

Slave Morality and the Revaluation of Values

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Abstract

I deny morality as I deny alchemy

– Nietzsche (*Dawn* 103)

What exactly does Nietzsche mean when he describes himself as an ‘immoralist’? Does he really reject all morality? Confounding the issue, Nietzsche himself seems to take a number of conflicting positions on the topic of morality. What is he really attacking – the moral values themselves or merely the effects of those values? Is he a moral nihilist, or is his criticism simply aimed at specific forms of morality? I maintain that neither of these possibilities is the case. Instead, I argue that Nietzsche’s immoralism is best understood in a straightforward literal sense – namely, Nietzsche is not a new kind of moralist offering a new moral system but an unapologetic iconoclast who challenges, not merely certain forms of morality, but morality itself. However, I argue that this does not commit him to some sort of value nihilism. Nietzsche is not opposed to valuing, just moral ways of valuing. Instead, Nietzsche’s values are related to health versus sickness – values that are ultimately rooted in Nietzsche’s notion of the will to power. I maintain that this is what he means by a ‘revaluation of all values’ – he wants to reorient the very way in which we (or at least some of us) value.

Chapter 1 explores Nietzsche’s critique of the various forms of morality while Chapter 2 establishes the anchor for his revaluation of values in the form of the will to power and his notion of health. In Chapter 3 I examine the sickness of the ascetic ideal while Chapter 4 contrasts Paul’s revaluation with Nietzsche’s. In the final chapter I contrast Nietzsche’s positive ideal of health (rooted in the will to power) with the full array of sick types delineated in Chapter 2. Based on this analysis, I then articulate Nietzsche’s positive views in connection to major features of his thought like the will to power and the eternal return.

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Introduction

The following dissertation will explore and analyze Nietzsche's infamous 'revaluation of all values' and his notion of 'slave morality'. This will require us to engage in a deep analysis of concepts like 'natural' versus 'unnatural', 'strength' versus 'weakness', and 'sickness' versus 'health'. We also have to explain not only the complex mechanisms that create slave moralities, the bad conscience, and the ascetic ideal, but also the mechanisms that exploit slave morality and the bad conscience. Much of this critical analysis will be rooted in Nietzsche's notion of the will to power. The will to power will serve as the bedrock for my critical analysis of Nietzsche's revaluation of values.

After a detailed survey of Nietzsche's critique of morality and his status as a morality critic, I will focus on the phenomena of slave moralities and the ascetic ideal. I will try and explain just how slave morality culminates in the ascetic ideal. At this point I attempt to unify Nietzsche's critique of morality with the psychology of slave moralities. Specifically, I will analyze the ascetic ideal in terms of what I will call a desire to be commanded – a complex form of closeted autonomy that I will argue is a product of a corruption of the will to power. This condition is therefore a kind of sickness according to Nietzsche. Finally I will use the Apostle Paul as a unique case study and argue that slave moralities cannot simply be understood as conspiracies promulgated by some priestly class; nor are they rare products of specific conditions. Instead, I will argue that, to varying degrees, slave moralities are everywhere in history and society. Finally I will delineate Nietzsche's vision of a 'higher morality'.

Chapter 1 will explore the various senses of 'morality' Nietzsche utilizes. This, I will argue is necessary because many of Nietzsche's claims about morality seem to be conflicting and at odds with each other. Accordingly, I argue that Nietzsche is not always careful with his

terminology and that he actually refers to various distinct senses of morality. I maintain that there are two primary kinds of morality and four additional senses of the term “morality”. The two primary kinds of morality have to do with the contrast between slave morality and other sorts of morality. I will proceed to lay out some of the defining features of slave morality and the conditions under which slave morality emerges. I will then compare and contrast slave morality with various senses of the term “morality” – specifically ‘the morality of mores/custom’ and the ‘morality of intention’. I will then consider two additional kinds of morality, beginning with what Nietzsche describes as ‘higher moralities’ in passages like BGE 202 and 32. I will discuss what makes these forms of morality superior to the other senses of morality, and whether they should even be considered moralities at all. The final kind of morality refers to non-Christian forms of slave morality and will be briefly discussed in this chapter but a lengthier discussion will be reserved for Chapter 5. So this chapter will set up the general framework of Nietzsche’s critique of morality and will also attempt to properly situate Nietzsche as a morality critic.

In Chapter 3 I will further address slave morality and the way in which it is ‘sick’ and ‘unnatural’ according to Nietzsche. I will argue that it is essential to tie this analysis directly to Nietzsche’s notion of the ‘will to power’ and critically assess competing models of the will to power offered by philosophers like B. Reginster, B. Leiter, M. Clark, and P. Foot. In the course of this analysis I will explore the nature of the will according to Nietzsche and the ascetic ideal. I will draw on J. Richardson’s analysis of what he calls ‘positive/negative’ and ‘active/reactive’ wills. This will help to make clear what Nietzsche considers a healthy and natural will as opposed to the sickness of the ascetic ideal. In order to do this I will also draw on Aristotle’s notion of *Eudaimonia*.

Chapter 3 will continue to focus on slave morality and the ascetic ideal. I will explore the psychological mechanisms at work in slave morality and the ascetic ideal. In particular I will analyze what I call the desire to be commanded. To understand this we will have to discuss how slave morality creates and exploits what Nietzsche calls the ‘bad conscience’ and ‘*ressentiment*’. Drawing heavily on passages like GS 347 and HAH 139 I will describe this desire to be commanded in terms of various forms of Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and what I will call “metaphysical motion sickness”.

In light of the analysis of the ascetic ideal and slave morality I will focus specifically on the Apostle Paul in Chapter 4 and the way in which he not only is the architect of slave morality according to Nietzsche but also serves as a very interesting case study in light of Nietzsche’s critique of morality. Specifically the question will be: on what non-hypocritical grounds can Nietzsche criticize Paul in the way he does in the *Antichrist*? After all, Paul was not an ascetic and, like Nietzsche, he was also engaged in a project of reevaluating all values. Moreover he was pursuing the difficult task of not only establishing a new moral system but also a new vision of man. So if Paul was in concert with the will to power as laid out in Chapter 2 and was not like the ascetic described in Chapter 3, on what grounds can Nietzsche justify his criticism of the Apostle Paul?

In the final chapter I will address Nietzsche’s reevaluation of values head on. With the optics of Nietzsche’s moral landscape firmly in place we will try to discern what Nietzsche’s positive vision of a ‘higher morality’ would look like. Specifically what exactly does Nietzsche mean by higher/noble kinds of morality? With the first four chapters having established the moral landscape as it pertains to Nietzsche’s critique, chapter 5 will discuss Nietzsche’s positive views. Chapter 1 explored Nietzsche’s critique of various forms of morality while chapter 2

established the anchor for his revaluation of values in the form of the will to power. Chapter 3 then explored the sickness of the ascetic ideal while Chapter 4 contrasted Paul's revaluation with Nietzsche's. In Chapter 5 we will now be able to contrast Nietzsche's positive ideals (related to health and the will to power) with the full array of sick types first delineated in Chapter 2. This will allow us to finally articulate Nietzsche's positive views in connection to major features of his thought like the will to power and the eternal return. This analysis will also allow us to compare and contrast Nietzsche's 'higher morality' with moral systems like Kant's deontological ethics. In the final analysis I will argue that Nietzsche's 'higher morality' really doesn't constitute a morality at all but rather a set of values rooted in health and strength. In light of this I will offer some final thoughts and conclusions regarding slave morality.

Chapter I: The Senses of “Morality”

It goes without saying that Nietzsche has much to say on the topic of morality. But the consistency of his views on morality is the subject of a rich debate. Things he says in one passage seem to directly contradict statements in other passages. For instance compare passages like TI 4, BGE 202, WP 268, A 24, and BGE 32, where Nietzsche talks of “higher” types of moralities, and says things like “Only *one* kind of human morality beside which, before which, after which many other, above all *higher*, moralities are possible or ought to be possible” (BGE 202), with passages like D 103 and GS 116 where he seems to reject morality altogether, declaring, “I deny morality as I deny alchemy, that is, I deny their premises” (D 103).

This raises several questions: were his views constantly changing? Are his views careless and contradictory? Or is it rather that his views are so rich and complex that a single term like “morality” cannot at all capture the various senses in which he utilizes the term? I am decidedly in favor of the latter proposition and maintain that he is far more consistent in his philosophical views of morality than it seems with only a cursory reading. A more nuanced analysis reveals that Nietzsche is in fact being careless with terms like “morality”. In passages like BGE 32 and D 103 the term does not refer to the same concept. In her article “Nietzsche’s Immoralism and the Concept of Morality”¹ Maudemarie Clark argues, “When Nietzsche occasionally writes of ‘higher moralities’, I take him, in accord with BGE 32, to be using ‘morality’ in a nontraditional and wider sense, which makes it equivalent to ‘codes for evaluating human beings and their conduct’ ” (Clark NICM 17). I agree with Clark’s interpretation. There simply is no other way to reconcile talk of “higher morality” with a rejection of “all moral premises”. The only alternative to this view is that Nietzsche’s thought contains glaring

¹ Clark, Maudemarie (1994) “Nietzsche’s Immoralism and the Concept of Morality” in R. Schacht (1994) *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morals* (London: University of California) Press [NICM].

inconsistencies. I submit that Nietzsche was too critical a thinker to allow such an egregious cognitive dissonance to permeate one of his primary philosophical topics.

Accordingly, the aim of this chapter is to identify, properly articulate and, most importantly, *relate* all the different ways in which Nietzsche uses the term “morality”. While there is a fair amount of overlap between several of the uses, I maintain that Nietzsche employs multiple notions of the term “morality”. The first sense is complex but sets the stage and provides the framework for understanding the subsequent senses and how they relate to one another. Additionally, in the first section of this chapter we will attempt to properly situate Nietzsche as a morality critic. The primary moral distinctions will help to accomplish this but it will require us to discuss not only the different senses of morality but also the different features of moral systems. This will allow us to situate Nietzsche’s various critical comments on morality within their proper context. One of the end goals of this entire work is to delineate the optics of the moral landscape as it pertains to Nietzsche’s ‘immoralism’. Accordingly, this chapter will provide an important first step in articulating that landscape.

i. The Primary Kinds of Morality and Nietzsche as a Morality Critic

The first kind of morality employed by Nietzsche refers to sets or codes of values. However, morality in this sense does not refer to just *any* sets of values – like say values of etiquette or local custom – but rather refers to sets of values that are ascribed significant normative value, and are at least *perceived* by members as being more purposeful than arbitrary (even if the opposite is in fact the case). Nietzsche argues that most of these sets of values involve, or are even entirely composed of, prejudices (GM Preface 2-3, GS 116, HAH 37, 42, 68, 96). There are of course varying degrees of normative significance and purpose that belong to different sets of values. In Nietzsche’s estimation few sets of values are entirely arbitrary; most have a genealogical origin that’s rooted in some purpose or other, but such an account does not vindicate or legitimize the normative force of a given value. Moreover, the real value of values,

and their real meaning and purpose, is often forgotten, distorted, or exaggerated by the adherents. However, some sets of values are more confused and full of prejudices than others.

Often Nietzsche assesses a morality in terms of two considerations: *first*, its ability to successfully achieve and produce desired ends, and *second*, the value and worth of those ends. In this manner Nietzsche simply takes it as a given that all moralities are, in truth, conventionalist in nature – which is to say, moral values are simply the product of human interactions and there is no moral law that exists objectively in itself. They are all the product of basic human needs in the context of environmental constraints and human competition (GS 116). However, some moral systems are more reflective of, and in sync with, basic human needs, and more efficient at satisfying them. A refined and deliberative set of moral values based on social contract theory will thus fare much better in Nietzsche’s evaluation than one that is bogged down with and clouded by historically rooted prejudices. Nevertheless even the best and most efficient moral system of this type will not fare as well in terms of the other consideration – namely, the value of the system’s ends. This is no doubt the major concern and objection Nietzsche has with Utilitarianism. As we will see, he is concerned with both the form as well as the content of sets of values.

So where should we situate Nietzsche as a morality critic? In his article “Nietzsche and the Morality Critics,”² Leiter argues that Nietzsche should be distinguished from other morality critics (specifically contemporary Anglo-American critics) in that “he is a genuine critic of *morality* as a real cultural phenomenon, while recent Anglo-American writers are only critics of particular *philosophical theories of morality*” (Leiter NMC 252). But this view raises an interesting question. Is Leiter correct in considering Nietzsche a unique equal opportunity critic of all morality? As previously mentioned, Clark stops short of this claim and argues instead: “I want to make it clear, however, that I do not take this as a claim to reject all morality (or morality

² Leiter, Brian (2001) “Nietzsche and the Morality Critics” in B. Leiter and J. Richardson (2001) *Oxford Readings in Philosophy: Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) [NMC].

itself) given every possible understanding of ‘morality’” (Clark NICM 16). She justifies this position by observing that Nietzsche himself spoke of “noble morality” and “higher moralities”. Leiter however goes on to further articulate his view of Nietzsche as a morality critic. He states, “Admittedly, the Morality Critics often present themselves as critics of morality itself – in that sense they echo Nietzsche – but, on examination, it is clear that their targets are specific theories of morality, consequentialist and deontological” (Leiter NMC 255). I agree with Leiter that Nietzsche is an ‘*extramoral*’ (NMC 258) critic but this should not obfuscate the fact that Nietzsche has his own specific target – namely Christianity. For this reason I do not consider Nietzsche an equal opportunity morality critic distinguished from all others. In her article “Nietzsche: the Revaluation of Values”³ Philippa Foot argues that Nietzsche singles out Christianity for the following two reasons:

In the first place he is suggesting that what is praised as Christian virtue is largely a sham, and that true goodwill would be produced not by teaching the morality of compassion but rather the encouraging “a healthy egoism”. Secondly he is saying that judged by its own aims this morality is bad. Men suffer pity as a sickness, and by their pity they do more harm than good (Foot NRV 212-213).

I think Foot’s analysis is correct – especially when she goes on to stress that Nietzsche also singles out Christian morality because it is a weapon used by the weak to empower themselves and undermine the strong and noble types⁴. Clearly Christian morality was the biggest target of Nietzsche’s critique (GM III 27, BGE 202, EH “Destiny” 4).

In addition to Foot’s observations, I would point out that as a moral system Christianity is unique among other forms of morality in that it fundamentally and essentially denies that its values are a product of convention but rather are real and metaphysically rooted in nature itself. The prejudices involved in Christian morality are therefore especially pernicious according to Nietzsche. Fundamentally it is rooted in the prejudiced and dogmatic assertion that it is

³ Foot, Philippa (2001) “Nietzsche: The Revaluation of Values” in B. Leiter and J. Richardson (2001) *Oxford Readings in Philosophy: Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) [NRV].

⁴ Foot NRV 213.

synonymous with, not only morality itself, but also value and meaning. Additionally Nietzsche is deeply skeptical of the value of Christian morality's values. This makes it unique and disparate from other sets of values or straightforward types of morality. So this first sense of morality actually involves two distinct *kinds* of morality: there are different forms of what I will call "A morality" that refers to distinct and specific sets of normative values – this more general use of "morality" leaves open the possibility of higher sets of values that do not involve prejudices and are worthy of valuing – and then there is what I will call "B morality" where a specific set of values becomes thought of, not as just a set of values among others, but as absolute in contrast to all other sets of values that are presumed to be products of convention. "All value of all things shines on me. All value has long been created, and I am all created value" (Z I 1) – in other words, when a specific A morality becomes synonymous with morality itself. Accordingly, the rejection of some particular B morality would in no way entail a rejection of A morality – something which would however be tantamount to nihilism from the perspective of B morality. But this is the prejudiced perspective of B morality and its so-called "absolute" moral values. Though all moral values (including B morality) are in fact products of convention according to Nietzsche, the absolute values of B morality became synonymous with morality and valuing itself – subsequently 'moral values' became synonymous with 'absolute values'. Accordingly, B morality would have been better characterized by a term other than "morality". But maybe the reason he does not do this is to highlight the fact that the very problem with B morality is that it fundamentally refuses to acknowledge the distinction between A morality and B morality. From the believer's perspective any values not in perfect concert with their B morality are immoral by definition. I take it this is why Nietzsche specifically states that his term 'immoralism' involves two negations:

Fundamentally, my term *immoralist* involves two negations. For one, I negate a type of man that has so far been considered supreme: the good, the benevolent, the beneficent [A morality]. And then I negate the type of morality that has become prevalent and predominant as morality itself [B morality] – the morality of decadence or, more concretely, *Christian* morality (EH "Destiny" 4).

Clearly Nietzsche considers Christianity to be an instance of B morality.

Only *one* kind of human morality [A] beside which, before which, after which many other, above all *higher*, moralities [A] are possible or ought to be possible. But against such a ‘possibility’, against such an ‘ought’, this morality [B] defends itself with all its might: it says, obstinately and stubbornly, ‘I am morality itself, and nothing is morality besides me!’... the *democratic* movement inherits the Christian (BGE 202).

Nietzsche thus refers to Christianity, or B morality, as “slave morality” and maintains it was born out of a hostile revolt against various forms of an A morality (i.e. Roman values, Pagan, etc.). In Nietzsche’s words: “The slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values... Its action is fundamentally reaction” (GM I 10). It is crucial to note that this process of appropriation and reorganization is itself a creative process. An underlying and somewhat undeclared theme of Nietzsche’s entire analysis of morality is that morality is *always* a *creative* endeavor – which is to say, metaphysically speaking, there simply is no such thing as absolute values. The irony is that the very notion of so called “absolute values” is in fact a created value. As Nietzsche describes:

“The enemy” as the man of *ressentiment* conceives him – and here precisely is his deed, *his creation*: he has conceived “the evil enemy,” “the Evil One,” and this in fact is his basic concept, from which he then evolves, as an afterthought and pendant, a “good one” – himself (GM I 10, [my emphasis])

Nietzsche’s point is that slave morality’s negation of everything noble is at the same time the creation of new, antithetical, moral values in which “pessimistic mistrust of the entire station of man will find expression” (BGE 260). As we will see, the key to the success of B morality is

the invention of new moral categories – ‘good’ and ‘evil’ in contrast to A morality’s ‘good’ and ‘bad’⁵.

In a poignantly titled section “how far the moral sphere extends” in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche says,

As soon as we see a new image, we immediately construct it with the aid of all our previous experiences, depending on the degree of our honesty and justice. All experiences are moral experiences, even in the realm of sense perception (GS 114).

The argument here is that it can appear as if nearly everything is imbued with moral values – and moral values do seem to color everything – but this is a kind of illusion. Just as in the case of aesthetic values, we project moral meaning and value into virtually everything through various forms of anthropomorphic projections. Nietzsche clearly views the process of valuing as a fundamental and essential part of being a human. We can no more divorce ourselves from valuing and judging than we can divorce ourselves from the necessity of breathing. In Nietzsche’s words, “Life itself forces us to posit values; life itself values through us when we posit values” (TI 5). According to Nietzsche valuing is an act of affirmation. There simply are no values, moral or otherwise, that exist in themselves. Consider the value of the conch in Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*. Initially it holds significant value for the boys. But its value and meaning is nothing but a product of the boy’s agreement on it and affirmation of it. When the majority of boys cease to affirm its value, it loses it because it had no real moral value in itself – it returns to being just a conch. So if morality just is this projection of values into nature then it will indeed essentially involve belief in moral facts according to Nietzsche’s estimation. “Morality is merely an interpretation of certain phenomena – more precisely, a *misinterpretation*” (WP 259).

⁵ A detailed discussion of these contrasting moral categories will be reserved for the third and final section of this chapter. For our present purposes we need only note that A and B moralities operate with different moral categories.

Whatever has *value* in our world now does not have value in itself, according to its nature – nature is always value-less, but has been *given* value at some time, as a present – and it was we who gave and bestowed it. Only we have created the world *that concerns man!* (GS 302).

In other words, just as we create complex and ever evolving structures of meaning in terms of concepts – like a bee building a honeycomb according to Nietzsche in the *Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense* – so too do we erect complex structures of value in the domain of morality. The trouble is that in both contexts the original value or meaning behind concepts and moral values can change or even be forgotten in ways we are completely ignorant of. As a result of this forgetting Nietzsche’s concern is that we all too often end up affirming values that are in fact prejudices or no longer worthy of value – and mistakenly come to think of them as ‘moral facts’ which we subsequently read back into the nature of things (BGE 108).

To properly situate Nietzsche as a morality critic we need to explore why this happens and what motivates it. Robert Guay argues that “morality forms a complex whose center is the search for a kind of normative stability” and that this desire compounded with “a belief that these conditions [stability and certainty] must be satisfied for a way of life to be legitimate”⁶ creates a need to be commanded that is best satisfied by the genesis of moral rules and facts. This, Guay argues, is why Nietzsche saw fit to do a genealogy of morality rather than a mere analysis⁷. I think Guay is right in this assessment and in his discussion of the problematic consequences of these ‘moral facts’. He identifies three problems with ‘moral rules’:

One is that insofar as morality takes on an abstracted form, it fails to cover matters of genuine responsibility... The second issue is that morality’s generality prevents it from having enough content to know what it means to apply it correctly... The third issue is that morality insists on universality of application, where that is inappropriate (Guay HBI 62).

⁶ Guay, Robert “How to Be an Immoralist” (2007) in Tevenar, G. *Nietzsche and Ethics* 58, 60 [HBI].

⁷ Guay HBI 57.

He references BGE 198 in support of this claim where it is clear that Nietzsche has exactly these three issues in mind when it comes to traditional forms of morality. Guay goes on to argue that Nietzsche is himself best understood as a more or less straightforward virtue ethicist.

While Guay's view has its merits, I think it misses the revolutionary aspect of Nietzsche's revaluation of values. Accordingly, I am much more in agreement with Philippa Foot's aesthetic form of evaluation⁸. Foot argues:

These considerations should, I think, incline us to view that Nietzsche is an immoralist rather than a special kind of moralist. And one is led in the same direction by the fact that he was prepared to throw out rules of justice in the interests of producing a stronger and more splendid type of man. I suggested that this implied a quasi-aesthetic rather than a moral set of values. Morality is necessarily connected with such things as justice and the common good, and it is a conceptual matter that this is so (Foot NRV 219).

What exactly this "quasi-aesthetic" element is will be revisited in later chapters but for our present purposes I think Foot does a better job of situating Nietzsche as a morality critic than Guay or Leiter does. Nietzsche is not exactly an equal opportunity morality critic. But his revaluation of all values does make him a sort of 'immoralist'. However, as Foot points out, this does not make Nietzsche a nihilist when it comes to values. As will be discussed in much more detail later, there were clearly values that Nietzsche himself endorses. Nietzsche is simply interested in changing the ways in which we value.

So, to return to the question, why do we value in these ways? The answer according to Nietzsche is that we are simply forced to value and create values (TI 5), and given psychological forces and needs humans will always value disparate things and value in disparate ways. Invariably some will be healthy and others will be destructive. As previously discussed, I maintain that Nietzsche is a conventionalist when it comes to forms of valuing and argues that valuing is fundamentally an act of affirmation that in effect creates the value of the value.

⁸ Foot (1994) "Nietzsche's Immoralism" in R. Schacht (1994) *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals* 11 [NI].

However, as it will be discussed in later chapters, I think that Nietzsche's primary 'naturalistic' values (i.e. the will to power and health) are not products of convention but actually represent 'ur-values'. For our present purposes though, with regard to moral values Nietzsche is clearly a conventionalist.

In GS 335 Nietzsche argues that there are three steps involved in moral action: *first*, one judges "this is right", *second*, "therefore it must be done", and *third*, they perform the action. He then observes:

You are speaking of three actions instead of one. When you judge "this is right," that is an action, too. Might it not be possible that one could judge in a moral and in an immoral way? *Why* do you consider this, precisely this, right? (GS 335).

Accordingly, the real value and meaning of so called "absolute values" is in fact a product of an adherent's affirmation of them as such. The problem is that, if Nietzsche is right, then the notions of 'moral facts' and 'absolute moral values' can be affirmed just like any other value and thereby obtain significant meaning. In fact such values obtain a special kind of meaning because they are seen as standing above all other sets of conventionalist values in that they are not conventionalist but absolute – as in the case of B morality. The prejudice involved here is the idea that conventionalist values are fundamentally inferior to absolute values. This is the highly successful (historically speaking) way in which such a morality markets itself. It does not compete with other sets of A moralities based merely on content of their values; rather, it cultivates its appeal by claiming its values have a radically different and superior *form* than any other possible sets of A moralities. In this way it's actually able to sell very backwards and even destructive content to followers. But the irony is that the proposition, the prejudice, that it (B morality) is higher and superior (to any form of A morality) is itself an affirmed and created value. Consider that the only way one could judge that the conventionalist's claim that "man is the measure" is qualitatively inferior to B morality's thesis that it is morality itself (i.e. its absolute values) is if man is in fact the measure. In other words, the very notion of B morality's

absolute values is in fact a created value. In Nietzsche's words this movement is "the transposition of morality into the metaphysical realm, as a force, cause, and end itself" (EH, "Destiny" 3).

This, I argue, is the deeper meaning behind his declaration that "there are no moral facts, only a moral interpretation of facts" (BGE 108). The very act of 'moral' valuation for Nietzsche is a process of interpretation. The problem, however, is when moralizers assume that there are moral properties to the facts/phenomena themselves. This is why Nietzsche claims that morality misrepresents phenomena (WP 259). The idea seems to be that everyone would agree with the proposition "murder is wrong" and yet people will have radically different opinions about what constitutes murder. This is not to say that Nietzsche is a moral relativist or subjectivist; but rather, the point is that the real moral significance of a proposition like "murder is wrong" is not contained in the proposition itself but in the affirmation of what one takes to constitute the meaning (or referent) of a given moral proposition. The real valuing then only begins when one is asked to articulate what exactly constitutes the concept 'murder'. One may begin with very general descriptions of case types but will very quickly discover that though everyone agrees that murder is wrong there are fundamental disagreements about what constitutes murder. For instance, is capital punishment murder? or abortion? or euthanasia? what about self-defense or the case of a just war, etc.? Invariably when further questioned individuals will be forced to appeal to more and more concepts.

Nietzsche's point is that it is really only at this stage that valuing occurs. And yet it's a process that is never really finished. How can one satisfactorily define, *even for themselves* let alone others, the concept of murder in terms of other refined concepts in a way that properly captures and anticipates *every* possible instance of an unjust killing a priori? This is because if there are no moral facts in themselves to appeal to and every case is to some extent unique then our moral concepts and abstractions will never really be adequate. Are we then left with a kind of subjective intuitionism where at best one can say "I can't define murder but I know it when I see it"? But then Nietzsche does not simply state "there are no moral facts" and leave it at that.

For, not only does he observe that this in no way excludes moral valuing and interpreting, he seems to endorse and advocate some ways of valuing. As Nietzsche argues in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

It is immediately obvious that designations of moral value were everywhere first applied to *human beings*, and only later and derivatively to *actions*... The noble type of man feels himself to be the determiner of values... he knows himself to be that which in general first accords honor to things, he *creates values*" (BGE 260).

Perhaps the model then is something like a judge who actively sets precedents based on previous cases and thereby creates new values through a process of valuing, judging, and affirming. After all there are no laws or legal precedents in nature apart from human interactions, but this in no way entails that there are no legal values – they are simply values that by their very nature have to be created. When Nietzsche discusses the creation of values in the case of master morality I take it to be very much analogous to this model. Clearly from the perspective of B morality the response to this would be that moral values are fundamentally different from legal values but that is precisely the point. The problem is that B morality takes moral values to be fundamentally *not* created or developed out of conventions like legal precedents when in fact they are – just as man is the measure when it comes to legal precedents so too is man the measure when it comes to moral precedents. The idea is roughly this: if one likened belief in God to belief in Santa Claus (as Nietzsche likely would), the believer would no doubt object that belief in God is fundamentally not like belief in Santa Claus. But this is the very point – if one came to view belief in God as the same as belief in Santa Claus they would not suddenly believe in Santa Claus but cease to believe in God. Similarly if one came to view moral values as analogous to legal values they would not suddenly take legal values to be absolute in nature but would cease to believe in the absolute values of B morality. We will revisit the tension between A and B moralities in the concluding section of this chapter, but for now let us take inventory of the other senses of morality employed by Nietzsche.

ii. “Higher Morality” and the Will to Power

Before we address any further senses of morality it is important to observe what is becoming increasingly apparent in my analysis of Nietzsche’s critique of morality – Nietzsche’s employment of the term “morality” appears to be messy. Recall the contrast in content and tone between D 103 and BGE 202. This however does not entail that Nietzsche’s critique is messy, but is, rather, a consequence of the nature of morality itself. The history of morality is long and winding. In the simplest terms, it is a messy amalgamation of traditions and prejudices, as well as complex psychological issues like guilt, punishment, and their prehistories⁹. Clark argues that when one analyzes Nietzsche’s treatment of things like guilt and punishment it becomes clear that “Nietzsche suggests that concepts influenced by history are like ropes held together by the intertwining of strands, rather than by a single strand running through the whole thing” (Clark NICM 22). So many features of any morality involve arbitrary prejudices and idiosyncrasies. That being said, different moral systems like slave morality may have defining features (i.e. they are reactionary and utilize the value schema good and evil) but the evolutionary process from the morality of custom to slave morality is long, complicated, and inefficient. The values of early moral values will continue to reverberate and influence the value of later values. Although that long history involves many individuals who have tried to revise and modify moral values, morality itself can never go back to the drawing board and start from scratch.

A couple of analogies may be helpful in clarifying these points. First, in his book *The Greatest Show on Earth*¹⁰, the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins makes similar claims about the evolution of any species. The changes and mutations it undergoes are always influenced by the prehistory of that species’ ancestry. Moreover, evolution can never go back to the drawing board and start from scratch. The organism has to remain functional and viable throughout every stage of an evolutionary process; if it fails to do this it simply dies off. This,

⁹ The term ‘prehistory’ is related to Nietzsche’s discussion of the ‘bad conscience’ and will be discussed in detail in chapter 2 in connection with an analysis of what Nietzsche calls ‘the will to power’.

¹⁰ Dawkins, Richard (2009) *The Greatest Show on Earth* (New York: Free Press).

according to Dawkins, is why evolution is so messy. He observes that, while any complex organism looks efficient and organized on the outside, if one dissects it, it is immediately apparent that the insides are a complete mess and are wildly inefficient. If humans had been designed, he argues, our circulatory system should look much more like a car's manifold intake and exhaust systems – neat, orderly, and efficient. The reason for this is that evolution (like morality) always works with what it has and can never go back to the drawing board. To further illustrate this point Dawkins considers whether engineers could transform an old prop plane into a jet plane. The catch however would be that as the engineers replace parts, the plane would have to remain functional and able to fly at every step in the process. While this would surely be possible, the final jet produced would be wildly inefficient and messy. So it is with the evolution of morality. The inefficiencies of this engineering experiment are analogous to the prejudices involved in the evolution of morality.

Because of this messy evolutionary process, morality has no clear or fixed essence. If anything, morality is a confused amalgamation of values, prejudices, and conventions. Accordingly, morality is analogous to a university like Kansas. It can be described in various ways (i.e. the campus, the departments, the faculty, the students, or its various organizations etc) but there is no one way to describe what the University of Kansas is. Moreover, it too (like morality) has an ever-changing history; so any description of the University of Kansas also has to take into account its duration through time. And yet KU lacks an enduring and unchanging essence. To further complicate the issue, not only does KU have many features unique to it, it also shares many features in common with other universities and schools. So how exactly can one define the University of Kansas? This of course is just another version of the classic problem identity that goes back to the ship of Theseus – but just as it applies to a university, so too does it apply to morality according to Nietzsche. In a word, whatever morality is, it's messy.

With this issue in mind, let us now consider the different senses of “morality” employed by Nietzsche. He refers to a “morality of intention” in contrast to a “morality of custom/mores” (*die Sittlich der Sitte*). The main difference is that intentions matter in the context of *morality of*

intention but do not in the case of *morality of custom*. For instance, as Nietzsche observes some customs are simply for the sake of custom: “as for example those among the Kamshadales forbidding the scraping of snow from the shoes with a knife, the impaling of a coal on a knife, the placing of an iron in the fire—and he who contravenes them meets death!” (D 16). In this barbaric form of custom one’s intentions do not matter – all that matters is whether or not they violated the customs. This extreme form of custom belongs to what Nietzsche describes as the “pre-moral” period. So “morality” in the sense of *morality of intention* refers to the period that followed – namely, the *moral* period – and does not then include the morality of custom. Instead the idea of morality in this sense essentially involves the value of intention. They both however demand self-sacrifice for the sake of the needs of the community. Nietzsche’s concern here is the way in which A moralities utilize the idea of moral facts to manipulate people into serving the interests of the herd. It is in this sense that Nietzsche speaks of “herd morality” and this is in fact a precursor for the development of B moralities like Christianity. Nietzsche describes this phenomenon as follows:

The task of breeding an animal with the right to make promises evidently embraces and presupposes as a preparatory task that one first *makes* men to a certain degree necessary, uniform, like among like, regular, and consequently calculable... With the aid of the morality of mores and the social straitjacket, man was actually *made* calculable (GM II 2)

Wherever we encounter a morality, we also encounter valuations and an order of rank of human impulses and actions. These valuations and orders of rank are always expressions of the needs of a community and herd... Morality is the herd instinct in the individual (GS 116).

By herd morality Nietzsche thus means a process of domestication through which behavior is made uniform and predictable. People are taught to be like cattle and desire only pleasure and security, and as a result become part of a herd with respect to society rather than a collection of individuals. In this sense, Nietzsche argues:

Morality makes stupid. – Custom represents the experiences of men of earlier times as to what they supposed useful and harmful – but the sense for custom (morality) applies, not to these experiences as such, but to the age, the sanctity, the indiscussability of the custom. And so this feeling is a hindrance to the acquisition of new experiences and the correction of customs: that is to say, morality as a hindrance to the creation of new and better customs: it makes stupid (D 19).

In the following passage from *Dawn* it is clear that Nietzsche here identifies the term “custom” with morality as he articulates the basic mechanisms of this herd morality:

The *chief* proposition: morality is nothing other (therefore *no more!*) than obedience to customs, of whatever kind they may be; customs, however, are the traditional way of behaving and evaluating. In things in which no tradition commands there is no morality; and the less life is determined by tradition, the smallest circle of morality... What is tradition? A higher authority which one obeys, not because it commands what is useful to us, but because it *commands*... (D 9).

Thus in this sense the individual and the demands of morality are in direct conflict with one another. Ironically, though such social contract moralities are pitched and sold in terms of self-interest they in fact are not in one’s interests (at least not the Noble’s) but rather are rooted in the interests of the community as a whole. In Nietzsche’s words, “The free human being is immoral because in all things he is *determined* to depend upon himself and not upon tradition” (D 9).

To be moral, to act in accordance with custom, to be ethical means to practice obedience towards a law or tradition established from old... it is above all directed at the preservation of a community (HAH 96).

According to Nietzsche guilt, self-sacrifice, and cruelty all intersect when it comes to all three of the senses of morality thus far discussed. Sacrifice for the sake of community eventually mutates into self-sacrifice for the sake of self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice in fact becomes a virtue and the very mark of the “most moral man”. In Nietzsche’s words:

Cruelty is one of the oldest festive joys of mankind. Consequently it is imagined that the gods too are refreshed and in festive mood when they are offered the spectacle of cruelty – and thus there creeps into the world the idea that voluntary suffering, self-chosen torture, is meaningful and valuable. Gradually, custom created within the community a practice corresponding to this idea: all excessive well-being henceforth aroused a degree of mistrust, all hard suffering inspired a degree of confidence... Thus the concept of the ‘most moral man’ of the community came to include the virtue of the most frequent suffering, of privation, of the hard life, of cruel chastisement – not, to repeat it again and again, as a means of discipline, of self-control, of satisfying the desire for individual happiness – but as a virtue which will put the community in good order with the evil gods and which steams up to the altar like a perpetual propitiatory sacrifice on the altar (D 18).

So this process of self-sacrifice carries its own momentum and ultimately culminates in valuing sacrifice and suffering above all else. It is in this way that the herd mentality sets the stage for ascetic ideals of slave morality¹¹. The herd mentality eventually transforms A morality into B morality, and B morality in turn becomes the ascetic ideal. In the ascetic, self-sacrifice becomes outright self-punishment. Why? Because self-punishment produces more suffering and guilt, which in turn perpetuates this vicious cycle – this cycle is what Nietzsche terms “suicidal nihilism” (a concept that will be discussed in the following section).

This is the basis of Nietzsche’s rejection of morality in general. Consider the following passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*:

Morality in the sense in which it has been understood hitherto, that is to say the morality of intention, has been a prejudice, a precipitancy, perhaps something provisional and precursory, perhaps something of the order of astrology and alchemy, but in any event something must be overcome. The overcoming of morality, in a certain sense even the self-overcoming of morality: let this be the name for that secret protracted labour which has been reserved for the subtlest, most honest and also most malicious conscience as living touchstones of the soul (BGE 32).

Although Nietzsche here specifically refers to morality of intention, I would argue that he is really referring not only to the morality of intention but also the many different forms of A

¹¹ What Nietzsche calls the “ascetic ideal” will be discussed in detail in chapter 3 along with what Nietzsche calls the ‘bad conscience’.

morality that Nietzsche rejects, and of course B morality. Accordingly, by the “self-overcoming of morality” I submit that Nietzsche means seeing the distinction between A morality and B morality, and overcoming not only the ideology of B morality but also the prejudices that are common to A moralities. It is in this context that Nietzsche states: “*Morality is in Europe today herd-animal morality* – that is to say, as we understand the thing, only *one* kind of human morality beside which, before which, after which many other, above all *higher*, moralities are possible or ought to be possible”. (BGE 202). So in both BGE 32 and BGE 202 Nietzsche is referencing a new sense of morality. In this sense of morality he is contrasting A and B morality with the possibility of higher sets of values that are worthy of value. The difference is that in BGE 202 he uses the term “higher morality” in contrast to the dogmatic forms of morality that have become synonymous with the very term “morality” (B morality) whereas in BGE 32 he uses the term “extra morality” in contrast to not only B morality but also prejudiced forms of A morality. In other words, though Nietzsche’s terminology is confusing, the “higher morality” he envisions would belong to the ‘extra moral period’. What exactly this “higher morality” is and whether it is a morality at all will be discussed in the subsequent chapters – in particular Chapter 5.

So in addition to A and B morality, “higher morality” represents a third kind of morality. Nietzsche frequently discusses healthy, noble, and *natural* forms of morality in contrast to “anti-natural” and prejudiced moralities¹². In this sense Nietzsche suddenly shifts from negative critical claims about morality and instead offers positive thoughts. In his article “Nietzsche and the Morality Critics” Leiter states, “Since Nietzsche uses the word ‘morality’ (*Moral*) in both positive and negative senses, I will introduce a ‘technical’ term to mark ‘morality’ as the object of his critique: what I will call henceforth ‘morality in the pejorative sense’ (MPS)” (Leiter NMC 263). At this point we can borrow Leiter’s technical term and now conclude that both A and B

¹² This refers to all of the senses of morality previously discussed. This includes straightforward forms of morality (A morality), dogmatic forms of moral realism (B morality), the morality of intention, and the morality of mores/custom. In addition to this kind of morality, I will discuss one last kind of morality that refers to non-Christian forms of B morality (i.e. Kant).

morality is an MPS. Nietzsche's notion of a higher kind of morality and an "extra-moral" morality (BGE 202), however, would not be an MPS. The reason this proposed "higher morality" is not an MPS, according to Nietzsche, is that it is natural and healthy (BGE 202).

The important question initially is what does Nietzsche mean by 'natural'? If by the term "natural" he means values that we naturally or commonly have, then he would no doubt be guilty of the naturalistic fallacy in deeming them superior to anti-natural moralities. But this does not seem to be the case. In fact he maintains that it is the anti-natural values that seem to be common and come naturally while the noble and healthy seem to be rare exceptions to these values. Nietzsche states:

Every naturalism in morality – that is, every healthy morality – is dominated by an instinct of life... *Anti-natural* morality – that is, almost every morality which has so far been taught, revered, and preached – turns, conversely, *against* the instincts of life (TI 4).

So by "anti-natural" Nietzsche means values that retard our nature, and by "natural" he means values that are in accord with our nature and minimally do not retard it; optimally such natural, noble, and healthy values aim to develop our nature and expand drives – which is to say, such natural values express what Nietzsche calls the "will to power"¹³. The anti-natural values of the ascetic aim to invert and sublimate both the Dionysian as well as Apollonian aspects of the will to power, whereas the natural values of Nietzsche's noble morality aim to express them both. So, where "anti-natural" values pollute the will to power, "natural" values purify it. In Nietzsche's words, "Verily, a polluted stream is man. One must be a sea to be able to receive a polluted stream without becoming unclean. Behold, I teach you the overman: he is this sea" (Z Prologue 3). Nietzsche argues:

¹³ The "will to power" is the specific subject of the next chapter and will be discussed in detail. It will also be further discussed in this chapter but for our present purposes we need only note that it is what Nietzsche considered the mark of the living and health – a relentless drive to become ever greater. As it will be later discussed, it is composed of two basic forces: a Dionysian aspect (chaos) and an Apollonian aspect (order).

Life itself forces us to posit values; life itself values through us when we posit values. From this it follows that even that anti-natural morality which conceives of God as the counter-concept and condemnation of life is only a value judgment of life – but of what life? of what kind of life? I have already given the answer: of declining, weakened, weary, condemned life. Morality, as it has so far been understood – as it has in the end been formulated once more by Schopenhauer, as “negation of the will to life” – is the very *instinct of decadence*, which makes an imperative of itself. It says: “*Perish!*” (TI 5).

So by *anti-natural* morality Nietzsche means all MPSs, which includes most forms of A morality, *morality of intention*, and *morality of ressentiment* (initially an A morality as discussed in the first section of this chapter), which becomes increasingly hostile to higher, noble, and aristocratic moralities, and eventually succeeds in becoming “morality itself!” (BGE 202) (B morality). In Nietzsche’s words:

In my *Genealogy of Morals* I offered the first psychological analysis of the counter-concepts of a noble morality and a morality of *ressentiment* – the latter born of the No to the former: but this is the Judeo-Christian morality pure and simple (A 24).

Two types of morality must not be confused: the morality with which the healthy instinct defends itself against incipient decadence – and another morality with which this very decadence defines and justifies itself and leads downwards (WP 268).

Therefore by “higher morality”, “noble morality”, “healthy morality”, “master morality” and “natural morality” (non MPSs) Nietzsche means a system of values that aim to, not retard, but develop our natures and expand our drives and is “extra-moral” in the sense of being beyond the schema of good and evil that belongs to B morality (GM I 17) as well as beyond the schema of moralities of intention and as custom. It is in this rarefied air that Nietzsche situates his higher values above morality itself. In Nietzsche’s words:

We should be *able* also to stand *above* morality – and not only to *stand* with the anxious stiffness of a man who is afraid of slipping and falling any moment, but also to *float* above it and *play* (GS 107).

Clearly the standard of what is natural according to Nietzsche has to do with strength and weakness; accordingly he identifies the will to power as the most natural force – most notably in BGE 19 and 36 where Nietzsche argues that everything in nature is on some level an expression of the will to power.

So the problem with traditional forms of morality is that they tend to pollute and corrupt the expression of the will to power in the case of humans. In passages like BGE 36 Nietzsche makes it clear that the will to power is everywhere in nature and the most natural and primordial force. In nature it is simply growth and the ceaseless expansion of drives. However, as previously discussed, humans are unique in that they must organize and negotiate competing drives. In his words, “The price of fruitfulness is to be rich in internal opposition” (TI “Anti-nature” 3). As a result, with respect to the will to power, given the complexities of human psychology there can be both *strong* as well as *weak* wills (BGE 21), and wills that desire to be *self-commanding* as well as wills that desire to be *commanded from without* (BGE 19) – which is to say, wills can flourish to varying degrees. According to Nietzsche humans can have either strong self-commanding wills or weak heteronomous wills. This can occur in the very extreme form of the ascetic or the moderate form of the plebeian herd but in either case it is the product of traditional forms of morality. So what Nietzsche means by “natural” in the case of values and the will to power is not simply what is common or pervasive. In his words, “Every naturalism in morality – that is, every healthy morality – is dominated by an instinct of life... *Anti-natural* morality... turns, conversely, against the instincts of life. It is condemnation of these instincts...” (TI “Anti-nature” 5). Here again it is clear that Nietzsche describes ‘unnatural’ moral values as those which are reactionary and hostile to what is instinctual – which is to say, they are values that are a “negation of the will to life” (TI “Anti-nature” 5). Though Nietzsche is a bit confusing with his use of terms I maintain he identifies ‘natural’ values with a process of artfully structuring, managing, and expanding drives. ‘Unnatural’ values are those that are reactionary

and hostile to the will to power – which will be the focus of the next chapter.¹⁴ Finally it should be observed that, according to Nietzsche, there are non-Christian forms of B morality – most notably Kant. I think it is important to distinguish these non-Christian forms of B morality because so much of Nietzsche’s critique of morality is focused on the Christian form of B morality. We should not however forget that there are other religious and secular forms of B morality. Kant and this form of morality will be analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5.

iii. The Slave Revolt in Morality

In light of my previous discussion of “higher morality” let us return to our analysis of MPSs and the prejudices of morality. As I have just argued in the previous section, B morality involves prejudices and misinterpretations. In Nietzsche’s words, “Morality is merely an interpretation of certain phenomena – more precisely, a *misinterpretation*” (WP 259). This misinterpretation involves not only the content and form of values, but also the motivations linked to traditional moral values. This is made clear in the following passage from *Dawn*:

There are two kinds of deniers of morality. – ‘To deny morality’ – this can mean, first: to deny that the moral motives which men *claim* have inspired their actions really have done so – it is thus the assertion that morality consists of words and is among the coarser or more subtle deceptions (especially self-deceptions) which men practice, and is perhaps so especially in precisely the case of those most famed for virtue. *Then* it can mean: to deny that moral judgments are based on truths. Here it is admitted that they really are motives of action, but that in this way it is errors which, as the basis of all moral judgment, impel men to their moral actions. This is *my* point of view... I deny morality as I deny alchemy, that is, I deny their premises: but I do *not* deny that there have been alchemists who believed in these premises and acted in accordance with them... It goes without saying that I do not deny – unless I am a fool – that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done and encouraged – but I think the one should be encouraged and the other avoided *for*

¹⁴ The topic of ‘natural’ values will be revisited in detail and further discussed in both chapter 2 as well as chapter 5. The main point for our present purposes is that Nietzsche considers ‘unnatural’ things to be marked by reaction and hostility. As we will discuss, the line of demarcation between ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ will be drawn in terms of health and sickness rather than frequency and rarity.

other reasons than hitherto. We have to learn to think differently – in order at last, perhaps very late on, to attain even more: *to feel differently* (D 103).

This passage however raises the question: what does he mean by “for other reasons than hitherto”? Does this mean other kinds of moral reasons or reasons other than moral ones? The answer however seems to depend on what sense of morality we are working with. I think BGE 202 makes it clear that he certainly means reasons other than B morality; but asking us to “feel differently” seems to suggest a paradigm shift in our ways of valuing even with respect to A morality.

To use Nietzsche’s own analogy, of course we know that the premises of alchemy are false, but only because they were replaced by modern chemistry. So, to deny alchemy does not commit one to denying that there is a real truth or fact of the matter behind the chemical structure of various elements; it simply denies that alchemy is the way to obtain such knowledge. Thus, alchemy may have been asking the right questions but it was not answering them in the right way. In the same way, Christian morality (B morality) and various forms of A moralities may have asked some of the right questions about morality but it did not supply the right answers. Thus, just as modern chemistry replaced alchemy perhaps Nietzsche envisions something superior replacing these forms of morality. This view is again supported by BGE 202.

Only *one* kind of human morality beside which, before which, after which many other, above all *higher*, moralities are possible or ought to be possible. But against such a ‘possibility’, against such an ‘ought’, this morality defends itself with all its might: it says, obstinately and stubbornly, ‘I am morality itself, and nothing is morality besides me!’... the *democratic* movement inherits the Christian (BGE 202).

Based on the text it is therefore reasonable to conclude that when Nietzsche says that he rejects morality as he does alchemy what he is really advocating and recommending is a rejection of B morality (BGE 32) which, as discussed, still leaves open the possibility for a system of A morality values worthy of value. Consider the following passage:

Must the ancient fire not some day flare up much more terribly, after much preparation?... Whoever begins at this point, like my readers, to reflect and pursue his train of thought will not soon come to the end of it – reason enough for me to come to an end, assuming it has long since been abundantly clear what my *aim* is, what the aim of that dangerous slogan is that is inscribed at the head of my last book *Beyond Good and Evil*. – At least this does not mean “Beyond Good and Bad” (GM I 17).

Nietzsche is as much rejecting previous forms of morality as he is advocating a paradigm shift in our very understanding of morality – the paradigm shift being the understanding that comes from the tension between, and nature of, A and B moralities. This understanding then is a first step towards what he calls the *revaluation* of all values. In Nietzsche’s words, “We need a critique of moral values, the value of these values themselves must first be called in question” (GM Preface 6). “Nobody up to now has examined the *value* of that most famous of all medicines which we call morality; and the first step would be – for once to *question* it. Well then, precisely this is our task” (GS 345).

One of the other major problems with the motives involved in B morality is that they are anchored in a desire/need to be commanded. What sets slave morality (B morality) apart is that this need is taken to an extreme such that, under its influence, morality becomes synonymous with the very idea of needing to be commanded by an external force. I maintain that one of the marks¹⁵ of slave morality that separates B morality from A morality is this need to be commanded. The focus here is the way in which B morality takes the manipulation of the herd and moral facts by A morality to a more vicious and extreme level, and involves even otherworldly sanctions and the idea of absolute moral facts (i.e. the schema of good and evil). This applies primarily to Christianity but when the need of other worldly sanctions and commands is taken to its zenith it culminates ultimately in the ascetic ideal.

Morality in this sense (ascetic ideals) is designed to resolve the anxiety of the normative vacuum discussed in GM III.

¹⁵ The other primary marks of slave morality is the moral categories of ‘good’ and ‘evil’, its hostile and reactionary nature, and its tendency to promote sickness. One other mark of slave morality is its tendency to empower the weak herd by undermining the strong nobles.

In the case of saints, finally, a pretext for hibernation, their *novissima gloriae cupido* [newest lust for glory], their response in nothingness (“God”), their form of madness. That the ascetic ideal has meant so many things to man, however, is an expression of the basic fact of the human will, its *horror vacui*. *it needs a goal* – and it will rather will *nothingness* than not will (GM III 1).

The ascetic ideal emerges as the only alternative to suicidal nihilism (GM III 28). In this way asceticism does not produce the need to be commanded – it is not the need itself but rather that which attempts to satisfy this natural human need. It was at the same time an attempt to provide meaning to suffering in order to avoid suicidal nihilism. In Nietzsche’s words:

This is precisely what the ascetic ideal means: that something was *lacking*, that man was surrounded by a fearful *void*... But his problem was not suffering itself, but that there was no answer to the crying question, “*why* do I suffer?”... The meaninglessness of suffering, *not* suffering itself, was the curse that lay over mankind so far – *and the ascetic ideal offered man meaning!* In it, suffering was interpreted; the tremendous void seemed to have been filled; the door was closed to suicidal nihilism. This interpretation – there is no doubt of it – brought fresh suffering with it, deeper, more inward, more poisonous, more life-destructive suffering: it placed all suffering under the perspective of *guilt* (GM III 28).

In this way, morality answers the same need to be commanded. As we discussed in the third sense of morality (morality of mores), it is satisfied by purely arbitrary rules that have little to do with the needs of society. In this extreme context sacrifice and suffering are no longer understood as necessary for the sake of the greater good. Under the specter of suicidal nihilism such an account is no longer sufficient for providing meaning to suffering. Instead, suffering and sacrifice become valuable for their own sake. At this point the meaning of the commands themselves become secondary to the act of obedience. Happiness is then held out perpetually like a carrot on a stick – and even reserved for the next world.

The most general formula on which every religion and morality is founded is: “Do this and that, refrain from this and that – then you will be happy! Otherwise...” Every morality, every religion, *is* this imperative. I call it the great original sin of reason, the *immortal un-reason* [*unsterbliche unvernunft*]. In my mouth, this formula [verwandelt sich jene Formel in ihre Umkehrung] is changed into its opposite – first example of my “revaluation of all values” (TI 2).

According to Nietzsche this need to be commanded goes hand in hand with a need to believe – both stem from a weak and superficial attempt to resolve the normative vacuum we encounter in terms of the meaninglessness of suffering. In the *Gay Science* Nietzsche argues:

Believers and their need to believe – How much one needs a *faith* in order to flourish, how much that is “firm” and that one does not wish to be shaken because one *clings* to it, that is a measure of the degree of one’s strength (or, to put the point more clearly, of one’s weakness)... “Instinct of weakness”, which, to be sure, does not create religious, metaphysical systems, and convictions of all kinds but – conserves them.... Faith is always coveted most and needed most urgently where will is lacking; for will, as the affect of command, is the decisive sign of sovereignty and strength (GS 347).

So the need to understand why one suffers is satisfied (out of weakness) by interpreting oneself as the cause¹⁶. This immediately leads to the need to be commanded. The solution to suffering becomes submission. The “believer” *must* become heteronomous. Nietzsche lays this out as follows:

In other words, the less one knows how to command, the more urgently one covets someone who commands, who commands severely – a god, prince, class, physician, father confessor, dogma, or party conscience. From this one might perhaps gather that the two world religions, Buddhism and Christianity, may have owed their origin and above all their sudden spread to a tremendous collapse and disease of the will. And that is what actually happened; both religions encountered a situation in which the will had become diseased, giving rise to a demand that had become utterly desperate for some “thou shalt...” Once a human being reaches the fundamental conviction that he *must* be commanded, he becomes “a believer.” (GS 347).

I take it that when Nietzsche says, “Once a human being reaches the fundamental conviction that he *must* be commanded” he is being a bit ironic and facetious. By stressing the “must” he seems to suggest that the conviction of the “believer” itself (that one must be commanded from something outside) *is in fact a command one gives to oneself* – which at once unravels the very

¹⁶ This I maintain results in the guilt discussed by Nietzsche throughout the *Genealogy of Morals* but specifically his discussion of guilt in GM III 28.

nature of their conviction, and thus simultaneously reveals the cognitive dissonance of their belief. It is self-deception cloaked by faith. By contrast this also shows the courage and greatness of what Nietzsche calls the *free spirit*, who does not attempt to flee from *the fact that* one essentially does command oneself, but rather embraces it and in so doing becomes responsible for oneself in an authentic manner. In Nietzsche's words:

But up to now the moral law has been supposed to stand *above* our own likes and dislikes: one did not want actually to *impose* this law upon oneself, one wanted to *take* it from somewhere or *discover* it somewhere or *have it commanded to one* from somewhere (D 108).

The point is not that the believer willingly becomes heteronomous by willingly choosing to submit to the authority and command of an outside force (which would not be problematic or contradictory); rather, the believer is, in essence, commanding himself *to be* a being of the sort *that must* be, and can in truth *only* be, commanded from without (which *is* a problem because it involves a blatant contradiction).

Nietzsche argues that “in this first type of morality [master] the antithesis ‘good’ and ‘bad’ means the same thing as ‘noble’ and ‘despicable’ (BGE 260). However, it is important to note that the categories ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are not moral evaluations. As Clark puts it, “calling commoners ‘bad’ is certainly making a value judgment about them, but it is not judging them to be ‘morally bad’ or ‘immoral’ (Clark NICM 24)¹⁷. The nobles are ‘good’ simply because they are the ones who take ownership of what it means to be human and actively work to define it. The ‘good’ is here defined by individuals as representative types. Anything that falls short of the standard they set in terms of their greatness becomes ‘bad’¹⁸ *by contrast*, or, as a “*pathos of distance*” (BGE 257). The most important consequence of this is that the moral categories of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ referred to *individuals*. In Nietzsche's words:

¹⁷ In contrast to these evaluations, the categories ‘good’ and ‘evil’ *are* moral evaluations. This will be discussed in more detail in connection with GM I 13.

¹⁸ Again, by the term ‘bad’ Nietzsche does not imply a moral judgment; rather he means an evaluation of despicable and inferior.

It is immediately obvious that designations of moral value were everywhere first applied to *human beings* (as in the morality of the nobles), and only later and derivatively to *actions*... The noble type of man feels himself to be the determiner of values... he knows himself to be that which in general first accords honor to things, he *creates values* (BGE 260).

Nietzsche then goes on to observe that slave morality has a different origin – one born of retaliation and *ressentiment*. The common plebeians were not satisfied with their second class rank and retaliated by creating a new form of morality that served their interests. Rather than being rooted in nobility, virtue, and greatness, their morality was one of *utility*. Nietzsche describes the plebeian's morality as the beginning of slave morality and claims it is marked by a pronounced disdain for everything the nobles represent – everything from their power to their virtues (BGE 260). As previously discussed, it is important to note that slave morality's "action is fundamentally reaction" (GM I 10).

What the plebeians did was really quite ingenious according to Nietzsche. They changed the moral game altogether. Since they were clearly inferior in any moral system that placed a premium on individuals and noble types, they posited moral values rooted not in individuals but in actions – the values of 'good' and 'evil'. In a sense they created an axiological domain above the nobles and their virtues through which they could judge and condemn the nobles. The moral values of slave morality are exactly opposite those of master morality. Here again is the "transposition of morality into the metaphysical" (EH "Destiny" 3) that culminates in B morality. In master morality the 'good' plays the primary role and is defined by the nobles – anything that falls short is simply deficient or 'bad'. In slave morality, however, the 'evil' plays a primary role and applies to anything powerful or threatening (i.e. the nobles), and 'the good' is anything that is not noble or powerful – anything that is potentially weak or vulnerable (i.e. the plebeians). Unlike master morality's categories, slave morality's categories are moral evaluations rather than mere value judgments. Nietzsche describes the genesis of these new moral categories in *Genealogy of Morals* saying:

This, then, is quite the contrary of what the noble man does, who conceives the basic concept “good” in advance and spontaneously out of himself and only then creates for himself an idea of “bad”. This “bad” of noble origin and that “evil” out of the cauldron of unsatisfied hatred – the former an after-production, a side issue, a contrasting shade, the latter on the contrary the original thing, the beginning, the distinctive *deed* in the conception of a slave morality – how different these words “bad” and “evil” are, although they are both apparently the opposite of the same concept “good.” But it is not the same concept “good”: one should ask rather *precisely who* is “evil” in the sense of the morality of *ressentiment* (GM I 11).

Nietzsche’s point is that master and slave morality do not share a common ‘good’ and merely have opposite negative correlates; rather they are completely antithetical and opposite moral systems – slave morality being designed and created precisely in response to master morality and its values. Thus, where the nobles gave conceptual primacy to the concept ‘good’ by actively defining it, the plebeians grant conceptual primacy to ‘evil,’ and define ‘good’ only in contrast to it. To reiterate *their* moral syllogism: “I am not that [noble], that is evil, therefore I am good”.

In the first essay of the *Genealogy* Nietzsche explains the ‘good’ as conceived by the man of *ressentiment* with an interesting allegory involving lambs and birds of prey. There he states:

That lambs dislike great birds of prey does not seem strange: only it gives no ground for reproaching these birds of prey for bearing off little lambs. And if the lambs say among themselves: “these birds of prey are evil; and whoever is least like a bird of prey, but rather its opposite, a lamb – would he not be good?” there is no reason to find fault with this institution of an ideal, except perhaps that the birds of prey might view it a little ironically and say: “we don’t dislike them at all, these good little lambs; we even love them: nothing is more tasty than a tender lamb” (GM I 13).

Nietzsche’s point is that the slaves need “moral” values (i.e. ones rooted in the moral categories of ‘good’ and ‘evil’) of utility and security instead of noble values of greatness. The lambs, for instance, declare that “the birds of prey *ought not* eat lambs”. While such a notion sounds silly it proved to be quite powerful historically. Nietzsche argues that so long as noble morality is the only game in town the lambs (plebeians) have a complex psychological dilemma. The problem is that it is psychologically hard to admit that one is weak and powerless. In the case of the

lamb, there is a strong psychological need to deny their vulnerability to the bird of prey. Acknowledging the fact that retaliation is simply not a possibility for the lamb adds psychological insult to injury. Accordingly they reject the noble categories of strong and weak in order to save face, opting instead to invent new “moral” categories that serve a psychological need. To assuage the vexing reality of their weakness, the lambs begin to reinterpret the fundamental nature of their conflict with the birds of prey and empower themselves by suggesting that they in fact *could have* retaliated but *chose* not to. This requires the positing of the doer behind the deed. The logic is: “the deed was done and I was harmed as a result of it, but the doer, on the part of the bird of prey, *could have* and *should have* done otherwise; and I myself *could have*, but *chose* not to, retaliate – how much greater and better am *I* then compared to the birds of prey”. It is precisely in this way that the *doer* becomes something artificially added to the deed *after the fact*. In truth however, “there is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything” (GM I 13).

It all begins with the negative self-evaluation on the part of the lambs in terms of the noble categories of strong and weak – the lambs are inherently weak and vulnerable, while the birds of prey are inherently strong and dominant. The lamb cannot deny the *fact* that they were harmed and their friends eaten, but they can exploit the power they have over the *interpretation* of this *phenomenon* – the only power they really have in this situation. According to Nietzsche, the lamb projects their negative self-evaluation, and feelings of *ressentiment* that result from it, onto the birds of prey in order to rid themselves of it. The lamb deems the bird of prey ‘evil’ and itself ‘good’ by contrast. The logic is: if the bird of prey is evil then “whoever is least like a bird of prey, but rather its opposite, a lamb – would he not be good?” In other words, the psychological strategy of the lamb is to translate and reinterpret their vulnerability and weakness into “I am *not* weak; for, I *could have* retaliated but I *chose not to* and am therefore *better* – in response to a wrong I did the *right* thing”. This of course requires that there be more than just the deed; there must also be the respective doers behind the deed. The doer behind the lamb is

good and the doer behind the bird of prey is *evil* and *ought to* act like the lamb. In Nietzsche's words:

The slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values... Slave morality from the outset says No to what is "outside," what is "different," what is "not itself"; and *this* No is its creative deed... This need to direct one's view outward instead of back to oneself – is of the essence of *ressentiment*: in order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all – its action is fundamentally reaction (GM I 10).

Thus, slave morality and its ways of moralizing are all born of retaliation and *ressentiment* – and are, interestingly enough, creative processes.

Before concluding this chapter let us take inventory of exactly what constitutes B morality and how it is distinct from other kinds of morality. I submit that it has a number of distinguishing features. *First*, as just discussed, it is born out of reaction to some external stimuli. *Second*, it is a robust form of moral realism. *Third*, it operates with the absolute moral categories 'good' and 'evil,' which are thought to be ontologically rooted. *Fourth*, it's non-reflective and refuses to acknowledge its own prejudices and arbitrariness. And *fifth*, it declares itself as morality and insists on an absolute monopoly when it comes to moral values (i.e. BGE 202). Also, unlike A moralities, moral values and facts are not understood as products of interpretation; rather, moral values and facts are seen as dictated from without (usually in religious contexts). Dialogue is thus next to impossible when it comes to believers of B morality. Any attempt at dialogue or debate can immediately be disrupted by simply playing the proverbial "I'm just the messenger" card¹⁹.

So, as an immoralist, Nietzsche does not deny the existence of B moralities. Clearly they do exist in the sense of motivating and effecting people's behavior. What Nietzsche denies is not that some people act in accordance with B morality; rather, he denies the premises of B morality

¹⁹ Consider for instance the infamous Westboro Baptist Church and its vicious B morality. Spokespersons for the "church" routinely try to deflect criticism by insisting that they are just the messengers of God's morality.

(D 103). In the next two chapters we will look Nietzsche's views on health and nature as they pertain to his critique of morality – specifically B morality. First we will further articulate what Nietzsche means by “morality as anti-nature”; then we will further analyze the moral psychology of slave moralities and their origins. Finally, after lengthy discussion of the Apostle Paul and Nietzsche's *Antichrist*, we will address the positive aspects of Nietzsche's critique of morality and what would constitute a natural or healthy or higher type of morality, and whether it would be a moral system at all. Whether a value system rooted in health, nature, and strength can be considered a ‘morality’ will have to be bracketed for the moment. In order to properly answer this question we will first have to discuss Nietzsche's revaluation of all values. This analysis will culminate in chapter 5 where we will discuss the value of values.

Chapter II: The Will to Power and Morality as ‘Anti-Nature’

Nietzsche’s employment of the term “natural” is pervasive, diverse, and complicated. This is especially evident in his critique of morality. Central to his critique is a repeated insistence that morality (save his notion of higher moralities) is somehow “anti-nature” (TI “Morality as Anti-nature”). In general, this use of ‘morality’ refers to moral systems that attempt to ‘improve’ mankind and human nature. Nietzsche accuses everyone from Plato to Socrates to Paul to Kant of trying to create value systems that would modify and improve human nature. In section 2 of *Twilight* titled “The ‘improvers’ of Mankind” Nietzsche declares that Christianity “ruined man, it weakened him – but claimed to have ‘improved’ him”. Whatever the intentions, it is this element of corruption that causes Nietzsche to declare that these types of morality are ‘anti-nature’. But the problem with such a claim is that it involves a vicious circularity. So in order to understand what “anti-nature” means in this context we will first need to understand what exactly Nietzsche means by “natural”. And yet Nietzsche seems to simply posit the concept ‘natural’ in opposition to the concept ‘moral’. Nietzsche’s ambiguous and at times sloppy uses of terms like “nature” and “morality” make this a particularly vexing problem to resolve yet one that is at the same time fundamental and crucial to understanding Nietzsche’s critique of morality. In fact, unless these ambiguities are resolved, his critique can’t even get off the ground. For instance, an obvious question with no obvious answer is: how can morality be ‘anti-nature’ if we so naturally engage in it? I maintain that the best way to resolve these important issues satisfactorily is by understanding and contrasting his notions of “natural” and “moral” in the context of the will to power. This will provide a framework in which his statement “morality is anti-nature” can be rendered clear and intelligible. So the proposed strategy is threefold; *first*, consult the important texts and passages on this issue and various interpretations of it by Clark, Reginster, and

Richardson²⁰, *second*, develop a clear understanding of the will to power, and *third* utilize this understanding of the will to power to explain Nietzsche's use of the term "natural".

i. The Will to Power and the Concept of 'Natural'

Resolving this problem will begin and end with a discussion of the term "natural". Part of what makes Nietzsche's use of the term "natural" so vexing is that it has so many varied meanings and uses. It's paradoxical in the sense that on the one hand it seems like such an obvious, fundamental, and translucent concept that scarcely requires, or lends itself to, any elaborate definition; while at the same time it proves to be incredibly difficult to really nail down. As a result a term like "natural" immediately invokes strong intuitions with regard to its content. And yet, at the same time, such intuitions can be radically disparate from person to person and context to context. For instance, in the most basic sense, when Nietzsche uses the term, does "natural" mean what is common or what is frequent? Or does he mean what is original and common absent outside influence? Is whatever tends to rule "natural" by definition, or could what is "natural" actually be the exception to the rules? To put it another way, is the *natural* definition of "natural" what Nietzsche means, or does Nietzsche mean that what is "natural" in one sense might be *unnatural* in another? I think Nietzsche's use of the term is clearly the more complicated latter notion that is conditional and depends on the context in which the term "natural" is being employed.

So to return to the earlier question, some of the ambiguity can already be cleared up – what is common is not necessarily natural according to Nietzsche. Morality might indeed be common but that doesn't make it natural – despite being common it can in fact be *anti-nature*²¹.

²⁰ Clark, Maudemarie (2001) "Nietzsche's Doctrines of the Will to Power" in B. Leiter and J. Richardson (2001) *Oxford Readings in Philosophy: Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) [NDWP].

Reginster, Bernard (2007) "The Will to Power and the Ethics of Creativity" in B. Leiter and N. Sinhababu (2007), *Nietzsche and Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) [WPEC].

Richardson, John (1996) *Nietzsche's System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) [NS].

²¹ This of course applies to all the types of morality discussed in the previous chapter save 'higher' and 'natural' moralities -- a topic which will be revisited in chapter 5.

The model I'm going to proceed to develop is rooted in the fact that Nietzsche uses the term 'natural' to refer to what is healthy, flourishing, and strong *even* in contexts where such things are rare and uncommon – since the will to power is fundamentally a force that involves growth, progress, and development, I will argue that the will to power applies to all life in its most *natural* (even if rare) form. Since the will to power is the clear link between understanding Nietzsche's critique of morality and his conception of natural, we will now shift the focus of the discussion specifically to properly understanding it.

In recent literature three disparate models of the will to power have emerged: Clark's straightforward psychological interpretation, Reginster's model that stresses the significance of overcoming resistance, and Richardson's model that revolves around the mastery and expansion of drives²². Clark's primary concern is to find a way to interpret the will to power that is consistent with Nietzsche's rejection of metaphysics. She maintains that Kaufmann's interpretation is more or less right but stresses that it really only applies to the human world and not the cosmos. In other words, she argues that it really only involves human psychology and doesn't extend beyond that into some sort of metaphysical claim about nature itself. She questions the metaphysical interpretation of the will to power seemingly put forward by Nietzsche in BGE 32 and argues that it's really just a thought experiment and not an actual force in nature. Likewise in BGE 22 she maintains that Nietzsche is simply offering it as a possible way of interpreting things but not a literal doctrine. She goes on to argue that Nietzsche is simply projecting what he valued on to nature – and, unlike other philosophers, being honest about it (Clark NDWP 145-146). So if it's a doctrine at all, it's a psychological one rather than a metaphysical one. She points out that Nietzsche himself distinguishes between a 'life will' and a 'will to power' so he couldn't have thought that the will to power was necessarily in all things –

²² Clark, Maudemarie (2001) "Nietzsche's Doctrines of the Will to Power" in B. Leiter and J. Richardson (2001) *Oxford Readings in Philosophy: Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) [NDWP].
Reginster, Bernard (2006). *The Affirmation of Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press) [AL].
Richardson, John (1996). *Nietzsche's System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) [NS].

it has to be developed. She considers it to be a second-order drive that all first-order drives be expanded (Clark NDWP 141-142).

Reginster also takes it to be a psychological doctrine but argues that it is best understood not so much as a second order drive but as a desire to overcome resistance. In reference to WP 704 Reginster says, “the will to power is the will to ‘striving against something that resists.’ Since striving against is an effort to overcome, we might say that the will to power is the will to overcome resistance” (Reginster AL 126). I think however that this creates a few problems. First, if it is not about expanding drives but overcoming resistance then it would seem to compel us to do tasks that we are less talented at and are more difficult for us than others. Can you fault Mozart for composing music because it came too easily for him? Was his music then a poor expression of power? If he was much less gifted as an athlete should he have focused on overcoming that resistance instead of composing music? Just doing whatever is most difficult for us is an odd notion of power yet it seems follow from Reginster’s interpretation of the will to power. Second, should we willingly handicap ourselves so that there’s even more resistance to overcome? Should Michael Phelps be expected to swim wearing all his gold medals because they would provide more resistance? This seems like a rather silly and misguided way to view power. Could this really be what Nietzsche has in mind? The problem with Reginster’s view is that he views resistance as an end rather than a means. “In my view, then, the will to power is the will to the overcoming of resistance” (Reginster AL 131-132). His intuition is partially right however. I think there is a definite connection between the will to power and resistance, but Reginster gets it wrong. He asserts that resistance is a means to the act of overcoming; however, for Nietzsche, the act of overcoming is itself a means, not an end. In other words, overcoming resistance is a means to strength and power but not the end. Just as in weight lifting, resistance is not an end but a means – namely, a means to strength²³. I think Reginster is right in thinking that Nietzsche did not advocate the path of least resistance attitude towards life but that doesn’t entail

²³ In Nietzsche’s words, “*Out of life’s school of war: what does not destroy me, makes me stronger*” (TI *Maxims and Arrows* 8).

that by the will to power he advocated a resistance for the sake of resistance view of life and power. The problem with Reginster's interpretation of the will to power is that he understands resistance as an end when it was only a means in terms of Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power.

The other prominent concern with Reginster's interpretation is that it draws too much on the unpublished material from *The Will to Power*. Reginster references numerous notes throughout his discussion (WP 702-704, 423, 675, 699, 697, 125, 689, 1067, 707, 751, 481, 656). The concern is that Nietzsche never published any of this material so there is no way to know what he really intended to do with it or the context in which he is thinking about the various ideas. When it comes to major issues/concepts of Nietzsche's thought like the eternal return, the overman, nihilism, and the will to power, there are unpublished notes that *directly* contradict his treatment of these concepts in his published works. Accordingly, one has to be very careful in referencing *The Will to Power*. I'm not suggesting that the *The Will to Power* can't be used or referenced at all; but, whatever the issue or concept is, it should always be a *secondary* source used to further support an interpretation that is primarily rooted in Nietzsche's *published* works. When it comes to the published works, Reginster appeals primarily to GS 56, BGE 6, GM I 13, and *especially* Z II 12.

Reginster relies so heavily on Z II 12 that he even quotes it to introduce the entire chapter. He ultimately concludes:

In willing power he [the agent] must also desire resistance to their [ends] realization. And so the agent who wills power must want *both* certain determinate ends *and* resistance to their realization: "That I must be struggle and a becoming and *an end and an opposition to ends* – ah, whoever guesses what is my will should also guess on what crooked paths it must proceed. Whatever I create and however much I love it, soon I must oppose it and my love; thus my will wills it" (Z II 12 [first emphasis mine]).

Reginster argues that by "crooked paths" Nietzsche means that not only does one continually will new ends but also one wills that the achievement of each new end involves resistance.

Moreover he suggests that the reason one must eventually oppose whatever they create is also because they have to seek out new resistances. So Reginster uses this passage to justify the proposed significance of resistance he derived from the WP passages. The problem is that there is a simpler way to interpret this passage that squares much better with the rest of what Nietzsche says about the will to power in other published works. By “crooked paths” I would suggest that Nietzsche means the various ways in which the will to power can express itself in the case of humans – the range of possible expressions from strong to weak, and healthy to sick. It also refers to the rich internal opposition and struggle of every individual with respect to their competing drives and wills. In Nietzsche’s words, “You should love peace as a means to new wars” (Z I 10). “The price of fruitfulness is to be rich in internal opposition... One has renounced the great life when one renounces war” (A 3). So in order to continue to grow and progress one has to experiment with new economies of wills. This explains Nietzsche’s praise of ‘brief habits’.

Brief habits. – I love brief habits and consider them an inestimable means for getting to know *many* things and states, down to the bottom of their sweetness and bitternesses. My nature is designed entirely for brief habits, even in the needs of my physical health and altogether *as far* as I can see at all – from the lowest to the highest (GS 295).

Accordingly, when it comes to experiments in life, Nietzsche emphatically declares “let’s try it!” in GS 51. So it is not the need of new resistances that causes the “crooked paths” but the struggle to continue to grow, develop, and progress. In Nietzsche’s words, “Through a hundred souls I have already passed on my way, and through a hundred cradles and birth pangs. Many a farewell I have taken” (Z II 2). Since this process never ends, one will have to oppose old values in order to create new ones in the interest of growth rather than in the interest of merely seeking out new forms of resistance. “Whoever must be a creator always annihilates” (Z I 15). Growth and development are essential to the will to power. “To have and to want more – *growth*, in one word, that is life itself” (WP 349). Nietzsche makes this very clear in the following passage

from *The Gay Science*. “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). Similarly Nietzsche states:

Life itself is essentially appropriation, injury, overpowering of the strange and weaker, suppression, severity, imposition of one’s own forms, incorporation and, at the least and mildest, exploitation... if it is living... it will have to be will to power incarnate, it will want to grow, expand, draw to itself, gain ascendancy – not out of any morality or immorality, but because it *lives*, and because life *is* will to power... ‘Exploitation’ does not pertain to a corrupt or imperfect or primitive society: it pertains to the *essence* of the living thing as a fundamental organic function, it is a consequence of the intrinsic will to power which is precisely the will of life (BGE 259).

The important point to take from this quote is the importance of struggle, development, and growth in understanding Nietzsche’s will to power.

I maintain that Richardson articulates the doctrine of the will to power, as Nietzsche envisions it, better than Clark or Reginster. He rejects the idea that it can’t just be the desire for a maximal achievement of some desire’s end. Like Reginster, he stresses that the will to power can never be satisfied. But this raises the question: does this mean it is like thirst where it can be satisfied for a moment but always returns or is it never satisfied in any way? I would argue it is the former – a thirst that can be temporally satisfied²⁴. So there can be moments of peace and rest but this does not entail that one ever becomes completely content. So like with any thirst, though it can be satisfied for brief periods, it eventually returns. Accordingly, one must always have an eye on new goals to quench it. The aim is continual growth but, as previously discussed, this process may at times be messy. It may often proceed in fits and starts. In Nietzsche’s words, “Whatever I create and however much I love it, soon I must oppose it and my love; thus

²⁴ Nietzsche often speaks of momentary peaceful moments or justifying moments of joy – most notably Z IV 10. There Nietzsche asks, “Have you ever said Yes to a single joy? O my friends, then you said Yes too to *all* woe. All things are entangled, ensnared, enamored; if ever you wanted one thing twice, if ever you said, “You please me, happiness! Abide, moment!” then you wanted *all* back. All anew, all eternally, all entangled, ensnared, enamored -- oh, then you *loved* the world. Eternal ones, love it eternally and evermore; and to woe too, you say: go, but return! *For all joy wants -- eternity*”. In Z I 10 he also states that, “You should love peace as a means to new wars” (Z I 10).

my will wills it” (Z II 12), “Whoever guesses what is my will should also guess on what *crooked* paths it must proceed” (Z II 12).

I think this fits with Richardson’s interpretation. In his view the will to power is best understood as the mastery of one desire over others – which is to say, the organized and purposeful expansion of drives where lower drives are incorporated and redirected by higher drives. Clearly some drives are stronger than others, and their relative strengths, at times, depend on circumstances, but theoretically any drive can govern. In this way there are no inherently higher and lower drives. The higher ones are simply the drives selected to govern. This point will be further explored later but it must be pointed out that by “selected” I do not mean by some pure subject detached from wills and drives. Nietzsche clearly excludes this Christian and Kantian view of the will (BGE 16-17, 19). So they are not selected in the sense of a pure subject but as a complicated process and struggle – the internal war and opposition he describes in section 3 of “Morality as Anti-nature” in TI. So there is no single subjective will that stands behind all drives, but rather an individual’s will is a collection of drives and will with no singular conductor. Again, I will revisit this issue later but I think the best analogy would be large flocks of birds and schools of fish that are collectively able to engage in very complicated, well organized, and purposeful movements despite the fact that there is no individual leader or conductor either among or independent of the group of fish and birds.

Consider that in the extreme case of the ascetic, even the completely inverted, sick, and artificial drive to retard all drives can actually emerge and be selected to govern. In fact Richardson also distinguishes active versus reactive wills²⁵, which I think is extremely helpful in reconciling the will to power with Nietzsche’s discussion of the ascetic ideal. An active will, wills power, whereas a reactive one wills some other end. Reginster argues that the problem with Richardson’s view is that it can’t explain the thirst, and perpetual dissatisfaction, that goes along with the will to power the way his view can²⁶. Thus he argues that Richardson’s account

²⁵ Richardson NS 39-41.

²⁶ Reginster AL 130.

can't explain why the will to power is never satisfied – for Reginster, it's because it always seeks out new resistances. But on Richardson's view the will to power is driven by perpetual development that will never come to an end – so I don't see why there's any less thirst in Richardson's model than Reginster's. If anything, there's more. In Reginster's model the will to power always seeks out new resistances whereas in Richardson's model it seeks out new goals. Moreover, would Sisyphus not fit Reginster's model of a dissatisfied confrontation with resistance perfectly? I am quite certain that this is not what Nietzsche has in mind. The problem is that Reginster stresses the significance of resistance and neglects the value of ends and goals. I think Richardson's view is much closer to what Nietzsche means than Clark's or Reginster's views. For Nietzsche it is not only resistance that matters but the value and nature of the goals.

ii. The Will to Power and *Eudaimonia*

With respect to Clark I think she is wrong to argue that the will to power is purely a psychological projection by Nietzsche onto nature and nothing more. I think he really did mean that the will to power is present not only in all forms of life – but in a sense, in all of nature too. The way it is expressed may be quite different but I do think we have to take Nietzsche seriously in passages like BGE 36 where he claims: “The world seen from within, the world described and defined according to its ‘intelligible character’ – it would be ‘will to power’ and nothing else”. I believe it is this distinction that Nietzsche tries to capture when he spoke of a ‘life will’ in contrast to the will to power. Nietzsche himself couldn't have been clearer on this issue. In his words, “Where I [Zarathustra] found the living, there I found will to power” (Z II 12). In this way the doctrine is analogous to Aristotle's notion of the three tiers of soul. According to Aristotle anything that is living and a ‘self-mover’ is alive in virtue of having a soul. Soul however has three levels or tiers²⁷. Plants have a soul of nutrition and accordingly *flourishing*²⁸

²⁷ *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I ‘An Account of the Human Good’ Sections 12-13.

is simply consumption of nutrients and growth. Animals have the second level of soul. Like plants they too have a soul of nutrition and must consume in order to grow but unlike plants they possess a higher level – a ‘sensuous’ soul or soul of locomotion. *Flourishing* for an animal is thus not mere consumption and growth but activity and interaction with its environment. Humans possess both a soul of nutrition and a soul of sensation but they also have the third and highest level – namely, a rational soul. So satisfaction of the first two levels is necessary but not sufficient for human happiness; rather, flourishing (or eudaimonia) for humans is a rational activity.

In a similar way I think the best way to understand Nietzsche’s doctrine of the will to power is in terms of a tiered structure. The most basic level is that of organisms, plants, and animals. At this level the will to power is expressed in living things as a continual desire to grow and push the limits of environmental conditions. One of Nietzsche’s favorite metaphors is of trees and the way in which they often threaten their own existence by continuing to grow larger and larger – plunging their roots ever deeper into the soil so that its branches can reach ever higher towards the heavens (Z I “Mountainside”). However the larger they become the more nutrients they require to sustain themselves. And this is not unique to trees of course. Everywhere in nature we find life pushing the envelope. Even in the harshest environments life finds amazing ways to gain a foothold, adapt, and grow. Everywhere from deserts, to the arctic poles, to the depths of the seas, life finds a way to thrive. For instance the giant Saguaro cactus of the southwest can grow over 50 feet tall, emperor penguins of Antarctica and Polar Bears in the north pole survive despite the most inhospitable of conditions, and finally coral has recently been discovered that survives in the darkest abysses of the oceans by feeding off hydrothermal

²⁸ Eudaimonia is the Greek term Aristotle uses frequently in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is typically translated as ‘happiness’ but it also involves strong connotations of ‘flourishing’ and ‘growth’. Where a term like ‘happiness’ is typically understood as passive and episodic, eudaimonia implies an ongoing active state. For instance, so long as one is flourishing at an activity even if elements of it are unpleasant they can still be said to be in a state of eudaimonia (i.e. an athlete engaged in difficult training). All of this makes eudaimonia much more like Nietzsche’s notion of the will to power than traditional notions of happiness.

vents. And of course, at the opposite extreme, where conditions are optimal like the rain forests of South America life teems and thoroughly saturates its environment.

Let us return to the tree example however. Consider the fruit it produces. It takes a considerable amount of energy to create fruit for the purposes of reproducing. And if successful they have merely created a competitor that now threatens their own existence. Yet all life reproduces itself, often at considerable expense and risk for the parent organism. Just consider the amount of energy and care that is required for humans to reproduce. Before modern medicine humans seriously risked their life in order to reproduce. Nevertheless the essence of life according to Nietzsche is the desire to produce something beyond itself. Of the ascetic who hates the body, Nietzsche says “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 4). I maintain that this is the understanding of the will to power Nietzsche articulates in BGE 36 where he concludes by saying that the “intelligible character” of the world is “will to power and nothing beside”. As he describes it in *Zarathustra*:

And life itself confided this secret to me: “Behold,” it said, “I am *that which must always overcome itself*. Indeed, you call it a will to procreate or a drive to an end, to something higher, farther, more manifold: but all this is one, and one secret (Z II 12).

It is not a mere will to live but a will to grow and produce something beyond oneself and one finds this will everywhere in nature²⁹. Nietzsche formulates the very principle itself in opposition to Schopenhauer’s *will to live*. In his words:

The “will to exist”: that will does not exist. For, what does not exist cannot will; but what is in existence, how could that still want existence? Only where there is life is there also will: not will to life but – thus I teach you – will to power.

²⁹ Nietzsche formulated his notion of the will to power in contrast to Schopenhauer’s notion of a will to live. Schopenhauer thought that it was a mere will to continue living that drove us. Nietzsche however argued that it is not a will to continue living that drives us but a will to do, accomplish, and to become ever greater. This involves risk taking and is precisely not the safe path of least resistance through life one would expect of someone only concerned with continual survival.

“There is much that life esteems more highly than life itself; but out of the esteeming itself speaks the will to power” (Z II 12).

Nietzsche also states that “the will to power” is “the unexhausted *procreative* will of life” (Z II 12 [my emphasis]). By this I think he means something external to oneself – for instance, a great book, sculpture, painting, athletic achievement, scientific discovery. However I think this also includes more mundane things as well like one’s legacy or offspring. It’s interesting to note that pregnancy and birth is also one of Nietzsche’s favorite metaphors. For instance, “To be the child who is newly born, the creator must also want to be the mother who gives birth and the pangs of the birth-giver” (Z II 2). The “going under” metaphor frequently employed by Nietzsche in *Zarathustra* seems to suggest a cyclical process of growth and decay followed by new life. In fact he introduces the idea in the prologue to *Zarathustra* by comparing it to the sun going under before returning anew. This mysterious and enigmatic notion of “going under” seems to be the mechanism by which new ideas are produced for *Zarathustra*.

I believe inorganic material also expresses will to power in Nietzsche’s estimation – for instance solar systems and galaxies grow and expand before decaying and producing new ones – but it’s the contrast between human and non-human organisms that’s most important for understanding his use of “natural”. Like with all living things growth and reproduction are important for humans but not everything. The expression of the will to power in fact becomes very complex in the case of humans. Like Richardson I agree that its expression can in fact be corrupted and even inverted. In humans the will to power motivates the expansion and organization of drives. Expressing the will to power for humans thus essentially involves the setting and achievement of ends and goals. As previously discussed I think resistance is important but not the sole desire of the will to power when it comes to achieving goals. But this raises the obvious questions of what ends and why? And what role does resistance really play? Purely in terms of physicality there seem to be three possible models of the will to power in the case of humans. In the *first* model there is lots of resistance but no valuable end. This would be a case like Sisyphus where considerable resistance is overcome but nothing of value is

accomplished. In the *second* model there is resistance but a trivial end. This would be a case like a pie eating contest. Again there is considerable resistance that is overcome but for the sake of a trivial end with no real value. Some may find real value in this accomplishment but most would deem it trivial. In the *third* model there is resistance and an end that is clearly deemed as valuable by most, even if elements of it are admittedly arbitrary. This would be a case like Michael Phelps winning eight gold medals in swimming. Once again there is considerable physical resistance but for the sake of an end that most consider worthwhile. I think it is clear that Nietzsche envisaged the third model. As previously discussed resistance plays a role but can't be understood as the end itself. Whether the end and resistance are physical in nature or intellectual the resistance is only as valuable as the end that is accomplished by overcoming it. So the difference is that while natural organisms do overcome resistance in nature, they do not set ends (trivial or worthwhile), or engage in self-determined projects, in the way that humans do. To be sure, while animals too set and pursue ends,³⁰ compared to the complex types of ends that humans pursue they are utterly trivial. In the same way, while some animals exhibit a modicum of intelligence, compared to the power of the human mind there simply is no comparison. For instance, it's unlikely that even higher primates have ever even entertained the question of how one might go about traveling to the moon and back, let alone accomplished such a task. For humans however, intelligence and rationality allow us to not only engage in broad range of complex projects, but also successfully complete them.

Accordingly what is 'healthy' for lower animals will not be 'healthy' for humans when it comes to the will to power. To again put it in Aristotelian language, the satisfaction of the soul of locomotion and the soul of nutrition is not sufficient for eudaimonia in the case of humans. Also, those tiers of soul involve a narrow range of potential projects. When it comes to the highest tier (the rational), however, the horizon is literally infinite. The problem with the ascetic is that they are too preoccupied with trying to deny the first two tiers of soul (nutrition and

³⁰ These ends are primarily to catch prey, avoid being eaten, migrate, procreate, etc.

locomotion), so that they misuse and neglect their rational soul. Likewise, the problem with the plebeian is that they are fairly content with satisfying the first two tiers of soul and don't fully develop or maximize their rational soul. While this might be a healthy state of eudaimonia for an animal it is not a healthy state for a human – by contrast, the ascetic is positively sick on Nietzsche's view.

Moreover, while I'm sure Nietzsche would agree that physical accomplishments have their place, intellectual and aesthetic accomplishments are of greater worth and importance. But on what basis can Nietzsche privilege intellectual accomplishments over physical? I maintain that it is because it is precisely intelligence that sets us apart from the animals. Many animals can easily outperform us physically, but when it comes to intelligence, compared to even the most intelligent animals, we are gods. Accordingly I think that Nietzsche employs his own version of Aristotle's function argument in order to privilege intellectual accomplishments over physical – if it's our mind that sets us apart from the rest of nature then it is the fruits of our minds that is of utmost value and importance. So it is because human intelligence is so unique and powerful that animals' tasks are rendered trivial in comparison. Similarly, aesthetic accomplishments are also unique to humans and thus deserving of a privileged status.

Nevertheless, when it comes to physical accomplishments, it is interesting to speculate what Nietzsche might say about a perfect steroid that builds muscle mass with no ill side effects. If such a thing existed I think as long as the user utilized his newfound strength in order to achieve worthwhile ends not possible before, Nietzsche would say it would be in concert with a healthy expression of the will to power – since, as I will argue, the doctrine is primarily about growth and development. Otherwise, it would suggest that curing people of polio was wrong because polio creates lots of resistance, in terms of most physical activity, for the patient – which is, again, the problem with Reginster's view. But again, as long as the cured patient uses his new found abilities to accomplish things they couldn't before, this would be a very healthy expression of the will to power. Consider that from the perspective of the polio patient, the cure is, for all intents and purposes, a perfect steroid.

The biggest upshot of contrasting the will to power in humans versus nature is that it allows us to make sense of the idea that there can be unhealthy expressions of the will to power in humans. In Nietzsche's words, "whoever guesses what is my will should also guess on what *crooked* paths it must proceed" (Z II 12). In nature we find mostly healthy expressions of the will to power. In the case of humans however we find a range of expressions of the will to power. The reason for this, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is that there are progressively more complex tiers of the will to power analogous to Aristotle's three tiers of soul, which culminates in the complex form of the human will to power. However, although in the case of humans the unhealthy expressions may be common and in that sense 'natural' it doesn't make them good or desirable. The problem with humans is that it's become common and 'natural' to become unhealthy in various ways ranging from the common/average plebeian to the extreme of the ascetic ideal. If we did not have the expression of the will to power in nature to contrast with humans' expression of the will to power there would be no way to make sense of Nietzsche's claims that the expression of the will to power in humans has become unnatural and unhealthy. So it is only in virtue of this distinction that Nietzsche's claim that what is common in the case of humans is at the same time unnatural and unhealthy.

This is why Richardson's interpretation of the will to power is superior to Clark's. His 'active' versus 'reactive' distinction allows us to make sense of Nietzsche's notions of 'natural' and 'healthy'³¹. Richardson argues:

Nietzsche supposes that some drives 'fall away from' their essence as will to power, failing to achieve one or another element in the full structure we've just surveyed... We must go on to see how will to power can occur in either of two basic forms, which I call 'active' [*aktiv*] and 'reactive' [*reaktiv*] (Richardson NS 39).

³¹ This is especially true of section 1.3 of *Nietzsche's System*. There, Richardson discusses not only 'active' and 'reactive' wills but also 'synthetic' wills, and both 'positive' and 'negative reactive' drives. All of these distinctions will be discussed in connection with the will to power and health and sickness.

According to Richardson, the active will wills power itself and is thus healthy and natural, whereas the reactive will is one that has become misdirected and sick – which is to say it wills something other than power (consider the ascetic) (Richardson NS 40). Without this distinction his notion of the ‘natural’ would ostensibly lose all meaning – especially as it pertains to Nietzsche’s claim that “morality is anti-nature”. I see this as a significant problem for interpretations like Clark’s and Reginster’s as this would render much of Nietzsche’s critique of morality incoherent.

This however raises an important question – why is it that only humans become sick in this way and why is it that the will to power’s expression is only corruptible in the case of humans? To answer this we will need to discuss Richardson’s account in more detail but first I think part of the answer to these questions can be found in the section of *Twilight* entitled “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind”. There, Nietzsche argues that the Dionysian aspect of the will to power takes the form of passion in the case of humans while the Apollonian aspect takes the form of reason. I maintain that, just as in the comparison to the Aristotelian model of the soul where the human’s rational soul is composed of the highest and most complex tier of soul, the Dionysian and Apollonian aspects of the will to power take on a higher and more complex manifestation than anywhere else in nature. This, I maintain, renders them much more susceptible to corruption than more basic and lower expressions. So, to streamline the point, you don’t find reason and human passion anywhere in nature except in humans; and accordingly, you don’t find their corruption anywhere else in nature. And in *Twilight*, Nietzsche proceeds to argue that many have endeavored to ‘improve’ human nature by toying around under the hood and attempting to redirect reason and passion. In the simplest terms, the Dionysian desire for power gets hijacked in the service of an alleged ‘higher’ type of ‘power’ that attempts to gain an advantage through sacrifice, self-denial, and asceticism. Likewise the Apollonian desire for reason and knowledge gets hijacked in the service of an alleged ‘higher’ type of knowledge and reason – namely faith. Consider that because animals lack rationality they are utterly incapable of self-control when it comes to delayed gratification. We of course are capable of such things,

but the dangerous downside is that we can become victims of these abilities if they become perverted. The logic behind the ascetic is a form of self-tyranny that goes something like this – “delayed gratification is better than immediate gratification, therefore denied gratification must be better than both.”

In so far as this tyranny fights against what is strong and natural it is a kind of sickness – especially in the case of B moralities³². To put it another way, such tyranny opposes the essence of life according to Nietzsche, which is the will to power, which is, in essence, growth. So when Nietzsche talks of instincts in this context he means instincts of *life* in general rather than uniquely human instincts – which, as previously discussed in connection with Aristotle, can be *both* healthy as well as unhealthy. The instincts of life however are always healthy. So although in certain circumstances the healthy expression of the will to power might not be common (i.e. when slave morality is dominant) it is still healthy, and natural.

Under the influence of slave morality, the individual becomes weak while the herd itself becomes collectively strong. As a result, prudential norms are often at odds with moral norms. Thus the natural desire to express the will to power and become a self-actualized agent has the potential to be corrupted and instead become a desire to be commanded from without (which will be discussed in detail in connection with Richardson). Accordingly, I do agree with Hurka that Nietzsche is a kind of perfectionist³³. As Hurka explains, Nietzsche does not hold a strong teleological perfectionism because this tendency for corruption is at odds with a Hegelian optimistic view – which maintains that the dialectical process will always ensure success. However, it is simply not the case that people always pursue the maximization of power. Instead, as Hurka persuasively argues, we always exercise power through the pursuit of goals; however, the goals we select may not maximize power. Again, this is certainly evident in the case of the ascetic. Everyone may start out like a child at play³⁴ (Z I “Metamorphoses”), but

³² This subject was first discussed in section one of chapter 1.

³³ Hurka “Nietzsche: Perfectionist” (2007) in Leiter and Sinhababu (2007) *Nietzsche and Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) [NP].

³⁴ Nietzsche’s allegory is likely also a reference to Heraclitus’ claim that, “History is a child building a sandcastle by the sea, and that child is the whole majesty of man’s power in the world.”

once exposed to the artificial desire of the ascetic ideal some become hooked on it like a drug³⁵. Just consider the way that artificial desires (like nicotine, alcohol, or heroin) are often more powerful than natural desires (like the desire for food and water). Likewise the will to power in humans often becomes polluted and in this way unhealthy. Despite the fact that the heroin junkie chases ephemeral pleasure, while the ascetic seeks to avoid and repress both pleasure and the desire for it, what they have in common is that their respective pleasure seeking vs. pleasure avoidance desires are equally artificial and unnatural. The junkie pursues unnatural sources of pleasure, while the ascetic attempts to shut down the natural sources of pleasure. As Nietzsche puts it in *Zarathustra*, “Verily, a polluted stream is man. One must be a sea to be able to receive a polluted stream without becoming unclean” (Z Prologue 3). In this way the overman is like the ‘natural’, clean, and healthy sea that is able to resist the corrupting influences of *ressentiment* and the bad conscience. However, it may be the case that there are types that simply can’t do better than the ascetic ideal once exposed to it. Another intriguing question, which will be the topic of Chapter 4 is, did a figure like the Apostle Paul possess an *active* or *reactive* will?

Returning to Richardson, as previously discussed he frames this distinction in terms of active and reactive wills. According to Richardson, “The distinction rests on the notion of will to power: the active drive wills power itself, whereas the reactive has somehow turned aside from its essential end”³⁶. So reactive wills may be more common in the case of humans but that doesn’t make them ‘natural’ or healthy. “Life is will to power” (BGE 259) even if its expression can be corrupted in the case of humans. And again, human instincts might not always be in concert with the natural instincts of nature. Nevertheless, Nietzsche argues, “Life itself is to my mind the instinct for growth, for durability, for an accumulation of forces, for power: where the will to power is lacking there is decline” (A 6). Though Nietzsche is a bit confusing with his use

³⁵ Nietzsche does offer an account of the allure of the ascetic ideal but for our present purposes we will not explore it here. It will however be discussed in Chapter 3.

³⁶ Richardson NS 39.

of terms I maintain that he identifies ‘natural’ values with a process of purposively³⁷ structuring, managing, and expanding drives. In Nietzsche’s words:

Greater complexity, sharp differentiation, the contiguity of developed organs and functions with the disappearance of the intermediate members – if that is perfection, then there is a will to power in the organic process by virtue of which dominant, shaping, commanding forces continually extend these bounds of their power and continually simplify within these bounds: the imperative grows (WP 644).

And again this passage from *Beyond Good and Evil* makes the same point:

Life itself is essentially appropriation, injury, overpowering of the strange and weaker, suppression, severity, imposition of one’s own forms, incorporation and, at the least and mildest, exploitation (BGE 259).

‘Unnatural’ values, by contrast, are those that are reactionary and hostile to the healthy expression of the will to power. So values are best understood as the ends of wills; and healthy values are those that promote growth and progress. Accordingly I agree with Hurka that the strong teleological view of the will to power with respect to humans must be rejected because it simply is not the case that all or even most people possess this attitude nor do all people work to expand power and their will. This is acutely evident in the case of the ascetic ideal. Although it should be pointed out that Nietzsche thinks there could actually be good and even healthy forms of the asceticism in the case of the philosopher. Nietzsche states:

The philosopher sees in it [asceticism] an optimum condition for the highest and boldest spirituality and smiles – he does not deny “existence,” he rather affirms his existence, and this perhaps to the point at which he is not far from harboring the impious wish: Let the world perish, but let there be philosophy, the philosopher, *me!* (GM III 7).

³⁷ In this context ‘purposively’ refers to a *teleological* or *ordered* process rather than an overtly *conscious* process. It is one thing to engage with structured values; but another thing to be aware of the process at a meta/self-aware level.

In other words there are certain forms of asceticism, or self-sacrifice, that are for the sake of some great task or end – like devoting oneself exclusively to philosophical inquiry. This is very different from the suicidal nihilism that motivates the ascetic ideal to shut down and retard all drives just for the sake of doing so. Focusing entirely on one end and one goal at the cost of others can thus still be a healthy expression of the will to power.

In addition to active and reactive wills, Richardson goes on to discuss what he calls “synthetic” wills. He argues that simple wills to power actually combine themselves and form complex “synthetic” wills³⁸. Especially in the case of humans, the will is not a singular or simple thing but rather a complex economy of competing wills and drives (BGE 36). So Richardson’s interpretation of this corruption, quite rightly, emphasizes the complexity of human drives and desires. In Richardson’s words, “Human beings are distinguished simply by bearing more such drives, and drives that are opposed to one another. Not only is there no detached theoretical subject standing above this struggle among our drives, there is also no preexisting “overwill”³⁹. Accordingly, Richardson argues that the will to power essentially involves competing wills – individual wills try to co-op other wills. Thus the will to power can never be satisfied, not because it seeks out a new resistance every time one is overcome as Reginster would argue, but because living things just are collections of competing wills. Due to the uniquely complex form of the will to power in humans, we must organize and negotiate competing drives in setting ends and goals. In Nietzsche’s words, “The price of fruitfulness is to be rich in internal opposition” (TI “Anti-nature” 5). Accordingly, Richardson argues that there is no real ‘doer’ behind the deed; rather a person is just a successive series of balancing points and equilibriums that is continually undergoing changes. A human then is just the ongoing chemistry of these competing simple wills to power⁴⁰. Accordingly, these patterns of activity can play themselves out in all sorts of ways. Some will be more full of harmony among wills than others.

³⁸ Richardson NS 44-45.

³⁹ Richardson NS 46.

⁴⁰ Richardson NS 45.

And this, I argue, is what determines the relative health or sickness of any given ‘individual’. As the following passages make clear Nietzsche rejects any notions of a ‘pure’ or ‘simple’ will wholesale: “Observe the strangest thing of all about the will – about this so complex thing for which people have only *one* word: inasmuch as in the given circumstances we at the same time will command *and* obey...” (BGE 19). “In real life it is a question only of *strong* and *weak* wills” (BGE 21). According to Nietzsche’s view a human will is thus best understood as a complex economy of competing wills – more like a corporation than a dictatorship. Thus Nietzsche rejects all classic models of the will that treat it as a single entity that is free and also transparent to itself.

So, given the complexities of human psychology, there can be both *strong* as well as *weak* wills (BGE 21), and wills that desire to be *self-commanding* as well as wills that desire to be *commanded from without* (BGE 19) – which is to say, wills can flourish to varying degrees. I maintain that only the former cases exist in nature whereas in humans the latter cases are possible. In nature, an animal simply acts on what its strongest drive is. But people are best understood as a large constitutive of disparate drives and wills. The wills however don’t themselves have wills – they are just drives. On this point I once again offer my flock of birds and school of fish analogy. This however may suggest that human volition is distinct from animal volition only in that humans are prone to *akrasia*. Admittedly there may be a kernel of truth to this view, but it is too simple and insufficient to properly capture the complex nuances of Nietzsche’s model of human volition and agency. However, rather than engaging in a detailed discussion of models of *akrasia*, for our present purposes it is sufficient to observe that for Nietzsche there are both strong and weak wills.

The weak will can occur in the very extreme form of the ascetic or the moderate form of the plebeian herd but in either case it is the product of traditional forms of morality. He clearly contrasts morality with what he calls the “natural” expression of the will to power. But what Nietzsche means by ‘natural’ in the case of values and the will to power is not simply what is common or pervasive. In his words, to reiterate a point from the previous chapter, “Every

naturalism in morality – that is, every healthy morality – is dominated by an instinct of life... *Anti-natural* morality... turns, conversely, against the instincts of life. It is condemnation of these instincts...” (TI “Anti-nature” 5). So again it is clear that Nietzsche describes ‘unnatural’ moral values as those which are reactionary and hostile to what is instinctual, which is to say, they are values that are tyrannical and a “negation of the will to life” (TI “Anti-nature” 5). So the point is, it’s not the case that there is a simple continuum of the will to power’s expression ranging from the strong free spirit that expands, organizes, and satisfies drives, and the ascetic ideal who works to shut down and retard all drives – with various degrees of weak wills⁴¹ in between.

Returning, however, to the active/reactive distinction, Richardson observes that it parallels Nietzsche’s master/slave morality distinction, but he is careful to point out that active versus reactive does not mean caused from within versus without the way one might assume. It’s not as simple as a free will versus a controlled will. As previously discussed Nietzsche in fact rejects the traditional notions of free will and the notion of mechanical causation in the will. According to Richardson there is a second axis to the expression of the will to power, which belongs to the reactive forms of its expression – both of which are actually rooted in weakness. *First*, there is the *positive reactive* will that internalizes and takes over the other’s values by adopting them – represented by the herd instinct and slave morality. And *second*, there is the *negative reactive* will that internalizes and takes over others’ values by rebelling against them – represented by the man of resentment and the malcontents. In Richardson’s words:

A drive ‘obeys’ foreign forces even in reacting against them; it obeys by taking over their values, whether positively *or negatively*. When a drive takes its task as the struggle against what some other is, it still sets its sights by reference to that other and is still diverted from its own development (Richardson NS 41).

⁴¹ These weak wills obey other’s values while not internalizing them. In other words they become completely heteronomous.

Richardson argues that the model of obeying in the case of the weak and reactive wills is not causally mechanical but rather the internalization of another will's values⁴². He maintains that a reactive will has this tendency to internalize and adopt the others' values⁴³. So in the *positive* way one simply adopts the other's values and obeys them; Richardson identifies this as the *herd* individual. In the *negative* way the will rebels against the other's values but begins to define itself and its values in direct contrast to the other's values. Richardson identifies this as the man of *resentment* and argues that the act of rebellion diverts one from their own interests such that the other still has control over them in an indirect way⁴⁴. They don't choose and affirm their values for their own sakes but because they are the antithesis of other's values. For instance there is the case of the extreme malcontent where the individual tries to violate every possible taboo. Such a case is the exact opposite of the ascetic who seeks to retard all drives. But ironically such an individual, despite all their rebelling, is actually still defined by the norms and taboos of society – just in a negative way. Accordingly their expansion and satisfaction of drives is less like a healthy natural growth, and more like the chaotic expansion and growth of cancer. So Nietzsche's ideal of the liberated free spirit who seeks power and the expansion of drives is not simply the antithesis of the ascetic ideal. Control is involved in both but the former involves development, growth, and productivity, and the latter does not. Thus, self control and order are in fact essential ingredients in the healthy expression of the will to power in humans. So while self-control and style are completely absent in the will to power's expression in nature, they are fundamentally involved in its expression in humans. Both the ascetic as well as the man of resentment, in different ways, poses a negative reactionary will in Richardson's analysis. Unlike the cancerous or suppressed will, or animal's will to power, the healthy forms of the will to power in humans are active and "pregnant with a future" (GM II 16). Once again, to draw on Richardson's analysis, an active will wills power, whereas a reactive one wills some other end.

⁴² Richardson NS 40-41.

⁴³ This issue will be specifically discussed in chapter 3 in connection with the will to be commanded.

⁴⁴ Richardson NS 42.

The weak will however is slightly different from either of these cases. The weak will internalizes and follows the values of the other but does not adopt them or consider them superior to their own the way the herd individual does. Given the opportunity the weak-willed individual will reassert their values in a way that the herd individual will not. This is more or less Richardson's view and I think his analysis is correct and allows us to make sense of the different types of wills Nietzsche identifies. Of the active will, Richardson says, "the active will keeps allegiance to itself and to the values favoring its own activities... The active will commands others 'internally', by interpreting them and their values from the viewpoint of its own, thus granting them only a subordinate role in a world still revolving about itself"⁴⁵. Simply put, the active will never allows its values to be deflected by, or subordinate to, another's.

One concern I have with regard to Richardson's treatment of the active will is that it seems dogmatic with respect to its values. If the goal is always development and growth, then there has to be an element of plasticity to one's values. One has to be willing and able to change and replace old values with new ones. This plasticity can be a conscious change (as in the case of a religious conversion like St Augustine) or a subconscious reconfiguration of drives (as in the case of someone who is brainwashed or joins a cult). In the simplest terms this plasticity (for good or for bad) means that no one is locked into any set of values in an absolute way. With regard to conscious change, initially, this might require looking to others and examining their values, and even imitating them along the lines of the Aristotelian virtue model. All of this seems excluded by Richardson's model, however, given his insistence that the active will must *always* favor its values⁴⁶. The very problem with slave morality is that it often values its values just for the sake of valuing. By contrast, master morality is supposed to be about valuing the right values that promote health and growth. Accordingly, any kind of dogmatic faith in one's values could seriously undermine this process. The active will must be able to consider and assess the values of others and be open to the possibility of adopting them. In no way does this

⁴⁵ Richardson NS 42.

⁴⁶ Richardson NS 42.

entail that they become subordinate to the other or their values. The active will is always free to adopt or reject the other's values. Richardson's model however seems to exclude this. In his book *Nietzsche's New Darwinism*, Richardson describes the active will as being 'self selecting' with regard to its values⁴⁷. In his words, "Superhuman value = the goal of a responsive behavior, self selected to serve oneself"⁴⁸; but this process should not be understood as dogmatic in nature. One must be allowed to self-select others' values for their own.

This issue aside, Richardson concludes, "Nietzsche thinks that conscious wills tend to be *reactive*, whereas simpler, non-human wills are more easily and usually active"⁴⁹. This comment squares very nicely with our previous discussion of the will to power in nature versus the will to power in humans. Now we can make sense of the notion that the *natural* and *healthy* expression of the will to power is the *active* expression, as seen in nature, even if the *reactive* expression is the norm for human beings. The fundamental difference is that an active will wills power, and a reactive will wills some other end (i.e. the ascetic does not will power but the sublimation of all drives). This is why Nietzsche is always ironic in his discussion of the "improvers" of mankind. They react to the healthy expression of the will to power in humans and oppose it. So "improvers" versus improvers refers to those who make humans sick versus those who promote their health (TI "Improvers"). The ascetic ideal is the extreme of this and rather than promoting the growth and expansion of drives, it simply pits all drives against each other. Nietzsche describes the subsequent feeling caused by the reactive corruption of the will to power as the "bad conscience" and clearly thinks that it was unique to humans. In his words:

All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward* – this is what I call the *internalization* of man: thus it was that man first developed what was later called his "soul".

⁴⁷ Richardson (2004) *Nietzsche's New Darwinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 95 [NND].

⁴⁸ Richardson NND 96.

⁴⁹ Richardson NND 43.

Hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction – all this turned against the possessors of such instincts: *that* is the origin of the “bad conscience” (GM II 16).

The corruption of the instinctual expression of the will to power in humans causes one to pit drives against each other in a sick attempt to retard and shut down the drives that are at odds with the interests of society and the herd – resulting in the “bad conscience”. The psychological strategy is to get the majority of wills that serve self-growth to acquiesce to the minority of wills that serve self-sacrifice – this is the essence of the slave revolt.

Note that within Christian morality much of what is considered natural and healthy according to Nietzsche becomes considered evil and sinful as the moral categories ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are replaced with ‘good’ and ‘evil’. However none of this should come as a surprise. There is no organism more complex than humans – which means there are many more ways in which its will to power can go wrong and become unnatural and sick. So all the attempts to ‘improve’ or ‘tame’ or ‘modify’ human nature will be at odds with the healthy instincts and accordingly they will always lead to a corruption of the will to power. Once again this is clearly a phenomenon unique to humans according to Nietzsche:

The man who, from lack of external enemies and resistances and forcibly confined to the oppressive narrowness and punctiliousness of custom, impatiently lacerated, persecuted, gnawed at, assaulted, and maltreated himself; this animal that rubbed itself raw against the bars of its cage as one tried to “tame” it... Let us add at once that, on the other hand, the existence on earth of an animal soul turned against itself, taking sides against itself, was something so new, profound, unheard of, enigmatic, contradictory, and *pregnant with a future* that the aspect of the earth was essentially altered (GM II 16).

So it is only in contrast to the active will to power found in nature that one can make sense of Nietzsche’s claim that the will to power as expressed in humans is often sick and unnatural. The “improvers” caused man to turn against the “old instincts” of nature such that the “animal soul turned against itself”.

In the final analysis, the will to power may be the essence of life but it is far from immune to corruption. Here I mean ‘natural’ in the sense employed by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*. There Nietzsche likens the process of creation and destruction expressed by the will to power to Heraclitus’ notion of a child playing in the sand. He says of this force that it is like “a playing child who sets down stones here, there, and the next place, and who builds up piles of sand only to knock them down again” (BT 24). So there is a kind of innocence to the child’s play. They naturally delight equally in creation as destruction and in this way beautifully express the will to power in its most basic form. So “natural” (or *active* will) in this sense means a state prior to any corruptive influences. To repeat Richardson’s words, “an active will keeps allegiance to itself and to the values favoring its own activities” (Richardson NS 42). Consider how utterly foreign and bizarre the notion of the ascetic ideal would be to a young child. Nietzsche also uses the child metaphor in *Zarathustra* when he talks about the three metamorphoses. He says, “the spirit becomes a camel; and the camel, a lion; and the lion, finally, a child” (Z I 1). The ideal here seems to be to return to this natural innocence and overcome corrupting influences. In fact, this is one of the ways in which Nietzsche diagnoses the ascetic ideal – it’s an inverted and *corrupted* expression of the will to power.

Here we can distinguish between the “improvers” of mankind (e.g. the Apostle Paul⁵⁰) from the improvers of the conditions that serve the interests of the potential higher types (e.g. Nietzsche). So it is not the case that Nietzsche is guilty of the very thing he criticizes – i.e. attempts to modify human nature. He is attempting to correct the corruption caused by reactive slave moralities to create conditions that were damaging to the potential healthy higher types. Here Nietzsche is himself being reactive but he is not being hypocritical. The difference is he is trying to steer humanity back to the original focal point. As BGE 260 makes clear, Nietzsche understood the fundamental difference between the values he espouses and the values he despises in terms of the fact that the former were original and active while the latter were

⁵⁰ The Apostle Paul will be the main subject of chapter 4. It will draw heavily from Nietzsche’s discussion of Paul in his book *The Antichrist*.

derivative, negative, and reactive – which is to say, the former are healthy while the latter are sick.

It should be noted that Nietzsche also offers an account of this sort of corruption that specifically attributes it to social forces. For instance, in the *Genealogy* he states: “I regard the bad conscience as the serious illness that man was bound to contract under the stress which occurred when he found himself finally enclosed within the walls of society and peace” (GM I 16). However, I would argue that these forces produce only the most basic forms of a bad conscience. The attempt to “improve” mankind is almost exclusively a religious endeavor. With various religions, the proverbial ‘walls’ become even tighter and more confining. I think this distinction is clear in the section “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” in *Twilight*. There, Nietzsche offers a series of examples of this attempted improvement. He discusses religious endeavors to “breed” and “tame” a better human. There he focuses on India’s “Law of Manu” and contrasts it with Christianity’s attempted improvements and it is evident he considers the latter the much pernicious case. So while social forces can produce early forms of a bad conscience, it is religious forces that exploit the bad conscience and literally try to modify human nature through moral value systems. What these moral systems are in fact doing, to borrow Richardson’s terminology, is disrupting the balance of what are otherwise naturally balanced ‘activity patterns’ and equilibriums of synthetic wills.

Finally, there is one more significant way in which the will to power is unique in the case of humans. Nietzsche argues that goal setting, growth, and overcoming involve an element of style⁵¹. Such activities, according to Nietzsche, are often a process of turning what is ugly into something beautiful (GS 299). In his words:

One thing is needful – to “give style” to one’s character... It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into

⁵¹ This element of style sets humans apart from other animals. Though many animals exhibit teleological behavior (nest building, hunting, migrating etc.) the element of style goes beyond all such activities. For Nietzsche, it is more than just satisfying drives, it is the process of organizing drives – and this is clearly something unique to humans.

an artistic plan until everyone of them appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye (GS 290).

“Style” here seems to mean a configuration of will that establishes the order and rank of drives and values. Nietzsche goes on to describe this “style” precisely as a self-given restraint and concludes: “It will be strong and domineering natures that enjoy their finest gaiety in such constraint and perfection under a law of their own” (GS 290). A person is nothing but an economy of wills and style renders some wills subordinate to others. So while there is no aesthetic style to the will to power’s expression in nature (except for what we project onto it), aesthetic style and taste are an essential part of its expression in humans. In this manner strength as well as weakness, good taste as well as bad, and beauty as well as ugliness, can all be expressed. So the cases of the man of resentment and the malcontent discussed earlier are best understood as cases that lack of self-control and style, and express themselves in ugliness. In Nietzsche’s words, “It is the weak without power over themselves that *hate* the constraint of style... Whoever is dissatisfied with himself is continually ready for revenge, and we others will be his victims, if only by having to endure his ugly sight. For the sight of what is ugly makes one bad and gloomy” (GS 290). As Kaufmann correctly observes in a footnote to this passage, Nietzsche identifies self-control and style with power, and a lack of self-control and style with weakness. So the range of strong and weak wills discussed earlier can be understood in terms of style and the degree to which one is self-commanding. In Nietzsche’s words, “It will be the strong and domineering natures that enjoy their finest gaiety in such constraint and of perfection under a law of their own” (GS 290). Nietzsche maintains that strong wills are active wills that flourish and grow and this requires that they are “rich in internal opposition” (TI “Anti-nature” 5). Nietzsche also declares, “The price of fruitfulness is to be rich in internal opposition... One has renounced the great life when one renounces war” (A 3). I submit that passages like these refer to a kind of dialectical struggle within oneself that is driven by one’s style. Weak wills are chaotic ones that are lacking in internal opposition – instead of being internally driven they react

to external stimuli. This form of opposition however does not facilitate growth – rather only perpetual conflict for the sake of conflict.

So the extreme malcontent is actually a weak-willed individual fundamentally frustrated with themselves, and precisely *not* the liberated free spirit they desperately profess themselves to be. They are not free at all but actually a kind of slave. While they might interpret their “wild, arbitrary, fantastic, disorderly, and surprising” nature as free and beautiful, it is actually weak and ugly according to Nietzsche (GS 290). Such individuals may in fact be satisfying certain base drives but it is done so in such an unbridled, chaotic, and destructive manner that it is not actually an expression of strength but of weakness – which is to say, a lack of self-control is not liberation and doesn’t constitute a style at all.

Accordingly, this weakness causes agents to always be out to *prove* something rather than *be* something. The goals they set and the drives they pursue are not chosen for their own sakes but are chosen purely as an act of rebellion – here again the extreme malcontent ironically becomes defined by the norms they rebel against. So, as previously discussed, there is an irony to the malcontent; by rebelling against all the norms of society in an attempt to defy them, they are still defined by those norms in a negative way. Take the very extreme case of G.G. Allin for instance⁵². He had drives of course; and desired first and foremost to satisfy certain ones. But, far from a bad style, he simply lacked any style at all. By all accounts he lived more like an animal than a human. So he could hardly be said to have flourished. Rather than internal opposition that spurred growth, he was consumed with external opposition that retarded it. And again, the irony is that, for all his talk of being a liberated free spirit, he was defined negatively by all the norms of society that he systematically and comprehensively tried to violate. However, it’s easy to see how Nietzsche’s notion of the will to power could be misunderstood when it comes to the malcontent. One could assume that such a malcontent is the opposite of the

⁵² G.G. Allin was a notorious early 90’s “musician” who broke nearly every social taboo and norm imaginable and eventually died of a drug overdose after a truncated life of unbridled indulgence and excess. He is the subject of a 1994 documentary called *Hated* by director Todd Phillips who, at the time, was an NYU film student.

ascetic ideal and must then be expressing the will to power in a healthy way. In this way it's easy to make a caricature of Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power and use that as a basis for a straw man argument against it. However, as this chapter has hopefully made clear, these types of objections are superficial and ill-formed.

Chapter III: Slave Morality and Self-Punishment: the Need to be Commanded

This chapter will analyze the rich and complex psychological mechanisms at work in slave moralities, and the need to be commanded that drives them. We will focus specifically on the sickness produced by slave moralities and other anti-natural moralities mentioned in the previous chapter. Slave moralities (or B morality discussed in Chapter 1), according to Nietzsche, are the products of what he calls “slave revolts”, in which a reactive and oppressed group establishes new values that corrupt the natural and healthy drives in an attempt to empower themselves. B moralities utilize the value schema of ‘good’ and ‘evil’, and assert that their values are absolute and therefore superior to all other sets of values or moralities. Although, as I will later argue, there are different types of slave morality, the primary one Nietzsche discusses in the *Genealogy* is the priestly revolt that gave rise to Christianity in which the plebeian herd reacted⁵³ to the noble elite types and produced a new moral system and table of values – culminating in what Nietzsche calls the “ascetic ideal”. I maintain that slave moralities such as this essentially involve a complicated desire to be commanded from without.

i. The Desire to be Commanded

While it seems completely counter-intuitive, I maintain that the ascetic ideal is in fact a closeted form of autonomy – wanting to want to be commanded. This makes it different from common notions of heteronomy. In everyday terms, under certain conditions, people are willing to submit to the will of another in exchange for some higher good. For instance, an employee submits to the will of his or her boss, a soldier follows the orders of his or her commanders, and patients adhere to the recommendations of their doctor. So how is the psychology of slave moralities different from these rather straightforward forms of heteronomy? *First*, I maintain that slave

⁵³ In this context there is a double meaning to ‘reactive’. First, it refers to the ‘external stimuli’ (i.e. the nobles) described in GM I 10. Second, it also refers to the fact that the herd as a group develop reactive wills.

morality is not just another form of heteronomy at all, but a unique and complicated psychological state that actually consists of a perverted form of autonomy. *Second*, it's distinct from forms of heteronomy in two key ways. *First*, in slave moralities the agent does not simply choose to acquiesce or submit to another's will; rather they desire to actually supplant their own will with the other's. *Second*, the agent is motivated to do this not for the sake of some higher ends deemed more important than one's immediate interests; instead, they actually submit to a mentality that allows them to serve interests that are actually contrary to their natural drives such that their various drives become redirected. In other words, their wills are no longer active (willing power itself) but rather become reactive (desiring some other end – in this case, the desire to be commanded and have their natural drives sublimated). In this way it is sick according to Nietzsche – the agent perceives the submission of their will as a strength, and the enslavement of their will as a liberation. It is self-perpetuating, and gets the healthy and strong parts of the will to serve the sick and weak parts. So it is a sickness that produces disharmony. Thus while this tendency is common in humans it is not natural. Specifically it creates conflicting and irreconcilable psychological forces that render the agent, in Gemes' terms, a non-integrated subject⁵⁴. Although Gemes acknowledges passages like “our body is but a social structure composed of many souls” (BGE 26) he argues that unity is the ultimate goal:

Nietzsche's attack on essentialist dogmatic metaphysics is in fact a call to engage in a purposive self creation under a unifying will... The de-centered self celebrated by the postmodernists is for Nietzsche the self-conception of the nihilistic Last Man. The construction of a unified self is the goal of Nietzsche's Overman (Gemes PUAN 339).

As Gemes correctly observes, it's clearly the distinct Cartesian or Kantian subject, doer behind the deed, that Nietzsche rejects. In contrast an agent is constituted by an economy of wills. Accordingly, non-integrated versus unified self is not to be understood as a weak confused will versus an autonomous will; but rather, it is a chaotic arrangement of wills versus an expansive

⁵⁴ Gemes (2001) "Postmodernism's Use and Abuse of Nietzsche" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LXII/2: 337-360 [PUAN].

and organized economy of wills. Recall the discussion in the previous chapter of the will to power, and G.G. Allin and the case of the extreme malcontent. Again, it is not enough for Nietzsche that wills are satisfied. As discussed in the previous chapter, there must also be an element of style that gives one character and organizes drives (GS 290).

This helps us to better understand Nietzsche's claim that morality is anti-nature. The natural forces meant to process and digest *ressentiment*⁵⁵ are corrupted such that they actually produce more *ressentiment* in the agent. In Nietzsche's words: "The ascetic ideal springs from the protective instinct of a degenerating life" (GM III 13). As we will see, in slave moralities, the desire to punish others becomes a desire to punish oneself. In Nietzsche's words, "all religions are at the deepest level systems of cruelties" (GM II 3). Here it's important to note that, while there are different forms of slave moralities (to be discussed later), the slave morality that gave birth to Christianity is a unique one (for reasons to be discussed) and the specific subject of Nietzsche's *Genealogy* and the following analysis.

But this raises an immediate question: if the desire to be commanded is sick and unnatural why is it so common? What motivates it? And why would one want to redirect their drives at all? I maintain that its appeal stems from, for lack of a better way to put it, psychological economics. Submission to commands is a highly effective mechanism to deal with stress, anxiety, and responsibility. When one finds oneself in ordinary and common circumstances there is a well tested and proven play book to follow and clear rules to abide by. As such, so long as one follows the rules, in the off chance that one still fails in achieving their ends they can blame the rules and not themselves for the failure. By contrast, there is nothing more stressful than finding oneself in exceptional circumstances where there is no playbook, or ready to hand rules to follow. In such a situation one has neither clear rules to follow nor an automatic scapegoat should they fail – which is to say, one becomes fully responsible. In this context the rules are absent precisely where they are needed the most. In his article "What is

⁵⁵ The topic of *ressentiment* was tentatively discussed in Chapter 2.

Moral Maturity?” Hubert Dreyfus⁵⁶ argues that a novice in any complex situation is in desperate need of rules in order to perform. The problem is that a novice is literally crippled by a surplus of options and possibilities. It is this sort of novice status that I would argue creates the legalistic vacuum that the plebeians fear and the nobles embrace⁵⁷.

However, it is in just such circumstances that the higher types thrive and flourish, while the average and plebeian suffer and fail. Now, if one grants Nietzsche's elitist claim that the plebeian types are common while the noble and higher types are rare, then it becomes obvious why this need to be commanded is so common and persuasive even if it is unnatural. The need to be commanded is a product of the common plebeians trying to deal with this legalistic vacuum. The strategy is this: if we can invent rules where rules are absent then we can better deal with the stress and anxiety that such circumstances produce by dispersing blame over a wider circumference. This, if nothing else, produces at least a semblance of control from the perspective of the agent. Or better still, this will to be commanded promises to prevent one from ever even finding themselves in such stressful circumstances so long as they follow the rules. Accordingly this desire to be commanded systematically produces rules that aim to keep everything common and average – which is to say, predictable:

The task of breeding an animal with the right to make promises evidently embraces and presupposes as a preparatory task that one first *makes* men to a certain degree necessary, uniform, like among like, regular, and consequently calculable... With the aid of the morality of mores and the social straitjacket, man was actually *made* calculable (GM II 2).

However effective or non-effective these mechanisms prove to be in practice takes a back seat to the promise of power these strategies offer to the common and plebeian types. As such these psychological strategies are inherently appealing to the average plebeian types but are distasteful

⁵⁶ Dreyfus, Hubert (1992) “What is Moral Maturity? A Phenomenological Account of the Development of Ethical Expertise” in J Ogilvy *Revisioning Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press).

⁵⁷ As discussed in Chapter 2, there may be social forces that initially create the bad conscience (GM II 16) but I maintain that the attempt to improve mankind that really exploit the bad conscience are almost exclusively the product of religions introducing ever-stricter rules to govern human behavior and interactions.

to the higher noble types. However, since the plebeians are much more common so too is this psychological tendency. Once again, though this tendency is common it is, nevertheless, not natural.

Turning specifically to the ascetic and the desire to be commanded, the rules alleviate suffering and make life more manageable by establishing a context of meaning wherein the alleged causes of suffering are identified and addressed. The enemy and cause of guilt is once again singled out and focused on. It is those pesky instincts once again. They are to blame – they are the ‘flesh’ and the cause of all sin. The dichotomy of the priest’s ‘good’ and ‘evil’ categories is correlated with the categories ‘spirit’ and ‘flesh’. War was declared on the instincts and passions in order to liberate the ‘spirit’.

Formerly, in view of the element of stupidity in passion, war was declared on passion itself, its destruction was plotted; all the old moral monsters are agreed on this: *il faut tuer les passions* [the passions must be killed]... but an attack on the roots of passion means an attack on the roots of life: the practice of the church is *hostile to life* (TI “Anti-nature” 1).

In the final analysis it is this war against the instincts and passions that causes the bad conscience that serves as the fuel for the *ressentiment* machine of the ascetic’s slave morality (HAH 141). It’s a sickness in which the will to power turns on itself and life. These psychological forces have a profound effect on the expression of the will to power. In the service of this psychological value structure, the natural desire to expand drives becomes the unhealthy and unnatural desire to be commanded. Once again, even though this desire is common, that doesn't make it natural. Again, if one grants Nietzsche's claim that the plebeian types are common while the noble and higher types are rare, then it is not surprising why this desire is so common and persuasive even if it is unnatural. All of this is rooted in a kind of psychological sickness and weakness according to Nietzsche. Here again, it’s important to stress that it is a holistic system that stands or falls together and has God as its cornerstone, and

paradoxically it is predicated on the idea that man cannot know what is in his real best interest.

This leads to the closeted autonomy that wants to be commanded. In Nietzsche's words:

Christianity presupposes that man does not know, *cannot* know, what is good for him, what evil: he believes in God, who alone knows it. Christian morality is a command; its origin is transcendent; it is beyond all criticism, all right to criticism; it has truth only if God is truth – it stands or falls with faith in God (TI “Untimely Man” 5).

A powerful need to be commanded accompanies the need to believe. This is because, in the agent's sick psychological state they require a special mechanism to digest and process the bad conscience and the unique guilt produced by sin. Recall that the bad conscience itself is a product of the redirecting of *ressentiment*, guilt, and the instincts. Rather than being released outwardly, they are redirected inward at oneself – which in turn creates the guilt of sin. In Nietzsche's words:

All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward* – this is what I call the *internalization* of man: thus it was that man first developed what was later called his “soul”... Those fearful bulwarks with which the political organization protected itself against the old instincts of freedom – punishments belong among these bulwarks – brought about that all those instincts of wild, free, prowling man turned backward *against man himself*. Hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in change, in destruction – all this turned against the possessors of such instincts: *that* is the origin of the “bad conscience” (GM II 16).

This, I maintain, is where the need to be commanded comes from. It's in place even at the level of the *morality of mores* (discussed in Chapter 1) in terms of dealing with *ressentiment*, but culminates in the ascetic ideal that accompanies slave moralities – for this reason he states that the origins of the bad conscience are rooted in the *morality of mores*. I maintain that Nietzsche sees this desire to be commanded as a necessary, though not sufficient, characteristic of morality that is present at the level of a *morality of mores* and culminates in the ascetic ideal of slave morality.

Specifically I would argue this tendency is the result of the aforementioned phenomena of psychological economics. In addition to the belief that slave morality's values are superior to any other set of values, its values are rendered more appealing by several other factors⁵⁸. First, consider just how incredibly attractive a prepackaged ideology or metaphysical worldview that promises the ability to resolve *ressentiment* would be to the marginalized plebeians who suffer acutely from the effects of *ressentiment*. If there are suddenly rules to follow and a playbook to draw from the anguish of uncertainty and despair is immediately ameliorated – just as in the case of the O.C.D. case. In both cases however it is a desperate mechanism employed to provide, if nothing else, a semblance of control – it is not a cure but part band-aid, part placebo, part toxin. It promises to alleviate the guilt and suffering acutely felt by the believer and is at the same time a kind of punishment the believer feels they deserve. As the earlier passage argues, the believer is made to believe that they cannot know what is good for them. The psychological system in fact does more to perpetuate the very guilt that plagues the believer than alleviate it, but this fact again remains obfuscated – and it must since if any part of the system is exposed it threatens the whole. Once the system is up and running however it achieves an equilibrium between sin production and digestion (by obeying the moral commands) and the psychological process perpetuates itself indefinitely. In the psyche of the believer a never-ending battle between the fictitious enemies of flesh and spirit ensues. Their inability to command and regulate their instincts, passions, and wills causes them to seek out other mechanisms to regulate them. According to Nietzsche the believer is not only in a profoundly sick state but also a weak one; thus, the believer clings desperately to the value system because it at least affords them the illusion of stability. Nietzsche addresses this complex psychology in GS 347.

Believers and their need to believe. – How much one needs a faith in order flourish, how much that is “firm” and that one does not wish to be shaken because one *clings* to it, that is a measure of the degree of one's strength (or, to put the point more clearly, of one's weakness)... That instinct of weakness... does not

⁵⁸ This topic was discussed in detail in Chapter 1 (especially section 2). The two primary references were BGE 202, and GM I 13 (where the birds of prey and lambs allegory was discussed).

create religious, metaphysical systems, and convictions of all kinds but – conserves them (GS 347).

What this passage highlights is that, like a placebo, the power of the “cure” is rooted in the belief of its power. It’s a kind of faith in the very notion of faith. For this reason, once the agent buys into the psychology, they cling to it. Ironically the weakness that motivates the belief is inversely proportioned to the degree of strength with which they cling to it. This is why Nietzsche states that:

Faith is always coveted most and needed most urgently where will is lacking: for will, as the affect of command, is the decisive sign of sovereignty and strength. In other words, the less one knows how to command, the more urgently one covets someone who commands. From this one might perhaps gather that the two world religions, Buddhism and Christianity, may have owed their origin and above all their sudden spread to a tremendous collapse and disease of the will... Once a human being reaches the fundamental conviction that he *must* be commanded, he becomes “a believer” (GS 347)

The agent thus becomes one who now *needs* to be commanded. Like a drug addiction, the rules and commands become a distraction and escape from the deeper pathologies that in fact initially caused, and subsequently feed, the artificial need itself. For Nietzsche, nothing could be more antithetical to the self-determined free agent – nothing could be more sick in comparison.

Conversely, one could conceive of such a pleasure and power of self-determination, such a *freedom* of the will that the spirit would take leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, being practiced in maintaining himself on insubstantial ropes and possibilities and dancing even near abysses. Such a spirit would be the *free spirit* par excellence” (GS 347).

So it is the believer’s desire to be commanded that keeps the believer locked into the psychological mechanisms of slave morality. The redirection of drives and the desire to be commanded are intimately intertwined. As the redirection of drives continues, the desire to be commanded becomes ever stronger. This is because the attempt to resolve suffering by

redirecting drives actually creates more suffering and frustration – accordingly the agent in turn desires more commands. In Nietzsche's words:

In many respects the ascetic too seeks to make life easier for himself: and he does so as a rule by complete subordination to the will of another... This subordination is a powerful means of becoming master of oneself... One has renounced one's own will once and for all, and this is easier than renouncing it only now and again... The saint thus makes his life easier through his complete surrender of his personality (HAH 139).

As discussed in Chapter 2 section two, this act of submission creates a sort of perpetual motion machine of suffering, guilt, and frustration that culminates ultimately in the ascetic ideal. Interestingly this seems to be the cause of Nietzsche's critique of Kant's normative theory. Nietzsche argues that Kant's deontological ethics also appeals to this desire to be commanded. In his words:

To demand that duty must always be something of a burden – as Kant does – means to demand that it should never become habit and custom: in this demand there is concealed a remnant of ascetic cruelty (D 339).

As with slave moralities in general, Nietzsche argues that Kant's morality involves a kind of sickness and weakness. The categorical imperative seems designed precisely to work against the exceptional types. For Nietzsche, however, part of what sets the nobles apart is that they deserve, and know when, to make exceptions of themselves. For this reason Nietzsche says that the categorical imperative "smells of cruelty" (GM II 6). Once again the will to punish others is redirected inward as a desire to punish oneself.

'Thou shalt obey someone and for a long time' – *otherwise* thou shalt perish and lose all respect for thyself' – this seems to me to be nature's imperative, which is, to be sure, neither 'categorical' as old Kant demanded it should be (hence 'otherwise' --), nor addressed to the individual (what do individuals matter to nature!), but to peoples, races, ages, classes, and above all to the entire animal 'man,' to *mankind* (BGE 188).

Thus, Nietzsche argues that the psychology behind the categorical imperative leaves one perpetually in debt to the moral law and mankind in general; and thus perpetually deserving of punishment. One must always consider their wills, desires, and actions with respect to the whole of humanity – and adjust them to the whole. Not only does Nietzsche see this as recklessly presumptuous, but also naively arrogant. In his words:

It is selfish to experience one's own judgment as a universal law; and this selfishness is blind, petty, and frugal because it betrays that you have not yet discovered yourself nor created for yourself an ideal of your own, your very own – for that could never be somebody else's and much less that of all, all! Anyone who still judges "in this case everybody would have to act like this" has not yet taken five steps toward self-knowledge... (GS 335).

Now compare this passage to the previously discussed GS 347. Nietzsche could just as easily be commenting on Kant in this passage. By contrast to the Kantian who has not taken any steps towards self-knowledge, Nietzsche's free spirit has taken all those steps and, as a result, is self-determined and free. Unlike Nietzsche's free spirit the Kantian, like the believer in the ascetic ideal, operates in an illusory world of manufactured metaphysical value system. According to Nietzsche the categorical imperative is just an updated version of the age-old "thou shalt" of slave morality – Kant did not so much transcend the old moral categories as reinvent them.

In the end, Kant tried, with "German" innocence, to give this corruption [conviction as criterion of truth], this lack of intellectual conscience, scientific status with his notion of "practical reason": he invented a special kind of reason for cases in which one need not bother about reason – that is, when morality, when the sublime command "thou shalt," raises its voice (A 12).

Kant, Nietzsche argues, simply posited new concepts and categories designed to preserve old value systems. He claimed to have discovered a new moral faculty, but Nietzsche considers the categorical imperative a vacuous moral place-holder invented by Kant for the old moral categories of good and evil (BGE 11). Specifically his charge is that Kant's strategy is to presuppose a metaphysical structure that makes certain questions, not only meaningful, but only

answerable in predetermined ways – all of which is thought to validate that structure after the fact. Which is to say, whether in epistemology or normative theory, with his invention of new faculties, according to Nietzsche Kant is guilty of pulling a necessary rabbit out of an unnecessary hat (HAH 25).

ii. Metaphysical Motion Sickness

In order to understand this closeted autonomy and the desire to be commanded that underlies slave morality we will need to unpack the psychological layers that constitute it. As Nietzsche explores in the *Genealogy*, slave moralities establish a new set of moral categories, and invent and posit a comprehensive metaphysical world-view to sustain them. This metaphysical value matrix distinguishes itself from all other value systems, and thereby gains its authority, by insisting it is not created, but rather, is given in nature (i.e. a kind of realism decreed by God).

Only *one* kind of human morality beside which, before which, after which many other, above all *higher*, moralities are possible or ought to be possible. But against such a ‘possibility’, against such an ‘ought’, this morality defends itself with all its might: it says, obstinately and stubbornly, ‘I am morality itself, and nothing is morality besides me!’... the *democratic* movement inherits the Christian (BGE 202).

So Christian morality involves a robust moral realism that insists it has a pure monopoly on morality and values to such a degree that anything non-Christian is at once perceived as immoral. While it is true that most moralities, to varying degrees, perceive any other morality’s values as false, Christianity, according to Nietzsche, takes it even further by insisting that its values are the essence of morality itself. In truth however its values are all rooted in utility and the needs of the herd over the individual, and are projected onto nature. In Nietzsche’s words:

At first, men imagined themselves into nature: they saw everywhere themselves and their kind, especially their evil and capricious qualities, as it were hidden

among the clouds, storms, beasts of prey, trees and plants: it was then they invented 'evil nature' (D 17).

All the values by means of which we have tried so far to render the world estimable for ourselves and which then proved inapplicable and therefore devaluated the world – all these values are, psychologically considered, the results of certain perspectives of utility, designed to maintain and increase human constructs of domination – and they have been falsely *projected* into the essence of things (WP 12).

Whatever has *value* in our world now does not have value in itself, according to its nature – nature is always value-less, but has been *given* value at some time, as a present – and it was we who gave and bestowed it. Only we have created the world *that concerns man!* (GS 302).

It is important to note that this metaphysical moral structure is a holistic system that revalues everything and is justified and sustained by the keystone concept of God. “Christianity is a system, a *whole* view of things thought out together. By breaking one main concept out of it, the faith in God, one breaks the whole” (TI “Untimely Man” 5). So the fact that this system is merely a projection has to be concealed at all costs. It is a kind of faith that has to be concealed. One has to have faith in the metaphysical structure that sustains the values. The loss of any one part, especially God, threatens the whole. In Nietzsche's words:

That which *constrains* these men [ascetics], however, this unconditional will to truth, *is faith in the ascetic ideal itself*, even if as an unconscious imperative – don't be deceived about that – it is the faith in a *metaphysical* value, the absolute value of *truth*, sanctioned and guaranteed by this ideal alone (it stands or falls with this ideal) (GM III 24).

This however creates a certain tension in the agent. The instincts repeatedly resist the system and its authority. The will to power fights to expand, while the moral values of this system work to reign it in. The agent finds himself torn between the two.

This, I maintain, leads to a kind of *metaphysical motion sickness*. Consider that motion sickness is caused by the tension between the illusion of stasis and the sense of motion. If everything in one's immediate environment is collectively moving in tandem (i.e. the cabin of a

ship in rough seas) it can trick some of the senses into thinking that they are at rest while other senses insist that one is not. It is this tension that results in motion sickness. In the same way, slave moralities attempt to invert all values collectively as a whole. The instincts however resist the illusion of this system of values. Like in motion sickness, this tension creates a kind of anxiety and sickness in the agent. As initially discussed in Chapter 2 section two, this negative feeling results in the ‘bad conscience’ and the agent immediately seeks out a cause. The obvious cause to blame is the instincts and, accordingly, they are blamed for the sake of preserving the metaphysical system of values – the system that also provides meaning to the suffering. This creates a “war against the old instincts” according to Nietzsche:

Man’s suffering of man, of himself – the result of a forcible sundering from his animal past, as it were a leap and plunge into new surroundings and conditions of existence, a declaration of war against the old instincts upon which his strength, joy, and terribleness had rested hitherto (GM II 16).

But this war against the old instincts in turn creates feelings of guilt and more suffering which leads to more disdain for the instincts. Nietzsche further describes the psychology of this tension in the *Genealogy*.

Man, the bravest of animals and the one most accustomed to suffering, does *not* repudiate suffering as such; he desires it, he even seeks it out, provided he is shown a *meaning* for it, a *purpose* of suffering. The meaninglessness of suffering, not suffering itself, was the curse that lay over mankind so far – *and the ascetic ideal offered man meaning!* This interpretation – there is no doubt of it – brought fresh suffering with it, deeper, more inward, more poisonous, more life-destructive suffering: it placed all suffering under the perspective of *guilt* (GM III 28).

So the system that creates the suffering and guilt also provides meaning for it, and the system perpetuates itself. The priest’s value system is not the cure but in fact the cause.

He [ascetic priest] brings salves and balm with him, no doubt; but before he can act as a physician he first has to wound; when he then stills the pain of the wound *he at the same time infects the wound* – for that is what he knows to do best of all,

this sorcerer and animal-tamer, in whose presence everything healthy necessarily grows sick, and everything sick tame... The priest *alters the direction of ressentiment* (GM III 15).

The tension between the belief system and the instincts creates a kind of metaphysical motion sickness and results in what Nietzsche calls the “bad conscience” which also demands a cause and a meaning. The artificial nature of the real psychological cause however remains buried, and the blame is instead placed on the instincts. This, Nietzsche argues, redirects the *ressentiment* of the bad conscience from the priest and his metaphysical value structure and towards oneself. In his words:

“Someone or other must be to blame for my feeling ill” – this kind of reasoning is common to all the sick, and is indeed held the more firmly the more the real cause of their feeling ill, the physiological cause, remains hidden... They scour the entrails of their past and present for obscure and questionable occurrences that offer them the opportunity to revel in tormenting suspicions and to intoxicate themselves with the poison of their own malice: they tear open their oldest wounds, they bleed from long-healed scars, they make evildoers out of their friends, wives, children, and whoever else stands closest to them. “I suffer: someone must be to blame for it” – thus thinks every sickly sheep. But his shepherd, the ascetic priest, tells him: “Quite so, my sheep someone must be to blame for it: but you yourself are this someone, you alone are to blame for it – *you alone are to blame for yourself!*” – This is brazen and false enough: but one thing at least is achieved by it, the direction of *ressentiment* is *altered*. (GM III 15).

This whole psychological system is designed to feed off itself and perpetually gather momentum. The axis of it involves turning suffering into guilt, turning guilt into ‘sin’, which in turn causes more suffering as one is told they are the cause of it. The agent is exploited by the priest’s system’s ability to turn a natural psychological force (suffering) into a sick and unhealthy force (sin) and thereby invert its meaning by redirecting it at oneself.

The chief trick the ascetic priest permitted himself for making the human soul resound with heart-rendering, ecstatic music of all kinds was, as everyone knows, the exploitation of the *sense of guilt*... It was only in the hands of the priest, that artist in guilt feelings, that it achieved form – oh, what a form! “sin” – for this is the priestly name for the animal’s “bad conscience”... he must seek it in *himself*,

in some *guilt*, in a piece of the past, he must understand his suffering as a *punishment* (GM III 20).

In this way, the natural desire to retaliate, intimidate, and harm others is inverted such that it becomes a desire to punish oneself – the retaliation against others becomes retaliation against oneself and their own drives.

iii. *Ressentiment* and O.C.D.

In the *Genealogy* Nietzsche argues that this psychological mechanism has its roots in the creditor debtor relationship. As Janaway observes in his essay “Guilt, Bad Conscience, and Self-punishment in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy*”⁵⁹:

One of the main sources of explanatory power for the whole essay is the repeated play on *Schuld*, *Schulden*, *Schuldner* (guilt, debt, debtor), at its most salient in Nietzsche’s thought that ‘that central moral concept “guilt” had its origins in the very material concept “debt” ’ (Janaway GBS 145).

As in the case of revenge, Nietzsche argues that punishing another or making them suffer can be viewed as compensation for a debt. Accordingly, the creditor is allowed to inflict pain on the debtor as payment for the debt (GM II 4, 6). Thus if one can be made to feel perpetually guilty or in debt, they can easily be convinced that they are deserving of continual punishment. At the hands of the priest the agent is made to believe that they suffer because they are forever guilty and in debt before God (GM II 12). This ubiquitous sense of pervasive guilt in turn leads to the agent punishing themselves as payment on this guilt/debt⁶⁰. The desire to punish others becomes a desire to punish oneself. As Janaway correctly argues, self-punishment is not only a product of the debtor-creditor relationship but also involves the satisfaction of the will to dominate by internalizing it⁶¹. He then observes that:

⁵⁹ In Leiter and Sinhababu’s (2007) *Nietzsche and Morality* 145 (Oxford: Oxford University Press) [GBS].

⁶⁰ The German terms are *Schuld/Schulden*.

⁶¹ Janaway GBS 147.

We are being cruel to ourselves because, given our instincts as living beings, we are driven to be cruel to something, but we interpret the self-cruelty as deserved and rightful, as punishment of ourselves by ourselves. We give ourselves permission to despise and maltreat ourselves (Janaway GBS 148).

Thus self-punishment comes to be seen as something virtuous. According to Nietzsche this occurs when unresolved guilt is transformed into sin (GM III 20).

In her essay “Nietzsche's Immoralism and the Concept of Guilt”⁶² Clark describes this process as the moralization of debt.

Debt is moralized into guilt, Nietzsche claims, when it is pushed back into the bad conscience (GM II: 21). I take this to mean that the moralization of debt into guilt occurs through the taking over of the idea of debt by the bad conscience, the project of internalizing aggression. Debt becomes guilt insofar as people start using the idea of being indebted to inflict suffering on themselves (Clark NICM, 29).

While I agree with Clark's and Janaway's analysis of this psychology for the most part, I don't think they emphasize the role that the concept of sin plays in it. As Nietzsche makes clear in GM III 20, it's not just suffering and guilt that motivates this process, it's that moralized debt becomes sin. This is important to note because it causes agents to perceive themselves in an existential state of *perpetual* indebtedness. Accordingly it is no longer specific sufferings or specific debts that the agent is concerned to resolve; it is their very being and condition itself. Thus they remain perpetually in debt and guilty before God (GM II 12, 21), and perpetually locked into these psychological mechanisms. Clark does make precisely this point⁶³ but she fails to observe that it is not mere guilt and debt that produces such an existential state⁶⁴, but specifically the introduction of *sin – a completely new type of guilt* – into the equation. The critical distinction between mere guilt and sin is that individual types of guilt can be specifically

⁶² In Schacht (1994) *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals* (London: University of California) Press) [NICM].

⁶³ See Clark NICM 30.

⁶⁴ In Clark's words, “We owe God a debt not just for what we do, but who we are” (Clark NICM 30).

addressed and resolved (at least in theory by repaying debts or accepting punishments). Sin however refers to one's very state of being. It's a sort of holistic debt, which cannot be resolved through any sort of repayment or punishment – it is perpetual existential guilt. Accordingly, what began out of a need to make sense of their suffering turns the agent into the victim of powerful psychological forces and the redirection of drives (GM III 15). Nietzsche of course describes such an agent as sick (GM III 21), the victim of a “sick soul” (GM III 20).

Here, however, a very important question arises: was this psychological manipulation a strategic creation of the priests to control the masses, or is it instead the product of psychological forces under certain social/cultural circumstances? In his essay “*Ressentiment, Value, and Self Vindication*,”⁶⁵ Wallace argues against the former (strategic) interpretation and in favor of the latter – what he calls the “expressive interpretation”. Wallace describes it as follows:

Ressentiment becomes creative and gives birth to values when the tensions that attend it lead the powerless to adopt and internalize a wholly new evaluative framework... The slaves adopt the scheme of values organized around good and evil, because doing so enables them to make sense of their experience of the world, which is mediated by the sentiments of hatred and *ressentiment*. If the masters are evil, then hatred of them becomes a response that is merited by its object, and the latent tensions in the world-view of the slaves are thereby resolved... The expressive interpretation attributes a plausible causal role to the unconscious forces of hatred and *ressentiment* (Wallace RVSV 119).

I think Wallace is exactly right that many of the psychological forces behind the slave revolt are unconscious. However he goes on to make a major qualification to his expressive interpretation.

Wallace goes on to argue:

This emotional dynamic would not succeed if the powerless masses viewed the new table of values in strategic terms, as something to be advocated solely as a way of striking a blow against the master class. The aristocratic priests, I now want to suggest, grasp the susceptibility of the masses to this dynamic, and exploit it expressly for the purpose of undermining the power and position of the warrior class. That is, without really accepting the new table of values themselves, they cynically advocate on its behalf, in the expectation that the values will catch on

⁶⁵ In B. Leiter and N. Sinhababu (2007) *Nietzsche and Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) [RVSV].

over time among the masses who join with them in resenting the power of the political aristocracy. There is, in other words, a strategic dimension to the slave revolt, but strategic rationality does not capture the primary psychological dynamic in which that revolt consists (Wallace RVSV 123).

For a variety of reasons I think Wallace gets this completely wrong. I do not think the slave revolt was the product of a priestly conspiracy; instead, I maintain that the priests themselves suffered from the same value system. As I will argue in a later chapter, I do think some forms of slave moralities can be strategic in nature, but the slave revolt of the priestly aristocracy did not have this strategic component. This I maintain is what allowed it to spread so fast. It was a unique and special slave morality, which is why Nietzsche devotes so much analysis to it. I maintain that, rather than having a strategic element to it, this slave revolt was more like a virus that, under “perfect storm” social/cultural conditions, spread like an epidemic. I further maintain that there is strong textual evidence to support this claim. BGE 260 strongly suggests that Nietzsche sees this slave revolt as a ground up process. In response to powerful oppressive forces, Nietzsche asks, “Suppose the abused, oppressed, suffering, unfree, those uncertain of themselves and weary should moralize: what would their moral evaluations have in common?” (BGE 260). This herd movement I maintain arose spontaneously in response to the oppression of the nobles.

Moreover I think the following passage makes one of the most fascinating aspects of this psychological system clear – the priest did not design it so as to control others, they in fact suffered from it as well, to an even greater degree.

Dominion over the suffering is his [ascetic priest] kingdom, that is where his instinct directs him, here he possesses his distinctive art, his mastery, his kind of happiness. He must be sick himself, he must be profoundly related to the sick – how else would they understand each other?... with his will to power intact, so as to be both trusted and feared by the sick... He has to defend his herd – against whom? Against the healthy, of course, and also against envy of the healthy; he must be the natural opponent and despiser of all rude, stormy, unbridled, hard, violent beast-of-prey health and might (GM III 15).

To Wallace's credit I will concede that Nietzsche does not refer specifically to the slave revolt at all in essay III of the *Genealogy*. Accordingly, it could be the case that essay III is about a later period in which the priests eventually became victims of the earlier slave revolt. But if there really is a time lapse in the essays, why didn't Nietzsche point this out? While I can't rule this out as a possibility, I see no compelling evidence that suggests this was the case. The sole motivation for this reading would thus be to cook the books against the chronologically consistent reading of the *Genealogy*.

This of course raises an obvious question, why does Nietzsche repeatedly describe the slave revolt as 'revenge' if it wasn't a conscious conspiracy? I maintain that Nietzsche's rhetoric of intentionality does not capture the real nature of the slave revolt. The slave revolt was 'revenge' in a highly qualified sense. Namely, it was originally the 'revenge' of the *collective herd* rather than an individual – it was *psychological* not conspiratorial revenge. Which is to say, it was extreme socio-political conditions that caused the slave revolt and not a priestly conspiracy. From the beginning I maintain that the priestly class were victims, not designers, of the psychology of slave moralities. Nietzsche's description of this event as 'revenge' was merely intended to highlight the *reactionary*, not conspiratorial, nature of slave moralities. Accordingly, I maintain that the herd wasn't spoon-fed appealing values by the priests; rather, the herd gave birth to new values as a result of their acute *ressentiment*. In time this resulted in the production of ascetic priests who were themselves victims of the same psychological forces and did much to perpetuate them – most notably Paul. They simply elevated the strategy by believing that further self-punishment and denial can resolve not only their guilt but also their followers'. This wins the priests' trust and power over the herd. They are necessary to validate the perceived truth of the metaphysical value system, and further obfuscate the real psychological mechanisms at work. The priests in turn require the herd to validate the meaning of their sacrifices and punishments – the punishment in fact serves as a kind of anesthesia and the whole system perpetuates itself and gains momentum.

For every sufferer instinctively seeks a cause for his suffering; more exactly, an agent; still more specifically, a *guilty* agent who is susceptible to suffering – in short, some living thing upon which he can, on some pretext or other, vent his affects, actually or in effigy: part of the suffering to win relief, *anesthesia* – the narcotic he cannot help desiring to deaden pain of any kind. This alone, I surmise, constitutes the actual physiological cause of *ressentiment*, vengefulness, and the like: a desire to *deaden pain by means of affects* (GM III 15).

So what began as a collective “revenge” eventually became conspiratorial and strategic at the hands of priests like the Apostle Paul.

What the priest (most notably Paul) offers are rules for dealing with sin and guilt. The rules of sacrifice and self-punishment they establish are also shared with the followers.

The most general formula on which every religion and morality is founded is: “Do this and that, refrain from this and that – then you will be happy! Otherwise...” Every morality, every religion, is this imperative; I call it the great original sin of reason, the immortal unreason (TI “Four Errors” 2).

The rules serve as a perpetual carrot on a stick continually promising the ability to curb *ressentiment*, the bad conscience, and guilty feelings of sin. The problem with accounts like Wallace’s is that he focuses too much on the psychological mechanisms involved in the revolt and fails to highlight and put sufficient emphasis on the reciprocal aspect of the relationship between the priests and the herd. Instead, I maintain that it was not a priestly conspiracy but this reciprocal relationship between the priests and their rules, and the believers and their suffering, that gave birth to the ascetic ideal – there was no strategic conspiracy. As it evolved from custom and tradition to the ascetic ideal the same reciprocal relationship was operating. Consider the following passage from *Dawn*.

What is tradition? A higher authority which one obeys, not because it commands what is *useful* to us, but because it *commands*... Originally, therefore, everything was custom, and whoever wanted to elevate himself above it had to become lawgiver and medicine man and a kind of demi-god: that is to say, he had to *make customs* – a dreadful, mortally dangerous thing! Who is the most moral man? *First*, he who obeys the law most frequently: who, like the Brahmin, bears a consciousness of the law with him everywhere and into every minute division of

time, so that he is continually inventive in creating opportunities for obeying the law. *Then*, he who obeys it even in the most difficult cases. The most moral man is he who *sacrifices* the most to custom... Let us not deceive ourselves as to the motivation of that morality which demands difficulty of obedience to custom as the mark of morality! (D 9).

So the need to be commanded is satisfied by the genesis of more and more rules and customs. But without the believers and the customs there could be no law givers and vice versa. It's a complex psychological game where once again it is evident that it is not so important what the rules are – just that there are rules and those who obey. And once again it is evident that once such a system gets rolling it produces its own momentum.

When Nietzsche says in the above passage that custom is not useful to us, I believe he means that it is not the content of the commands that is useful but the command itself. In fact much of essay III in Nietzsche's *Genealogy* suggests that such moral commands are helpful in resolving the anguish that accompanies a perceived normative vacuum. As Nietzsche argues, "Any meaning is better than none at all... In it [ascetic ideal], suffering was interpreted; the tremendous void seemed to have been filled; the door was closed to any kind of suicidal nihilism" (GM III 28). In this way, the ascetic ideal is a sort of extreme form of obsessive compulsive disorder and slave morality is itself a social/collective form of O.C.D. (TI "Four Errors" 2, D 108, GS 347, GM II 2, D 9, GS 335). The crucial difference however is that while O.C.D. involves a cognitive dissonance, in the sense that the person knows their rules are entirely arbitrary and yet still feels they must obey them, the ascetic really believes the rules are essential and not arbitrary. The reason for this is that the person who suffers from O.C.D. is forced to create and impose their own arbitrary rules, whereas the ascetic ideal is situated in a large institutional structure (i.e. religious) that imposes the rules for them.

In either case however it is motivated by the anxiety of a perceived normative vacuum. As Sartre would later argue, the idea that without God everything is permitted is exactly the starting point – especially for Nietzsche's free spirit. "Nothing is true, everything is permitted.' – Very well, *that was freedom of spirit*; in that way the faith in truth itself was *abrogated*" (GM

III 24). The burden and responsibility for our values ultimately rests on us. As he describes in *Dawn*:

Morality is nothing other (therefore *no more!*) than obedience to custom, of whatever kind they may be; customs, however, are the *traditional* way of behaving and evaluating. In things in which no tradition commands there is no morality; and the less life is determined by tradition, the smaller the circle of morality. The free human being is immoral because in all things he is *determined* to depend upon himself and not upon a tradition (D 9).

It is easy to go by the book, as it were, with blind allegiance to tradition. If one follows the rules of tradition, and does what they are “supposed to” then, at the very least, there is no legalistic vacuum and the blame for sub-optimal results can be dispersed over a broader metaphysical surface area and thereby reduce the negative pressure on the individual. While Nietzsche is not examining morality as tradition in the *Genealogy*, he clearly was in *Dawn*. Regardless, the point is that, as previously mentioned, the plebeian fears a legalistic vacuum while the free spirit embraces it – it brings out the weaknesses in the plebeian and the strengths in the noble free spirit. Moreover, tradition is a powerful force that can serve to justify a host of bad values where the plebeian herd is concerned. Consider for instance the role that tradition played in our country’s history in justifying slavery and later opposing civil rights. It took strong free spirits capable of depending on themselves to stand up to the forces of tradition.

So moral systems satisfy this need to be commanded and their origins are always rooted in tradition, but how much or how little does the content of the rules matter? In this regard is it really analogous to O.C.D. where the content of the rules is often known to be entirely arbitrary? The answer is yes and no. Although the subject matter of the rules is never arbitrary much of the content often is. In this regard it is in fact like O.C.D. For the O.C.D. case the rules are designed to effect specific and very significant things – i.e. to ensure health and wellbeing of oneself and their loved ones. However, the content of the rules is arbitrary⁶⁶ and the causal relationship to

⁶⁶ In most cases of O.C.D. not only is the content of the rules arbitrary but they typically involve arbitrary numbers of repetitions.

the desired effects is irrational. Accordingly, if one asked the believer what the causal connection is they would likely get a very thin explanation.

There is however a range when it comes to O.C.D. Rules like checking the stove five times before you leave to ensure the house doesn't burn down is more rational and less arbitrary than locking and unlocking the door five times to ensure you don't get into a car accident. These types of rules are the product of an obsession with specific concerns/fears to an irrational degree. As such one is motivated by legitimate concerns but deals with them in an inappropriate, and even destructive, way. This is similar to the nature of moral commands and the need to be commanded. Like O.C.D. the subject matter is not irrational or arbitrary though the content may be. Consider early man and his bizarre rituals concerning things like droughts and famines. These subject matters were hardly arbitrary. However, the content of the rules and their causal relationships were entirely arbitrary – i.e. sacrificing animals or virgins to bring about rain. In such cases, like the analogous O.C.D. cases, one would likely get a very thin story from the believer if they were pressed to explain the causal relationship of the rule and the effect – somehow that action is pleasing to a god who rewards their sacrifice.

These types of commands however can only be successful where there is a tremendous vacuum in knowledge that obfuscates their arbitrary nature. Unlike with O.C.D., if the believer ever comes to perceive their rules as arbitrary they will lose all their psychological power. So there is an incentive to produce rules whose content is perceived to be relevant as well. Consider the way in which all moral systems, especially religious ones, address human sexuality head on and apply often very strict rules to regulate human behavior. The subject matter is hardly arbitrary, since human sexuality is a very important part of human nature. However the content is largely arbitrary from any other perspective but the believer's. For instance, if one asked a Catholic about the rules and why they follow them, one could expect a very rich explanation. However, if one asked an Orthodox Jew or a Muslim the same question, one could expect very different rules and disparate explanations. From a neutral perspective the subject matter of the rules (human sexuality) hardly seems arbitrary or irrational, but the rules and explanations

would. Like the checking the stove five times to ensure the house doesn't burn down, there is a legitimate concern that is being dealt with in an irrational way or to an irrational degree. However, unlike with O.C.D. one needs a community and lawgiver other than themselves to ensure that these arbitrary elements remain obfuscated.

The trouble is that, if there truly are no absolute moral facts rooted in nature itself, then if we are not doing the actual valuing and interpreting for ourselves, someone, or some institution, is in fact doing it for us under the guise of so-called absolute values. The following passage perfectly describes this psychological force:

Up to now the moral law has been supposed to stand *above* our own likes and dislikes: one did not want actually to *impose* this law upon oneself, one wanted to take it from somewhere or discover it somewhere or *have it commanded to one* from somewhere (D 108).

By 'moral law' Nietzsche refers to the morality of good and evil that belongs to slave morality and this highlights the major problem with slave moralities. They cause the herd, and thus the potential higher types, to believe too much in the value of certain values. As first discussed in Chapter 1, Leiter describes this as "morality in the pejorative sense" and says of it, "it is not, then, that there is too much pity and altruism in the world, but rather too much *belief in the value of* pity, altruism, and, and the other values of MPS"⁶⁷. I think Leiter's analysis is correct and Christianity is for Nietzsche the ultimate MPS. It creates a ferocious need for, and invention of, 'moral facts' to set the rules. Once again, as stated in Chapter 2, I maintain that Nietzsche sees this desire to be commanded as a necessary, though not sufficient, characteristic of morality that is present at the level of a *morality of mores* and culminates in the ascetic ideal of slave morality, which Nietzsche identifies with Christianity.

Accordingly, to pursue a brief tangent, I reaffirm the claim in Chapter 1 that Nietzsche is not just a critic of Christian morality and any morality that shares elements of it, but *all* traditional forms of morality (especially those rooted in the schema of good and evil). That

⁶⁷ Leiter NMC 263.

being said, Christianity is clearly the focus of much of Nietzsche's critique when it comes to slave morality. He even employs the phrase "slave revolt" specifically in reference to the Christianization of Rome and Europe. But Christianity aside, it is more than just an objection to certain values, he objects to the value schema of traditional forms of morality and the ways in which they value. The marks of a 'traditional' form of morality according to Nietzsche are: an appeal to moral facts thought to exist independently of our attitudes and dispositions, involves a desire on the part of the agent to be commanded from without, a tendency to place the needs of the community over those of the individual, and an emphasis on egalitarianism. The basis of his criticism is that such moral systems may make life easier for the weak herd, but they are life-inhibiting for the superior kinds of individuals – which is to say they undermine Nietzsche's elitism. In Leiter's words:

The normative component of an MPS is harmful because, in reality, it will have the effect of leading potentially excellent persons to value what is in fact not conducive to their flourishing and devalue what is in fact essential to it (Leiter, NMC 274).

Like Leiter, I agree that a culture that embraces such values makes the extraordinary life difficult to achieve for the potential greats. Nietzsche objects on the grounds that such moral systems do not value strength and beauty, but humility and contentment.

In conclusion, however, all of this raises an obvious question, how does the healthy, and non-weak agent deal with suffering and even *ressentiment*? First, the strong agent does not always seek out a specific cause for every suffering and thus is less susceptible to the manipulation of false causes. Likewise they do not fight with their instincts and natural wills since they are not operating in an illusory metaphysical system. Instead they process experience and suffering directly as it comes rather than internalizing and turning against themselves. "A strong and well constituted man digests his experiences (his deeds and misdeeds included) as he digests his meals, even when he has to swallow some tough morsels" (GM III 16). Accordingly,

in what Nietzsche calls the “noble man” suffering does not become acute guilt, and *ressentiment* is resolved without being redirected back at oneself. In Nietzsche’s words:

Ressentiment itself, if it should appear in the noble man, consummates and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction, and therefore does not *poison*: on the other hand, it fails to appear at all on countless occasions on which it inevitably appears in the weak and impotent (GM I 11).

So here again the fundamental contrast is between health and sickness; but it also involves the tension between freedom and repression. In the sick individuals the natural drive for power and freedom is inverted and repressed.

This instinct for freedom forcibly made latent – we have seen it already – this *instinct for freedom* pushed back and repressed, incarcerated within and finally able to discharge and vent itself only on itself: that, and that alone, is what the *bad conscience* is in its beginnings (GM II 17).

So in the sick agents their will becomes *reactive* and inverted. Rather than willing power and the expansion of drives, they will a different end – namely a “war against the old instincts” (GM II 16). The problem is that, according to Nietzsche, “All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward*” (GM II 16). As a result the bad conscience takes hold of the sick agent, and the frustration, suffering, and sickness perpetuates itself and they succumb to what I have called *metaphysical motion sickness*.

Chapter IV: Slave Morality and the Apostle Paul

In terms of the psychology of slave moralities, Paul represents a unique and fascinating case study. Paul effectively throws a wrench in Nietzsche's analysis of slave moralities and one can palpably sense that Nietzsche's vehement criticism of Paul in *The Antichrist* is tinged with frustration⁶⁸. The problem for Nietzsche is that Paul was not a meek ascetic monk teetering on the brink of suicidal nihilism; rather he was an itinerant and prolific creator of new values who also pursued and obtained much power. He is nothing like the sick agent desiring to be commanded discussed in the previous chapter. In fact Paul himself repeatedly boasted about gaining power through his special abilities to tap into 'the Spirit' and demonstrate great 'signs and wonders'⁶⁹. I find it surprising, unfortunate, and somewhat embarrassing that the topic of the Apostle Paul has been so neglected when it comes to Nietzsche's critique of morality. This chapter will offer a much needed analysis of Paul and the revaluation of values.

In the simplest of terms, despite being the grand architect of Christian slave morality, Paul exhibited numerous *Übermensch* qualities. Moreover, Paul was not a group, class, or herd but an *individual* – perhaps, in terms of Nietzsche's own values, even a free spirit of sorts. For lack of a better way to put it, he was an elite who utilized and manipulated the herd. So on what grounds then does Nietzsche have the right to vehemently criticize Paul? Paul, it seems, was somehow sick and powerful at the same time. In the previous chapter I argued that the priestly class were themselves sick and foisted their sickness onto the masses in a failed attempt to cure it – but what about the grand architect of slave morality? Was Saul's conversion to Paul the result of sickness or conspiracy? As discussed in the previous chapter I reject the conspiratorial elements of Wallace's expressive model⁷⁰. However, I do maintain that Paul is a unique figure and did serve as the strategic architect of slave morality and facilitated its spread

⁶⁸ In particular A 41-45 where Nietzsche describes Paul as a tyrant and villain; and also D 68 where he sharply criticizes Paul.

⁶⁹ See Romans 1:16, 15:19, 8:38, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 2 Corinthians 12:12, Galatians 3:5, 1 Corinthians 5:3-5.

⁷⁰ Wallace RVS 123.

through his itinerant reformation project. So there was a conspiratorial element to the slave revolt but according to Nietzsche it did not belong to the priestly class as a whole, as Wallace argues, but rather to a particular member of the priestly class – namely the Apostle Paul who manipulated and molded not only the herd but also the priestly class itself. Through Paul a new type of person became valued and a new way of life was established – ones which Nietzsche found no value in. Interestingly, Nietzsche attacks Socrates for very similar reasons – he too tried to promote a new way of life that Nietzsche also rejects. According to Alexander Nehamas in his book *The Art of Living*⁷¹, Nietzsche criticizes Socrates for three primary reasons: *first*, he disregarded the importance of instincts and other drives in favor of rationality; *second*, he was the first great ‘moralizer’⁷²; and *third*, he dismantled the early Greek’s views of human nature, suffering, and tragedy⁷³. Like Socrates, Paul revalued old values in ways that established a new type of individual and new way of life that Nietzsche rejects as sick and unworthy of value.

This understanding will allow us to better understand the nature of the slave revolt, the context of Nietzsche’s critique, and why he attacks it with such vitriol. Moreover, an examination of Paul will provide insight into the psychology of the ascetic ideal discussed in *The Genealogy* and it will also allow us to understand what Nietzsche is attempting to do in *The Antichrist*. I maintain that *The Antichrist* should be read, not as an objective historical analysis, but rather as Nietzsche’s attempt to establish a philosophical nemesis. I do not think Nietzsche is trying to rewrite history to accomplish this, but many of the generalizations and claims of *The Antichrist* highly suggest a pre-established motive and bias in Nietzsche. This may seem a provocative claim but consider that Nietzsche came to refer to himself as “Dionysus versus the crucified” – and “the crucified” was Paul’s term for Jesus Christ.

Let’s begin by addressing Nietzsche’s own words on Paul. Nietzsche devotes a sizable portion of *The Antichrist* to discussing Paul. There he states: “At bottom he [Paul] had no use at

⁷¹ Nehamas, Alexander (1998) *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (London: University of California Press) [AL].

⁷² This topic will be revisited later in this chapter.

⁷³ Nehamas AL 335.

all for the life of the redeemer – he needed the death on the cross and a little bit more” (A 42)⁷⁴. Essentially Nietzsche argues that Christ was the invention of Paul and had little to no connection to the historical “gentle Jew from Nazareth”. As Nietzsche provocatively put it: “there was only one Christian, and he died on the cross” (A 39)⁷⁵. Nietzsche was clearly very influenced by David Strauss’ 1839 work *The Life of Jesus* in which he argues that there indeed was an historical Jesus but he was in no way divine. It seems Nietzsche appropriates this thesis but stresses that it was almost entirely Paul who was responsible for the invention of Christ. As Geuss argues in “Nietzsche and Genealogy” Paul hijacked the meaning of Jesus and established the essence of Christianity (D 68)⁷⁶. Of course Nietzsche of all people would be a hypocrite if he maintains that all reinterpretation was tantamount to hijacking. In fact he explicitly argues that reinterpretations are unavoidable, and meanings, the value of values, and purposes necessarily change over time (GS 54, 57). In Nietzsche’s words, “the cause and origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart; whatever exists, having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it” (GM II 12).

Geuss maintains that Paul’s interpretation of the meaning of Jesus is wrong in two ways: *first* he was wrong to interpret the meaning of Jesus’ life and message in terms of sin, guilt, and redemption. Jesus’ original message was that there is no such thing as sin (A 33) and that the concept of perpetual guilt is ‘abolished’ (A 41). *Second*, Paul’s propositional claims are false. Geuss argues that for Nietzsche the whole notion of ‘sin’ is the product of the priests’ misinterpretation of suffering⁷⁷. I think Geuss’ analysis is correct but it raises an immediate question: was this creation consciously done and conspiratorial in nature or was Paul himself the victim of a kind of sickness? Unlike the sick priestly class discussed in the previous chapter, I

⁷⁴ See also WP 171, 177.

⁷⁵ See also A 24, 27, 35, 39

⁷⁶ In Richardson and Leiter’s (2001) *Oxford Readings in Philosophy: Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 330-331 [NG].

⁷⁷ Geuss NG 330-336.

maintain that Nietzsche takes Paul's invention of Christ to be both a conscious act and part of a conspiracy.

Paul comprehended that the lie – that “faith” – was needed; later the church in turn comprehended Paul. The “God” whom Paul invented, a god who “ruins the wisdom of the world” ... is in truth merely Paul's own resolute *determination* to do this: to give the name of “God” to one's own will, *torah*, that is thoroughly Jewish. Paul *wants* to ruin the “wisdom of the world” (A 47).

This passage (along with A 42) strongly suggest that Paul's invention of Christ was an intentional and even vengeful project. I think it is crucial however to point out that this in no way entails that Paul was lying and merely trying to control the people. Rather, he could have been motivated to challenge the “wisdom of the world” and Christ was his vehicle for doing so. Accordingly, perhaps Saul's conversion to Paul was the result of an enlightened epiphany⁷⁸ in which he sincerely saw the need to challenge the old world values and establish new ones. Consider that he did explicitly state that his message was not given to him by man but revealed to him⁷⁹. So Paul could have conspired to promote these new values not merely to control people and gain power but because he genuinely saw a vacuum in traditional theology which he filled in with a radical reinterpretation of the life and death of Jesus and the creation of Christ (A 24, 40-42, 46, 51-52). It is crucial to point out that Paul did not claim he got his message of sacrifice and resurrection⁸⁰ from the historical Jesus or any of his followers. Rather his message was the result of direct and personal revelation when he was raised to the third level of heaven on the road to Damascus⁸¹. In light of this revelation, Paul simply appropriated the crucifixion of Jesus, attached the message of his revelation to it, and thereby created the notion of Christ.

I maintain that the conspiratorial/strategic component of Wallace's expressive model⁸² discussed in the previous chapter applies not to the priestly class as a whole but to a particular

⁷⁸ Galatians 1:13-17.

⁷⁹ Galatians 1:12.

⁸⁰ 1 Corinthians 15.

⁸¹ 2 Corinthians 12, Galatians 1:12.

⁸² Wallace RVS 123.

member of that class (i.e. Paul). Paul designed the psychology of slave morality and introduced it to the priestly class and the masses. He perceived a need to challenge the old world theology and created a savior figure (Christ) who would accomplish this and would be attractive to the masses. Paul was simply opportunistic and took advantage the confusion of his day surrounding the life and death of Jesus to promulgate his new system of values. As Nietzsche puts it: the disciples were left confused by the death of Jesus and asked “who was this, what was this?” (A 40). Paul simply answered these questions for them in a way that could both make sense of his untimely death and still preserve his redeemer status. The notion of a risen savior that serves as a metaphysical messiah made perfect and obvious sense. In Nietzsche’s estimation Paul didn’t need to know anything about the historical Jesus except that he was believed to be the messiah; as he put it in A 42 “he needed the death on the cross *and* a little bit more”. I maintain that in Nietzsche’s view Paul and the priestly class represent the “men-of-resentment” and the followers the “herd-animal”⁸³. Paul’s resentment stemmed from his inability to fulfill the law – in changing the fundamental nature of the law he also satisfies his lust for power (D 68) over others by exploiting a theological vacuum.

i. The Historical Context of Paul

Near the end of first century Palestine there was a great deal of tension between Jews and Christians. In the beginning Paul was part of the Jewish tradition which held that all Gentiles must abide by the law before they can be associated with. Initially then he was very hostile to Christians and would have viewed them as a stubborn cult. After Paul’s vision and conversion ⁸⁴ however Paul fought to reconfigure social relations (i.e. Jew/Gentile, slave/free, male/female). For instance in Galatians Paul addresses the Antioch incident in which James refused to eat with Gentiles⁸⁵. Without the law Paul argued that the whole distinction between Jews and Gentiles

⁸³ Richardson NS 42.

⁸⁴ Galatians 1:13-15.

⁸⁵ Galatians 2:11-14.

had broken down and Jews should interact with Gentiles apart from any considerations of the old Jewish laws. Paul began to directly challenge the social norms of the Jews. It was a vision and a call that converted Paul, not some deeper reflection and insight that produced a new way of relating to the law. In fact he considered himself “blameless” under the law⁸⁶. Put simply, he was trying to change the world for the sake of the coming world.

So what was the source of all the societal tension that eventually gave birth to Paul? For Nietzsche it goes back to the conflict between master and slave morality, or “Rome against Judea” (GM I 16). Nietzsche declares in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

The Jews – a people 'born for slavery' as Tacitus and the whole ancient world says, 'the chosen people' as they themselves say and believe – the Jews achieved that miracle of inversion of values thanks to which life on earth has for a couple of millennia acquired a new and dangerous fascination – their prophets fused 'rich,' 'godless,' 'evil,' 'violent,' 'sensual' into one and were the first to coin the word 'world' as a term of infamy (BGE 195).

In *The Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche is clearly referencing this passage when he continues on the same theme, saying: “The Jews, that priestly people, who in opposing their enemies and conquerors were ultimately satisfied with nothing less than a radical revaluation of their enemies' values, that is to say, an act of the most spiritual revenge... With the Jews there begins the slave revolt in morality” (GM 34).

Nietzsche's estimation of Judaism often seems ambiguous and contradictory. For instance, in his book *The Antichrist* he speaks highly of Judaism in contrast to “Christian decadence”. So what are we to make of passages like this and how do they relate to his overall criticism of Christianity in terms of a genealogical analysis of history? Perhaps the following passage from *The Antichrist* can provide the answer – or at least point us in the right direction.

“Originally... Israel stood in the right, that is, the natural, relationship to all things. Its Yahweh was the expression of a consciousness of power, of joy in oneself, of hope for oneself” (A 25).

⁸⁶ Philippians 3:6.

However, according to Nietzsche, due to certain threats, “they changed his concept – they denatured his concept: at this price they held on to him. Yahweh the god of ‘justice’ – no longer one with Israel, an expression of the self-confidence of the people” (A 25). I think Nietzsche’s use of terms in this passage is significant. What does it mean to say they *denatured* (*entnatiürlichte*) the concept of YHWH? In light of the ongoing discussion of Nietzsche’s use of the term ‘nature’ I would argue that the best way to understand this passage is that, according to Nietzsche, originally the concept of YHWH was in concert with the will to power and represented strength and growth (i.e. “self-confidence”) to the Israelites. “Yahweh was the expression of a consciousness of power, of joy in oneself, of hope for oneself” (A 25). Somehow this concept was corrupted and the formulation of the concept of YHWH set the stage, and provided the metaphysical framework for the slave revolt that is the emergence of Christianity according to Nietzsche. In his book *Nietzsche, God, and the Jews*⁸⁷ Weaver Santaniello describes this transition as follows:

The severed natural realm, which was formerly intertwined with the conception of Yahweh, first had to be consecrated by the priest in order to be rendered holy. It was out of this utterly *false* soil, Nietzsche writes, that Christianity grew up (Santaniello NGJ 122).

While I agree that this is indeed Nietzsche’s view, historical generalizations like this are frustratingly common in *The Antichrist*. It is doubtful that Jewish people would agree with this historical account but that alone doesn’t discredit it when one considers that they have biases of their own. Right or wrong Nietzsche is clearly committed to this view of the origins of Christianity (A 33). This issue aside, Nietzsche goes on and argues that the natural values in concert with the will to power were supplanted with new unnatural parasitic values – this was the start of the new “moral world order”. In Nietzsche’s words:

⁸⁷ Santaniello, Weaver (1994) *Nietzsche, God, and the Jews* (New York: State University of New York Press) [NGJ].

Every natural custom, every natural institution (state, judicial order, marriage, care of the sick and the poor), every demand inspired by the instinct of life – in short, everything that contains its value *in itself* is made altogether valueless, anti-valuable by the parasitism of the priest (or the “moral world order”): now it requires a sanction after the event – a *value-conferring power* is needed to negate what is natural in it and to create a value by so doing. The priest devalues, *desecrates* nature: this is the price of his existence (A 26).

So what happened exactly? Unfortunately Nietzsche doesn't get into the historical details of this transition but history and the Biblical tradition does support the idea that YHWH went through significant changes. *The Antichrist* 25 is crucial in sorting out how Nietzsche understands this transitional period in history. There he describes this as the “denaturing of natural values” (A 25) and argues it happened in 5 stages. In his words:

1. Originally, especially at the time of the kings, Israel also stood in the right, that is, the natural, relationship to all things. Its Yahweh was the expression of a consciousness of power, of joy in oneself, of hope for oneself.
2. This state of affairs long remained the ideal, even after it had been done away with in melancholy fashion: anarchy within, the Assyrian without.
3. But all hopes remained unfulfilled. The old god was no longer able to do what he once could do. They should have let him go. What happened? They changed his concept – they denatured his concept.
4. The concept of God becomes a tool in the hands of priestly agitators... that most mendacious device of interpretation, the alleged “moral world order,” with which the natural concepts of cause and effect are turned upside down and for all. When, through reward and punishment, one has done away with natural causality, an anti-natural causality is required: now everything else that is unnatural follows.
5. Morality – no longer the expression of the conditions for the life and growth of a people, no longer its most basic instinct of life, but become abstract, become the antithesis of life – morality as the systematic degradation of the imagination, as the “evil eye” for all things (A 25).

Nietzsche then concludes by saying, “The concept of God falsified, the concept of morality falsified: the Jewish priesthood did not stop there” (A 26). What are we to make of these passages? What historical period is he describing? And what were the threats mentioned by

Nietzsche and what exactly changed in Judaism? In the passage Nietzsche alludes to the Assyrians and certain enemies being threats to Israel, which seems to be a subtle reference to 2 Kings. And indeed, 2 Kings can help answer many of these questions. In 2 Kings 19 Hezeki'ah is desperately concerned about the mounting threat of the Assyrians who had conquered other parts of Israel (scattering the original 12 tribes) and now threatened Judah. Though Nietzsche is not explicit on this, he seems to be suggesting that up until this point YHWH had only been the unique cultural expression of the Jewish people and nothing more than an expression of 'joy', 'hope', and 'power' (A 25). However the threat of the Assyrians began to change this conception of YHWH. God *had* to become *The* God of all nations if Judah was to survive the Assyrians and not meet the same fate as Israel. Thus Hezeki'ah appealed to YHWH and transformed him from a mere *aesthetic expression* and representation of justice into a *metaphysical instrument* of power and justice. In 2 Kings Hezeki'ah declares:

O Lord the God of Israel, who art enthroned above the cherubim, thou art the God, thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth... O Lord our God, save us, I beseech thee, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou, O Lord, art God alone (2 Kings 19:14-19).

In referencing this biblical text Nietzsche seems to be suggesting that when Judah prevailed over the Assyrians, this declaration became, ipso facto, the Truth. But this transition was not institutionalized and finalized until the reign of Josi'ah, when the priest Hilki'ah discovered a mysterious set of laws⁸⁸. The laws were more than likely the laws of Deuteronomy and were rediscovered in the basement of a temple when Josi'ah ordered it to be cleaned out. Josi'ah feared that the identity of the Jews was losing its stability as other cultural norms and traditions began to influence the people of Judah. Fearing the same fate that befell Israel would soon come to Judah, Josi'ah then utilized the newly discovered laws to *universalize* the Jewish identity and the Jewish God – it was no longer a culture and a people, it became a Religion... *the* religion and

⁸⁸ These events are described in 2 Kings 22.

the people. It was the only way to prevent the complete *dispersion* of the Jewish identity. YHWH then became a universal metaphysical entity (a force) and no longer an *aesthetic expression*, and morality was no longer seen as something *self created* but as something *universal* and in itself justified by *absolute* laws – which is to say it became “unnatured”.

It is this transformation that Nietzsche has in mind when he declares that “Judaism was the slave revolt in morality” and furthermore he characterizes Christianity as simply the continuation of this transformation. In *The Antichrist* he even characterizes Christianity as “the ultimate Jewish consequence” (A 24). When Paul challenged the legitimacy of this law he created a new morality that had jurisdiction beyond the descendants of Abraham; under Paul’s design it would extend to all. Therefore, Christianity grew out of the conflict between Roman and Jewish morality – or “noble” and “slave” to use Nietzsche's terminology – and represents the historical victory of slave morality over master morality with the “Christianization” of Rome. Santaniello argues that there was original Israel and YHWH and then a priestly strand of Judaism that gave birth to Christianity⁸⁹. He then remarks:

Within Nietzsche’s scheme, Jesus stands in contrast to both poles of the Rome/Judea paradigm. In the *Genealogy* Jesus appears in a negative role as the continuation of negative Judea. In the *Antichrist*, Jesus is the ultimate denouement of the slave revolt who dissolves the whole system of sin and judgment (Santaniello NGJ 119).

I think Santaniello’s analysis is exactly right on this point and helps us better understand the difference between Nietzsche’s discussion of slave morality in the *Genealogy* versus the *Antichrist*. So the values of the original Israel and YHWH became priestly Judaism and its God of judgment, which in turn became Christianity with its crucified god – the “anti-natural castration of a god” (A 16).

But the question remains: why was Nietzsche himself so vague on the historical details? I maintain that he simply didn’t feel the need to do so since it wasn’t intended to be a work of

⁸⁹ Santaniello NGJ 118.

rigorous historical analysis. Rather, he is simply articulating the general context in which the slave revolt took place. He is not interested in the *history* of the slave revolt but the *psychology* of it. So nuanced questions about historical details were simply irrelevant to Nietzsche. Moreover, the notion that slave morality was the product of corrupted values squares nicely with his view that the slave morality itself is a kind of sickness. And this generalized context allows Nietzsche to focus specifically on Paul as the great villain – and, as previously mentioned, establish him as Nietzsche’s great adversary.

ii. Paul and Master/Slave Morality

As previously discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, I maintain that Nietzsche’s distinction between master and slave morality can be best understood in terms of this contrast of healthy and sick. The nobles simply assert themselves as actively defining what the good is for humans. This is why Nietzsche argues that their master morality applied first only to individuals – specifically the noble types in contrast to the plebeian types. The concept ‘good’ originally, according to Nietzsche, was simply a description of this distance. In *Beyond Good and Evil* he states:

The noble human being separates from himself those natures in which the opposite of such exalted proud states find expression: he despises them. It should be noted at once that in this first type of morality the antithesis ‘good’ and ‘bad’ means the same thing as ‘noble’ and ‘despicable’ (BGE 260).

Thus ‘good’ was initially defined by distinguishing it from ‘bad’ in the non-moral sense of ‘noble’ versus ‘despicable’ – a definition based on a “*pathos of distance*” (BGE 257).

It is therefore the high-stationed, powerful, and noble themselves who determine what the concept ‘good’ means. According to Nietzsche they are the first to take ownership of the term and adopt the role of value creation. “The noble type of man feels himself to be the determiner of values... he knows himself to be that which in general first accords honor to things, he *creates values*” (BGE 260). Originally the nobles define ‘good’ independently of the common or

plebeian – they simply are good themselves. However, when they encounter the common or plebeian and recognize a marked difference they label them ‘bad’ in the sense of contemptible. In other words, ‘bad’ is defined in relation to ‘good’ not ‘good’ in relation to ‘bad’ – the concept ‘good’ therefore has etymological primacy according to Nietzsche. Again, however, it is important to emphasize the non-moral sense of this distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’⁹⁰. Originally, ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are distinguished in a non-moral sense in terms of quality. In other words, Nietzsche's point is that ‘good’ for the nobles means excellence in one or more of uniquely human activities, be it physical, intellectual, artistic in nature. The nobles are ‘good’ simply because they are the ones that take ownership of human nature and actively define it. As discussed in Chapter 1, anything that does not fulfill that actively defined essence subsequently becomes ‘bad’ by comparison in terms of a “*pathos of distance*” (BGE 257).

The story does not end there however. As one would rightly expect, the plebeian class is not content with the pejorative label ‘bad’, and they become frustrated with their lack of power and ability to resist persecution. The plebeians also seek to express their will to power but are faced not only with physical and violent oppression at the hands of the masters, but also the psychological oppression of master’s moral categories that labels them inferior, weak, and powerless. This leaves them frustrated and discontent resulting in what Nietzsche refers to as *ressentiment*. They want to challenge the authority of the nobles but lack the resources to do so. As a result: “the slave [plebeian] is suspicious of the virtues of the powerful: he is skeptical and mistrustful, *keenly* mistrustful, of everything ‘good’ that is honored among them” (BGE 260).

I think Paul witnessed this tension (between the Jews, Gentiles, and newly emerging Christians) reach a fever pitch in first century Palestine. Thus the plebeian class seeks to find a way to exert power over the noble class and challenge their authority, but they lack just such power. Therefore, according to Nietzsche, they would have been very susceptible to the introduction of new moral concepts that empowered them (i.e. ‘good’ versus ‘evil’) in place of

⁹⁰ This point was originally discussed in section three of Chapter 1.

those that rendered them powerless (i.e. ‘good’ versus ‘bad’). So Paul opportunistically posited a radically different system of morality, insisting that his values were not created but revealed. His values were a higher type of ‘absolute’ values that were metaphysical in nature. These values also perfectly mapped on to and satisfied the need to be commanded discussed in chapter 3 since such values are presumed, by their very nature, to be the furthest thing from arbitrary. They were too attractive to be ignored by the plebeians because they also promised to resolve suffering. Accordingly the lynchpin to the whole doctrine was its realism.

This extreme form of moral realism armed the plebeians with the necessary tools to ‘retaliate’ – or more precisely *empower* themselves by devaluing the noble’s status. According to Nietzsche, this reorganization is the origin of morality in the sense of slave morality – which is first and foremost a response, a reaction, a *retaliation*. Once again it is important to highlight the reactive nature of the slave revolt. In Nietzsche's words, “Its action is fundamentally reaction” (GM I 10). Just as the plebeians began to define themselves in antithesis to the nobles (they are evil therefore we are good), so too did they define their values simply in antithesis to the nobles’ values. The implicit logic is: the oppressive values of the nobles are conditional and created, therefore ours’ are absolute and real. However, as discussed in Chapter 1 section three (in connection with the lambs and birds of prey allegory from GM I 13), although this strategy may sound conscious and conspiratorial, it’s actually the product of complex psychological mechanisms that have to remain suppressed in order to be successful. Paul as the great architect saw a need and endeavored to satisfy it. As a member of the priestly class he manipulated it so as to manipulate the herd in turn. The slave revolt was, to be sure, a reactive movement. But it was more about the plebeians and priestly class empowering themselves than retaliating against the nobles for the sake of retaliation. Paul, as an individual member of the priestly class, simply supplied the means to do so.

Nietzsche observes that, with their power, the noble class exerts a degree of fear over the plebeians – and it is precisely this fear that gives rise to the plebeian’s re-valuation of the ‘good’

in contrast to the imposition of 'evil'. It is this 'degeneration of life' that eventually gives birth to the ascetic ideal (GM III 13). In Nietzsche's words:

According to slave morality the 'evil' inspire fear; according to master morality it is precisely the 'good' who inspire fear and want to inspire it... The antithesis reaches its height when, consistently with slave morality, a breath of disdain finally also comes to be attached to the 'good' of this morality' (BGE 260).

Therefore, the plebeians, due to their powerless state, define themselves, and likewise the 'good,' in contrast to the nobles by labeling the nobles 'evil' and, subsequently, themselves 'good' (GM I 10, 13). As Clark puts it in her article "Nietzsche's Immoralism and the Concept of Morality," "Good versus evil, however, is clearly supposed to be a moral distinction. Like good versus bad, it distinguishes superior from inferior people"⁹¹.

According to Nietzsche, slave morality introduces the term 'evil' for all things *powerful*, and redefines 'good', this time in a *moral* sense as the antithesis of 'evil' (i.e. meek). Thus, where the nobles defined 'good' in a creative and positive sense, the plebeians now define it in a negative sense – that is, in contrast to 'evil'.

This, then, is quite the contrary of what the noble man does, who conceives the basic concept 'good' in advance and spontaneously out of himself and only then creates for himself an idea of 'bad'! This 'bad' of noble origin and that 'evil' out of the cauldron of unsatisfied hatred – the former an after-production, a side issue, a contrasting shade, the latter on the contrary the original thing, the beginning, the distinctive *deed* in the conception of a slave morality – how different these words 'bad' and 'evil' are, although they are both apparently the opposite of the same concept 'good.' But it is not the same concept 'good': one should ask rather *precisely who* is 'evil' in the sense of the morality of *ressentiment* (GM I 11).

Thus, where the nobles gave etymological primacy to the concept 'good' by actively defining it, the plebeians grant etymological primacy to 'evil', and define 'good' only in contrast to it. It is therefore defined in *negation* – articulated by the declarative syllogism: "I am not that [noble], that is evil, therefore I am good". 'The good' becomes anything weak or humble (i.e. the

⁹¹ Clark NICM 25.

plebeians) while ‘the evil’ refers to anything powerful or threatening (i.e. the nobles) (GM I 7).

In Nietzsche’s words:

“The enemy” as the man of *ressentiment* conceives him – and here precisely is his deed, his creation: he has conceived “the evil enemy,” “the Evil One,” and this in fact is his basic concept, from which he then evolves, as an afterthought and pendant, a “good one” – himself! (GM I 10).

It is crucial to note that this process of appropriation and reorganization is itself a creative process. To reiterate a point I’ve made previously, an underlying and somewhat undeclared theme of Nietzsche’s entire analysis of morality is that morality is *always* a *creative* endeavor. Therefore, just as the morality of the nobles was a creative process of actively defining what it was to be a human, so too is the retaliatory slave morality of the plebeians a creative process. Slave morality’s “‘No’ is its creative deed” (GM I 10).

So what exactly constitutes this process of appropriation and reorganization? I maintain that it is still an expression of the will to power – the satisfaction and expansion of drives. It however can be done in a positive way or negative reactionary way. According to Nietzsche, slave morality is *fundamentally* reactionary and projects a realm above the noble class – above the ‘good’ – in order to challenge and critique it. For, if the noble class simply *is* the definition of good, the plebeians have no recourse but to establish something higher than the noble class in order to challenge that definition. They must reclaim the ‘good’ from the nobles by somehow projecting the ‘good’ over and above the nobles. Accordingly, they establish the universal, absolute, realm of the “moral world order” (A 25) in order to accomplish this. Slave moralities’ values become viable precisely in so far as they are presumed to exist in themselves and are thought not to be created. Therefore, any morality that acknowledges itself as ‘self-created’ becomes, *ipso facto*, ‘immoral’ by contrast Paul’s slave morality was the product of divine revelation⁹². And this now provides the grounds for the plebeians to be critical of the nobles on

⁹² 2 Corinthians 12, Galatians 1:12. This is the same distinction made in chapter 1 between A and B moralities – B moralities are marked by robust dogmatic moral realism.

the grounds that their morality is manufactured (i.e. its values do not exist in themselves), and simultaneously elevate their own morality above it by maintaining that theirs is absolute and real. As the architect Paul then invests this universal moral realm with values that serve the interest of the plebeian herd. “Slave morality is essentially the morality of utility” (BGE 260). Slave morality proceeds by redefining the concept 'good' by conceiving it in a *negative* sense.

So the reason Nietzsche approves of the noble's values and disapproves of slave morality is that the latter is a retaliation against the former. While some of these values may in fact benefit the weak and certainly the needs of the herd, the cost is that their insistence that all are equal in every significant way undermines the noble types. Accordingly it is not the case that Nietzsche thinks the noble's values were somehow more real or true compared to slave morality and therefore more worthy of belief. Since he denies the very existence of any moral properties independent of our attitudes and opinions, a value just is a value in so far as it's affirmed according to Nietzsche. As discussed in the previous chapter, it all comes back to the will to power for Nietzsche. So the difference is, where the noble's values are in concert with the will to power and promote growth and strength, slave morality is hostile to the will to power and promotes values that undermine individual strength and growth while at the same time promoting the strength and influence of the herd. In his article “Vengeful Thinking and Moral Epistemology”⁹³ Sinhababu points this out and argues that “Nietzsche approves of the noble morality not because it is true or because the nobles are epistemically justified in accepting it, but because it promotes the active, proud, strong-willed lifestyle that the nobles enjoy”⁹⁴. In support of this Sinhababu refers to BGE 4 where Nietzsche says, “The falseness of a judgment is to us not necessarily an objection to a judgment... The question is to what extent it is life-advancing, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-breeding” (BGE 4).

⁹³ In Leiter and Sinhababu (2007) *Nietzsche and Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) [VTME].

⁹⁴ Sinhababu VTME 267.

Sinhababu also argues that “vengeful fury of oppressed classes in ancient Rome caused them to invert the value system of their rulers and embrace slave morality”⁹⁵. I think Sinhababu rightly identifies *ressentiment* as the primary cause of this value inversion. In his words, “the slaves’ powerlessness and inability to act causes their *ressentiment* to build up inside them until it begins to reshape their beliefs and values”⁹⁶. Sinhababu then goes on to argue that there was no priestly conspiracy at all – that it was all a passive and subconscious phenomenon⁹⁷. Essentially Sinhababu argues that one cannot simply change one’s beliefs and values by mere conscious force of will. *Ressentiment* however can be a powerful value changing force on a passive and subconscious level.

I think however that Sinhababu has oversimplified the nature of the slave revolt that was Christianity according to Nietzsche. I think Nietzsche believes slave revolts are as inevitable as human conflict. That being said I maintain that Nietzsche thinks the Christian slave revolt was a special case given its scale and the near perfect storm of conditions that gave rise to it. Part of what made it unique and special is that it was the product of both a priestly conspiracy as well as historical conditions. I fail to see why the slave revolt must be either passive or conscious as Sinhababu argues. Why can’t it be both? Nor do I see why the active and conscious interpretation of Nietzsche’s analysis makes less sense. I would argue that it’s just the opposite. The biggest reason for this is Nietzsche’s discussion of Paul in *The Antichrist*. “Paul comprehended that the lie – that ‘faith’ – was needed; later the church in turn comprehended Paul. The ‘God’ whom Paul invented, a god who ‘ruins the wisdom of the world’ is in truth merely Paul’s own resolute *determination* to do this” (A 47). Whether he is right or wrong it’s clear that Nietzsche sees this as an active and conscious development in the case of Paul. According, to Nietzsche Paul was unquestionably the grand architect of the slave revolt and the new moral schema of good and evil. However, its spread and success was not itself a

⁹⁵ Sinhababu VTME 263.

⁹⁶ Sinhababu VTME 264.

⁹⁷ Sinhababu VTME 267.

conspiracy; rather, it was due to the fact that it tapped into universal features of human psychology in a highly manipulative way. This accounts for not only its spread but its longevity.

In his book *The Tipping Point* Malcolm Gladwell sets out to explain the ways in which trends, values, and ideas, can “tip” – which is to say, spread rapidly like an epidemic. He argues that the key to a message’s successful spread throughout a society is a combination of three factors in the messenger: a connector (people who are good social networkers who know the right people in the right places – i.e. people that serve as hubs of information), a salesman (a charismatic person with the ability to capture an audience’s attention), and a maven (a knowledgeable expert trusted by many who passes vital information on to others). In addition to these factors the message itself also has to be “sticky” according to Gladwell – namely, an attractive idea that is also memorable and significant. This he argues is what explains the wild success of Paul Revere’s midnight ride in getting the word out that the British were coming, and the failure of several others who also went out on their own midnight rides that night but did not make it into the history books. Paul Revere had the key ingredients. Likewise I would argue that what caused Paul’s version of Christianity to win out over others and spread like wildfire is that he was, like Paul Revere, a well-connected maven who was also a good salesman with a very “sticky” message to spread.

I think Sinhababu, though in different terminology, correctly identifies what made Paul’s message so “sticky”. He argues that vengeful thinking towards the nobles is a kind of wishful thinking. In his words, “As is the case with all varieties of wishful thinking, vengeful thinking disposes the slaves to believe that the states of affairs which they desire will come to pass. The more satisfying a kind of revenge against the nobles would be, the more powerfully vengeful thinking will dispose them to believe in it”⁹⁸. Paul’s message of unorthodox empowerment of the plebeians, coupled with a reclaiming of the notion of ‘good’ that is now rooted in the plebeians and the promise of justice for the weak and powerless (even if it is put off to the next

⁹⁸ Sinhababu VTME 264.

world), would be very attractive to the plebeians. This made it a very sticky message and Paul's itinerant lifestyle along with his connector, salesman, maven qualities almost guaranteed that his slave morality would quickly become an epidemic. What Gladwell's model points out is that the messenger is every bit as important as the message itself in terms of its ability to tip. So even though Paul's competitors like Peter tried to make their messages even more attractive and sticky by catering even more to the desires of the plebeians, theirs did not win out in the end because they could not compete with the three key ingredients Paul had, by all accounts, in spades as a messenger.

I think the other helpful model for understanding how the slave revolt happened is Richardson's reactive account of the corrupted expression of the will to power involved in a slave revolt. In his book *Nietzsche's System* Richardson distinguishes between the 'man-of-resentment' form of this corruption and the 'herd-animal' form. "He [Nietzsche] distinguishes (we might say) two main species of reactivity: the herd animal and the person of resentment, the former obeying by following the latter obeying by reacting against. Although Nietzsche pays much attention to the herd instinct, he takes far more interest in resentment"⁹⁹. I maintain that the slave revolt that is Christianity according to Nietzsche was in fact a perfect marriage of these two forms made possible by specific historical conditions. Specifically, Paul embodied the 'man of resentment' while the oppressed masses of the time embodied the 'herd animal'. After Paul and the emergence of Christianity a new kind of person came to be valued and thus a new morality. Given the historical conditions of the oppressed during this time, Paul's slave morality tipped and became an epidemic. In other words, in contrast to Sinhababu, I maintain that the slave revolt was both an active and conscious phenomenon as well as a passive one.

To his credit however Sinhababu does make some salient and significant points about the limits of wishful thinking related to the slave revolt. Though we are more likely to believe something if we strongly wish it were true, there's a critical point at which the undeniable brute

⁹⁹ Richardson NS 42.

facts of reality and experience render some beliefs, no matter how attractive, unbelievable. For instance, the plebeians may strongly desire to be more powerful than the nobles the facts of their everyday experience makes it impossible for them to believe this is actually the case. However, beliefs involving morality and the afterlife are much more difficult to falsify. Accordingly, their is much less empirical resistance to their belief. In Sinhababu's words, "These beliefs [afterlife and morality], if not totally isolated from empirical confirmation and disconfirmation, are at least difficult to confirm or disconfirm empirically. Evidence does not get in the way of vengeful thinking on these topics"¹⁰⁰. So it is much easier for the plebeians to wishfully think themselves into believing that they are good and the nobles evil, and that all will be rectified in the future or at least in the afterlife. This is the key to wishful thinking – there may be no data that suggests certain beliefs are true, but if there is no obvious data that can refute those beliefs and one wishes such beliefs to be true, there will be little to no resistance in believing them to be true. When it comes to human psychology nothing is more uncertain, unknown, and at the same time significant as what happens after we die. This makes it the perfect environment for vengeful wishful thinking to flourish – the dichotomy of the notions of heaven and hell perfectly illustrates this point.

This is likely the source of Nietzsche's animosity for "doctrines of the next world". They are breeding grounds for falsehoods born out of weakness and intellectual pettiness. In Nietzsche's words, "It was suffering and incapacity that created all afterworlds... weariness that wants to reach the ultimate with one leap, with one fatal leap, a poor ignorant weariness that does not want to want any more: this created all gods and afterworlds" (Z I 3 "Afterworldly" 143). Nietzsche sees such views as not only inherently intellectually cheap and lazy, and not only do they stem from weakness and a kind of nihilism and in opposition to the will to power, but they also negate life. They reduce this life and this world to nothing but a means to another. Nietzsche sees this as inherently life negating. This being said, these beliefs serve as powerful

¹⁰⁰ Sinhababu VTME 269.

cohesive forces in the service of slave moralities. All of this is perfectly illustrated in the case of extreme religious cults – most of which tend to attract weak individuals and are fundamentally rooted in wishful beliefs in some notion of the afterlife. In A 50 Nietzsche remarks that the psychology of faith is rooted, not in truth, but in wanting to believe and the pleasure a belief brings. He argues, “the greatest suspicion of a ‘truth’ should arise when feelings of pleasure enter the discussion” (A 50). Nietzsche even goes so far as to suggest that most people really aren’t even interested in the truth at all; but rather, desire veils to cover the truth (A 54, 57). In his words, “The service of truth is the hardest service” (A 50).

To sum up, master moralities are those which are motivated by strength and health, and facilitate strength and growth, whereas slave moralities are those which are motivated by weakness and sickness, and facilitate weakness and sickness. Accordingly, Nietzsche’s reaction to slave moralities in no way makes him a hypocrite – nor does it entail that his values are reactive in the way he criticizes Paul’s values of being. Nietzsche makes this abundantly clear in the following passage:

Master morality *affirms* not just as instinctively as Christian morality denies... These contrasting forms of the optics of value are *both* necessary: they are ways of seeing which are unaffected by reasons and refutations. One does not refute Christianity, just as one does not refute a defect of the eyes (CW Epilogue).

So Nietzsche affirms master morality because it promotes the values which he considers the most important. And this is the basis of Nietzsche’s critique of Paul. Due to the psychological pressure of the acute *ressentiment* felt by the oppressed, they are unconsciously rather than strategically compelled to view things in this negative way. This was the essence of Paul’s new moral world order. Paul’s system was consciously strategized but spread due to the fact that it satisfied powerful psychological needs for the plebeians and the priests of 1st century Palestine.

iii. Nietzsche and The Apostle Paul

Now we are finally in a position to address both the fairness as well as the consistency of Nietzsche's critique of Paul – specifically the lengthy discussion of Paul in *Dawn* 68. To sum up, Nietzsche argues that Paul simply appropriated the notion of Christ in order to vicariously and disingenuously promote his values. As Nietzsche puts it, the 'Holy Spirit' was in truth just Paul's spirit (D 68). "Without this remarkable history, without the storms of confusions of such a mind [Paul's], of such a soul, there would be no Christianity" (D 68). As we will discuss in detail Nietzsche also argues that Paul secretly hated the law because it could not be fulfilled so he plotted its destruction through the figure of Christ. This raises two big issues to resolve: *first*, on what grounds can Nietzsche criticize Paul when he in fact pursued and won considerable power? In Paul's words, "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works"¹⁰¹. *Second*, on what grounds can Nietzsche fault Paul for consciously attempting to modify the values of first century Jews and Christians? Was Paul not, like Nietzsche, just another re-valuator of values? Here again, these two aspects of Paul are in concert with Nietzsche's own notion of the will to power previously discussed as well as Nietzsche's *Übermenschian* ideal. In this light, Nietzsche's critique of Paul comes off as not only hypocritical, but petty, and even *ad hominem* in nature. There is no question that Nietzsche has nothing but disdain for Paul as an individual but the question is whether he had legitimate and non-hypocritical reasons for doing so. Consider that Nietzsche himself declares that "His [Paul's] need was for power" (A 42)!

First let's consider Nietzsche's provocative claim that Paul was really motivated by a secret desire to destroy the old laws of Judaism. "The 'God' whom Paul invented, a god who 'ruins the wisdom of the world' is in truth merely Paul's own resolute *determination* to do this" (A 47). In *Dawn* 68 Nietzsche argues:

¹⁰¹ 2 Corinthians 12:12. See also Romans 1:16, 15:19, 8:38 1 Thessalonians, 1:5, Galatians 3:5, 1 Corinthians 5:3-5.

And then he [Paul] discovered in himself that he himself – fiery, sensual, melancholy, malevolent in hatred as he was – could not fulfill the law, he discovered indeed what seemed to him the strangest thing of all: that his extravagant lust for power was constantly combating and on the watch for transgressors and goad... However much he tried to relieve this conscience, and even more his lust for domination, through the extremist fanaticism in revering and defending the law, there were moments when he said to himself: ‘It is all in vain! The torture of the unfulfilled law cannot be overcome’ ” (D 68).

So according to Nietzsche, Paul was so frustrated by his inability to fulfill the law that he decided to destroy it and replace it with mere faith. As an added bonus Paul would gain considerable power by filling in the vacuum left by the law with his own message – which goes beyond just the Jews and actually wins authority for Paul over the Gentiles as well. This, I take it, was Paul’s ‘lust for power’ – he desired to control the masses. “In Paul the priest wanted power once again – he could use only concepts, doctrines, symbols, with which one tyrannizes masses and forms herds” (A 42). Nietzsche calls this Paul’s ‘perfect revenge’ and argues:

The destiny of the Jews – no, of all mankind – seems to him [Paul] to be tied to this notion, to this second of his sudden enlightenment, he possesses the idea of ideas, the key of keys, the light of lights: henceforth history revolves around him! For from now on he is the teacher of the *destruction of the law* (D 68).

One can find support for this view in Paul’s own writings. Paul says things like “The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law”¹⁰². “If you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law”¹⁰³. “Christ is the end of the law”¹⁰⁴. And “If justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose”¹⁰⁵ – which comes across from Nietzsche’s perspective as a clear case of reverse engineering. He is presupposing his view of Christ’s purpose in order to validate his view of the law. As Nietzsche puts it (speaking as Paul):

God could never have resolved on the death of Christ if a fulfillment of the law had been in any way possible without this death; now not only has all guilt been

¹⁰² Romans 3:21.

¹⁰³ Galatians 5:18.

¹⁰⁴ Romans 10:4.

¹⁰⁵ Galatians 2:21. See also Romans 7:4, 8:3.

taken away, guilt as such has been destroyed; now the law is dead, now the carnality in which it dwelt is dead (D 68).

Moreover Paul was clearly engaged in a power struggle with other Apostles for authority and power over numerous congregations. He repeatedly feels the need to re-affirm his authority above all others by stating things like, “The signs of a *true apostle* were performed among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works”¹⁰⁶.

But here is where things get really confusing. Nietzsche seems to be criticizing Paul for no other reason than that he pursued and won power. Consider this description of Paul “The law was the cross to which he felt himself nailed: how he hated it! how he had to drag it along! how he sought about for a means of *destroying* it” (D 68). Assuming Nietzsche’s interpretation of Paul’s motives is accurate, this was no easy task and yet: Paul accomplished it according to Nietzsche. Moreover, wouldn’t the personal nature of this project amount to an act of self-overcoming in Nietzsche’s view? But here is perhaps the most confusing fact yet, despite the previous statements about the law, Paul also maintained that he was actually *blameless* under the law¹⁰⁷. This inconsistency in Paul’s message has been one of the biggest and most complicated issues in the history of Paul scholarship. And yet Nietzsche fails to even acknowledge this statement, despite the fact that it flew directly in the face of his thesis. Was Nietzsche somehow ignorant of this issue? And what do we make of all this?

It is hard to believe, given what a scholar Nietzsche was, that he is somehow ignorant of Paul’s conflicting statements regarding the fulfillment of the law. I think it is more likely that Nietzsche considers the single passage in Philippians a fluke compared to the numerous other passages where he argues that Christ was necessary because no man could fulfill the law. In Paul’s words, “God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do”¹⁰⁸. Whatever the explanation is, for our purposes, not nearly as much turns on this issue as the question of Nietzsche challenging Paul for his pursuit of power. Once again I maintain that Paul in fact

¹⁰⁶ 2 Corinthians 12:12 [my emphasis].

¹⁰⁷ Philippians 3:6.

¹⁰⁸ Romans 8:3. See also Romans 3:21, Romans 10:4, Galatians 5:18, Galatians 2:21, Romans 7:4.

desired power over the masses – not merely the Jews but also the Gentiles. Paul obsessively traveled to his various congregations in order to continually reassert his authority.

I maintain that Nietzsche is not criticizing Paul for his pursuit of power at all. In fact, if Nietzsche were pressured to say something positive about Paul, I am confident we would concede respect for Paul's itinerant lifestyle¹⁰⁹ and commitment to a difficult and complex project. What Nietzsche objects to is the moral values that Paul was promulgating. After Paul and the emergence of Christianity a new kind of person came to be valued and thus a new morality – both of which Nietzsche objects to. However, I do not think this in any way makes Nietzsche a hypocrite. From Nietzsche's perspective Paul was not a re-valuator of values like himself but a destructive 'improver of mankind' (TI "Improvers") who promoted sick and unhealthy values. I maintain Nietzsche regards revaluation as good only when it is to reverse sick and unhealthy values and promote healthy ones (which he of course saw himself doing). Moreover Nietzsche thinks that Paul's attempt at 'improving' mankind resulted in the slave revolt that brought down Rome and caused the cultural value schema to shift away from elitism to the morality of good and evil which benefits the weak and undermines the strong. So while Paul may not himself have been an ascetic, he set the stage for, and established the psychological mechanisms of, slave morality.

I maintain that from Nietzsche's perspective Paul did this in two primary ways. *First*, his conception of selfhood and the will. He more or less posited a Cartesian/Kantian view of the subject, arguing that will is singular and distinct from actions. In *Romans* Paul offers his famous "I" and "sin" passage:

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh... If I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me (Romans 7:14-20).

¹⁰⁹ It is perhaps worth noting that Nietzsche himself lived an itinerant vagabond sort of existence.

This kind of moral scapegoating, and the conception of the subject it presupposes, is clearly at odds with Nietzsche's views. Not only is there no singular will operating behind all deeds (GM I 13) there is no single will at all – rather a complex economy of wills (BGE 36). I don't think this view of the pure subject behind the will was original to Paul but I would argue that the coupling of it with the flesh/spirit dichotomy and the disassociation of the 'I' and actions were his invention. In fact Nietzsche himself blames Socrates for first articulating the singular will/soul model of human nature. As Alexander Nehamas argues in his book *The Art of Living* Socrates was:

The first to establish the notion that the soul (which he identified with rationality) is fundamentally different from the rest of us – from everything that according to Nietzsche in reality constitutes the human individual. He was not only the first modern but also the first Christian (Nehamas AL 140).

In this regard Socrates and Paul have a lot in common. Paul's claim that the old Jewish law no longer had authority, and that it had been replaced with the universal judgment of God in Christ, mirrors Socrates' claim that moral judgments are rational and therefore apply universally – without regard to individuals, circumstances, or instincts. Whether it was in the context of Socrates, Paul, Christianity, or Kant, it is this universalizing aspect of morality that was clearly the common denominator in Nietzsche's comprehensive critique of morality (TI 2, BGE 188, GS 335, D339, GM II 6). However, according to Nietzsche Socrates and Paul were the original moralizers. Where Paul invented the notion of spirit, Socrates selected rationality, but *both* attempted to define the essence of human nature in contrast to other competing instincts and drives. Nietzsche absolutely rejects this disregard for all the other significant human drives and instincts. On this point Nehamas says the following of Socrates; but I submit that it would (substituting "spirit" for "rationality") apply equally to Paul:

By giving it [rationality] absolute preeminence, Socrates convinced us not to think we comprise many things, all of them equally part of what we are. Instead, he persuaded us to identify ourselves with this one impulse, to consider it the seat of

the self, the mark of the human, and to distrust everything else about us as lower, degenerate, as features simply of the body or our fallen nature. Instead of integrating our various capacities, he convinced us to try to subjugate, perhaps even to destroy them (Nehamas AL 139).

What Paul and Socrates have in common then according to Nietzsche is that they are both sick and viewed, not only human nature, but life itself as a disease in need of a cure.

Second, Paul was attempting to “improve” mankind with his dichotomy of flesh and spirit. According to Nietzsche however this results in a non-integrated self that goes to war with itself and pits drives against one another, creating chaos and sickness in the subject. With his spirit/flesh distinction, Paul was exploiting the psychological need to be commanded discussed in the previous chapter and creating a profoundly sick subject. The more the agent tries to isolate the fictitious ‘spirit’ and subdue the fictitious ‘flesh’ the more sick they become. This results in the perpetually escalating sickness discussed in the previous chapter. To accomplish this, Paul employed the moral schema of good and evil, and the profoundly manipulative narrative of an alleged “present evil age”¹¹⁰ and ‘spirit/flesh’ dichotomy¹¹¹. In Paul’s words, “walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh”¹¹². Accordingly, the form of Christianity that emerged under Paul’s influence is essentially a war against the ‘higher type of man’ and his ‘basic instincts’ – which are considered evil (A 5).

In an effort to ‘improve’ mankind, Paul launched an all-out war on the flesh. Paul’s worldview was essentially that there were powerful oppressive elemental forces that he had the power to overcome through his unique access to “the Spirit”¹¹³. The “thorn in his side” described in 2 Corinthians 12:7 and Galatians 4:12-13 represented his “weakness” in the flesh; his strength, by contrast, resided in his spiritual possession of Christ. Put simply, the flesh was

¹¹⁰ Galatians 1:4.

¹¹¹ Galatians 5:16.

¹¹² Galatians 5:16.

¹¹³ See Romans 1:16, 15:19, 8:38 1 Thessalonians, 1:5, 2 Corinthians 12:12, Galatians 3:5, 1 Corinthians 5:3-5.

the battleground of spirit. In Nietzsche's eyes, however, Paul's war on the flesh amounted to a war on the passions and the instincts – on the will to power itself. Nietzsche argues:

People like St. Paul have an evil eye for the passions: all they know of the passions is what is dirty, disfiguring, and heartbreaking; hence their idealistic tendency aims at the annihilation of the passions, and they find perfect purity in the divine (GS 139)¹¹⁴.

Rather than improving or liberating people, Nietzsche think that Paul's views in fact enslaved the individual by chaotically pitting drives against each other in an futile attempt to shut down all drives (a.k.a. the 'flesh') so as to liberate the fictitious notion of 'spirit'. Thus, while it is true that Paul sought power and the creation of new values, his values were sick, unhealthy, and at odds with the will to power.

Paul was trying to control people by manipulating the way they view the nature of suffering. Like other priests and ascetics discussed in *The Genealogy* (GM I 13). Paul argued that we suffer because we can't control our drives. For Paul however, suffering is synonymous with the 'flesh'. The only solution then is to be found in the 'spirit'. However, if Paul's notion of 'spirit' is fabricated, and his notion of 'flesh' misguided, then he will not be able to deliver on his promise to control drives. But this reality will not deter his believers because, as previously discussed, they are attracted to the pleasure that attends a belief and not the truth. Accordingly, Paul can promise everything and yet deliver nothing because the believers want to believe (GS 347, A 50). In the end all Paul really achieves is the redirection of drives. According to Nietzsche however the only way to truly control drives is to exercise them.

On the subject of destructive "improvers" of mankind, Hurka, in his article "Nietzsche: Perfectionist," offers two interpretations. *First*, he argues that if one's activities stem from weakness and/or resentment they are corrupted expressions of the will to power and not worthy of value since they are reactive in nature; *second*, he argues that the activities are not worthy of value if their intent was to undermine the best and noble. Once again the activities are

¹¹⁴ See also WP 155.

reactionary and therefore corrupted expressions of the will to power. Hurka is indifferent with respect to these two views. I however am decidedly in favor of the former. In the *Antichrist* Nietzsche does not seem to be very concerned with Paul's intentions. Maybe they were more to empower one group rather than undermine another. Either way Nietzsche's real concern with Paul is that if Abraham was the father of faith, Paul was the father of *ressentiment*. As Nietzsche argues in the *Genealogy*, the act of punishment is just an action – what is more interesting is the various ways it can be interpreted (GM II 12). Paul offered a specific interpretation of the crucifixion and its meaning that systematically reoriented the focus of all valuing from this world to some imagined world to come and, fictitious notion of the 'Spirit'. "Our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like a glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself"¹¹⁵. At this point Paul's morality became *entirely misinterpretation*. In other words, not only was Paul's morality false, it was unnatural, undermined the potential of the higher types, and promoted sickness.

¹¹⁵ Philippians 3:20-21.

Chapter V: The Revaluation of Values

So what does my analysis of Paul, morality as anti-nature, and the will to be commanded tell us about the sorts of values that Nietzsche endorses? Does Nietzsche's provocative rhetoric make him a casuist? If not, what can we conclude about Nietzsche's positive views concerning morality and values? Specifically what exactly does Nietzsche mean by higher/noble kinds of morality (BGE 32, 202, TI 4)? The first 4 chapters have established a framework within which we can now discuss Nietzsche's positive views. Chapter 1 explored Nietzsche's critique of the various forms of morality while Chapter 2 established the anchor for his revaluation of values in the form of the will to power and his notion of health. Chapter 3 explored the sickness of the ascetic ideal while Chapter 4 contrasted Paul's revaluation with Nietzsche's. In this chapter we will now contrast Nietzsche's positive ideal of health (rooted in the will to power) with the full array of sick types first delineated in Chapter 2. This will allow us to articulate Nietzsche's positive views in connection with major features of his thought like the will to power and the eternal return.

Without question, one of the most provocative questions surrounding Nietzsche is, What ought to become of morality and related values in the wake of the death of God? Unfortunately we have only the first offering of his great project, *the revaluation of all values*, in the form of his book the *Antichrist*. Regardless, the two most significant casualties of this great event in terms of morality are that, not only must the notion of moral facts be abandoned, but so too must the old moral categories of 'good' and 'evil'. In Nietzsche's words:

Must the ancient fire not some day flare up much more terribly, after much preparation?... Whoever begins at this point, like my readers, to reflect and pursue his train of thought will not soon come to the end of it – reason enough for me to come to an end, assuming it has long since been abundantly clear what my *aim* is, what the aim of that dangerous slogan is that is inscribed at the head of my last book *Beyond Good and Evil*. – At least this does not mean “Beyond Good and Bad” (GM I 17).

I maintain that while Nietzsche doesn't offer his own moral system, he does offer a set of values that focus on the individual qua individual and have self-actualization (i.e. the free spirit that properly expresses the will to power) as their main goal – naturalistic values of strength and self-overcoming which Nietzsche sees as the opposite of the will to be commanded¹¹⁶.

By self-actualization I mean the higher and noble types winning their autonomy and establishing their own values. “The noble type of man feels himself to be the determiner of values... he knows himself to be that which in general first accords honor to things, he *creates values*” (BGE 260). Or as Nietzsche puts it in GS 290, strong natures and free spirits seek “constraint and perfection under a law of their own”. But how do these ideas relate to the discussion of the previous four chapters? Specifically what is it that unifies all these concepts? As Chapters 2 and 3 made clear, it will somehow have to come down to power and health for Nietzsche. Passages like BGE 260, GS 335, and GS 290 suggest that responsibility is a paramount feature of Nietzsche's naturalistic value schema, and I maintain that this is a product of his emphasis on the *uniqueness* of the free spirit as an autonomous agent and the *particulars* of the historical and life circumstances in which he or she finds herself. As we will discuss towards the end of this chapter, this kind of responsibility requires that one question and engage with their own unique pre-history. Furthermore, I maintain that it is understanding, embracing, and acting on these realities that sets the free spirit apart, and represents the highest articulation of power possible for humans – a state of self-actualization.

So what does it mean to move beyond *good* and *evil* but not beyond *good* and *bad*? In the simplest of terms I think Nietzsche means that we cannot help but value; the challenge is that we find new and non-moral ways of valuing. As Nietzsche states in *Twilight of the Idols*, “Life itself forces us to posit values; life itself values through us when we posit values” (TI 5). Where Dostoevsky thought that the death of God spelled the potential end of morality with his famous claim that “without God anything is permissible,”¹¹⁷ Nietzsche sees this event as, not the end of

¹¹⁶ The will to be commanded was first discussed in Chapter 3.

¹¹⁷ Dostoevsky *The Brothers Karamozov*.

meaning to human existence, but in some sense the beginning of a new and profoundly promising chapter – hence the title of his book *Dawn*.

i. The Value of Values

So if life forces us to value, how ought we to value? What exactly was Nietzsche's revaluation of values? I maintain that he intends this to be not merely a revaluation of what we value, but also *how* we value. As Leiter observes in his article "Morality in the Pejorative Sense,"¹¹⁸ Nietzsche's criticism of pity is not that pity is inherently a bad value merely because it somehow *always* "makes suffering contagious" (A 7); rather it makes suffering contagious only when we place too high a value on it. The problem is that when people overvalue pity they become too complacent and accepting of weakness – both in terms of themselves as well as in others. Expectations drop and mediocrity becomes more acceptable. Such values can, in effect, spread like a pathogen causing individuals to wallow in one another's weaknesses. More than anything, however, Nietzsche wants us to evolve beyond the notion that the value of values lies in sanctions and expected rewards. So Nietzsche is concerned not only with the value of the values but also an agent's motivations. In his words:

The most general formula on which every religion and morality is founded is: "Do this and that, refrain from this and that – then you will be happy! Otherwise..." Every morality, every religion, *is* this imperative. I call it the great original sin of reason, the *immortal un-reason*. In my mouth, this formula is changed into its opposite – first example of my "revaluation of all values" (TI 2).

By contrast, Nietzsche sees virtue as its own reward and considers sanction-based moral systems superficial and underdeveloped.

¹¹⁸ Leiter (1995) "Morality in the Pejorative Sense: On the Logic of Nietzsche's Critique of Morality" in *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 3/1:113-145 [MPS]

You who are virtuous still want to be paid! Do you want rewards for virtue?... And now you are angry with me because I teach that there is no reward and paymaster?... Alas, that is my sorrow: they have lied reward and punishment into the foundation of things, and now into the foundation of your souls, you who are virtuous (Z II “Virtuous”).

He adds: “You are too pure for the filth of the words: revenge, punishment, reward, retribution. You love your virtue as a mother her child; but when has a mother ever wished to be paid for her love?” And concludes: “grow weary of the old words you have learned from fools and liars. Weary of the words: reward, retribution, punishment, and revenge in justice”. Sounding almost Kantian, Nietzsche maintains that virtue must be pursued for its own sake – he even adds, “I do not even teach that virtue is its own reward”. Instead Nietzsche implores one to “be in your deed as the mother is in her child”. These statements seem to imply that it is neither the case that virtue gets you a reward nor is virtue even its own reward; as in the case of the genuinely nurturing mother, a reward simply isn’t involved.

From this we can conclude that when Nietzsche speaks of “higher moralities” he clearly has in mind a system of valuing rooted in virtues that focuses on individuals (as opposed to actions), and is not founded on either sanctions or duty-based values but values like honesty, self-knowledge, and responsibility. In Nietzsche’s words:

The proud awareness of the extraordinary privilege of *responsibility*, the consciousness of this rare freedom, this power over oneself and over fate, has in his case [the sovereign individual] penetrated to the profoundest depths and become instinct, the dominating instinct. What will he call this dominating instinct, supposing he feels the need to give it a name? The answer is beyond doubt: this sovereign man calls it his *conscience* (GM II 2).

Passages like this (along with GS 335) suggest that self-knowledge is a special and significant virtue for Nietzsche. In the same way he is skeptical about most people’s desire for the truth, he seems equally skeptical about most people’s desire for self-knowledge. For the sovereign individual, however, self-knowledge is, in almost any case, a good thing. This however does not refer to mere factual knowledge of oneself. That type of knowledge can in fact cause harm on occasion. As passages like GS 324 suggest, sometimes forgetting is a good thing. In contrast,

what I mean by self-knowledge in this context, is the critical engagement of an agent with his/her conscience and prehistory. I maintain that this engagement is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for the possibility of a sovereign individual. Accordingly this type of self-knowledge is not only beneficial but necessary in the case of a sovereign individual. Although Nietzsche is not always clear on the nature of this conscience, I take it that he means a kind of mature moral character that is able to move beyond childish punishment and reward based moralities. Passages like this clearly recall Socrates and his debate with Glaucon on the nature of justice, virtue, and character where Socrates argues that, ideally, justice and virtue should have little to nothing to do with consequences¹¹⁹. Nietzsche and Socrates seem to agree that virtue and noble values should be understood in terms of individuals and types rather than actions and consequences (BGE 260).

But beyond this, Nietzsche clearly thinks that virtue and value are intimately related to aesthetics – recall the previous discussion¹²⁰ of GS 290 where Nietzsche insists that one must give “style to one’s character”. We concluded that style here refers to the teleological organization of drives, but I maintain that this also gestures to an aesthetic element in that arrangement. Nietzsche goes on to argue that style

is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason... It will be the strong and domineering natures that enjoy their finest gaiety in such constraint and perfection under a law of their own. (GS 290).

So the idea seems to be that the aim of this organization is to make things beautiful. This is clear in a follow-up passage where Nietzsche states: “*What one should learn from artists.* – How can we make things beautiful, attractive, and desirable for us when they are not?” (GS 299). I submit that this is connected to Nietzsche’s ongoing analysis of the problem of suffering and is the biggest challenge. As we discussed in Chapter 3, the ascetic attempts to deal with, explain, and resolve his suffering in unhealthy and sick ways that in fact perpetuate a cycle of suffering. In the *Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche articulates a thesis that the early Greeks found healthy and life

¹¹⁹ See Plato’s *Republic* Book 2 (2.359a–2.360d).

¹²⁰ This topic was initially discussed in section two of Chapter 2.

affirming ways of understanding suffering with their creation of Greek tragedy. There one also finds his claim that “only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* is existence and the world eternally *justified*” (BT 5). He argues:

Art alone can re-direct those repulsive thoughts about the terrible or absurd nature of existence into representations with which man can live; these representations are the *sublime* whereby the terrible is tamed by artistic means, and the *comical*, whereby disgust at absurdity is discharged by artistic means (BT 7).

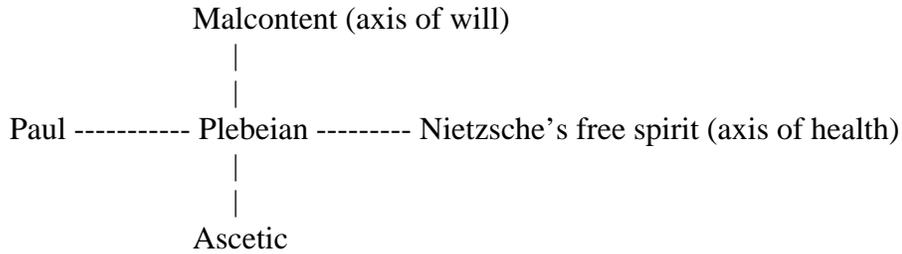
This notion that the affirmation of life and one’s self is essentially aesthetic in nature is an idea that Nietzsche revisits and further develops throughout nearly all his works. As he puts it in *Zarathustra*, “Creation – that is the great redemption from suffering” (Z I “Blessed Isles”). Given that this type of creation essentially involves choice and style (GS 290), it is necessarily an aesthetic project. The essence of the view is that, for the sake of health, one must embrace their nature rather than trying to modify or “improve” it. This however does not entail that we should just accept ourselves the way we are. Rather, as he argues in the *Birth of Tragedy*, the idea is to not allow the Dionysian side of one’s nature to war with the Apollonian side. In other words, one should embrace the universal features of the will to power within them so as to overcome the idiosyncrasies of their particular nature as it just so happens to be. It’s not about modifying one’s nature but rather overcoming the “improvements” others have tried to make with respect to human nature. In other words, it’s not about changing one’s nature, but changing how one comports oneself to their nature. As discussed in Chapter 2, the structural nature of the Apollonian aspect must harness the passion of the Dionysian aspect. This imperative, however, is not moral in nature but rather prudential – it facilitates health. Once again this requires an aesthetic element of style and balance to achieve – or, as Nietzsche puts it, it requires an “artistic means” (BT 7). As discussed in connection with the nurturing mother, virtues are not about external rewards, but rather, states of character. As I will further discuss in detail at the end of this chapter, I maintain that the ultimate aim of this aesthetic process is to create a free spirit that

is able to achieve self-actualization – the higher and noble types winning their autonomy and establishing their own values.

Here it is again important to point out that this in no way makes Nietzsche a hypocrite. He is of course critical of the reactionary nature of slave moralities, but he himself is not merely reacting to slave morality out of retaliation, but to overcome its sick and anti-nature characteristics. As discussed in Chapter 2 the contrast here is always between health and sickness. In Nietzsche's words:

Two types of morality must not be confused: the morality with which the healthy instinct defends itself against incipient decadence – and another morality with which this very decadence defines and justifies itself and leads downwards (WP 268).

It is only in light of this point that we can make sense of Nietzsche's critique of Paul. While it is true that Paul worked to establish new values and a new type of man, the values he was promulgating were born of retaliation, and promoted sickness and weakness. As previously discussed, while Nietzsche is himself in some ways retaliating against Paul's values, he is not retaliating just for the sake of retaliation; rather, he is attempting to cure and overcome Paul's sick values and replace them with his healthy ones. Insofar as Paul's values had style, Nietzsche rejects them because, for lack of a better way to put it, they were ugly. Here it might be helpful to distinguish the first-order sickness of the ascetic discussed in Chapter 3, and a second order sickness that involves the revaluation of values. In this way, Paul was not sick like the ascetic; rather he was, like Nietzsche, a creator of values who fought for a revaluation of the ways in which we value. But again, his values were retaliatory in nature and promoted sickness. As discussed in Chapter 2 concerning the extreme malcontent, there seem to be multiple axes involved rather than a simple continuum when it comes to the will to power – specifically an axis of will and an axis of health. I think the following model allows us to finally situate all the significant cases discussed in the previous chapters:



With respect to the axis of will the two extremes are the malcontent who has a cancerous and disorganized expansion of drives, and the ascetic who seeks to shut down and suppress drives and wills (as discussed in Chapter 2). Paul, the plebeian, and Nietzsche's free spirit all fall somewhere in between. With respect to the axis of health the two extremes are Paul and his sick slave morality values, and Nietzsche's free spirit and his healthy life affirming values who also possess a balanced and organized hierarchy of wills. The plebeian, malcontent, and ascetic all fall somewhere in between when it comes to health. The plebeian is at best innocuous and uninteresting, but the other three (Paul, the ascetic, and the malcontent) are all dangerous and destructive.

This however raises another interesting question with regard to Paul. To what degree was he self-actualized and did he possess style? If nothing else he clearly engaged in the singular project of institutionalizing and spreading Christianity. However, since his moral system was a "decadent" one that "leads downwards" he was not engaged in making things beautiful but rather ugly – which is to say, he was not resolving suffering but further promoting it with his life negating worldview. It is clearly people like Paul that Nietzsche has in mind when he discusses preachers of the next world in sections "On the Afterworldly" and "On the Despisers of the Body" in *Zarathustra*. So although people like Paul may have been self-actualized and pursued power, they are life-negators and "poison-mixers" (Z Prologue 3) according to Nietzsche.

To return however to the question of style and aesthetics, it should be noted that Sartre would later make a very similar claim regarding the connection between aesthetics and ethics in his work *Existentialism is a Humanism*, and I maintain that Nietzsche would affirm many of

Sartre's ideas. For instance, Nietzsche would no doubt embrace Sartre's treatment of Dostoevsky's famous claim that without God anything is permitted. Sartre argues: "Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist, and man is in consequence forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend on either within or outside himself. He discovers forthwith that he is without excuse"¹²¹. While Nietzsche would no doubt take issue with Sartre's analysis of free will, I am confident he would agree with the general sentiment of Sartre's point. If one is not actively creating, evaluating, and affirming values for themselves, someone else or some other institution/system is doing it for them – as in the case of slave moralities. In so doing, the values of slave moralities spread like computer viruses and render agents sick by subversively appropriating their autonomy. Consider that, if there truly are no moral facts, only a moral interpretation of facts (BGE 108), then it is the affirmation of a value that in fact gives it its value, authority, or power; which is to say, the value of values does not lie in nature itself but in our human interactions, attitudes, and opinions¹²². Normally we assume that it is the value of a value that gives it its legitimate authority – however, it is frequently the authority of a value that gives it its arbitrary value. After all, of what value is an unenforceable law, however good and noble it may be? And as discussed in Chapter 3, any value (no matter how arbitrary) is better than none. In our all too common non-reflective moods we simply assume that values that effectively command are automatically good ones. As it will be discussed later, we get caught up in, and confused by, not only the prehistory of our cultural values, but also the prehistory of our individual values. Slave moralities exploit this fact and once one takes hold, like any virus, it is difficult to overcome because it establishes a narrative of meaning that the agent becomes schematically locked into.

To better understand this aspect of values that slave moralities take advantage of reconsider the conch in Golding's *The Lord of the Flies* discussed in Chapter 1. The shipwrecked children in the story decide that whoever has the conch has the floor and is free to

¹²¹ Solomon (2005) *Existentialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 211.

¹²² See Chapter 1 discussion of legal realism.

address the group. It was intended to represent and ensure equality and free speech. Initially everyone affirms its value and authority – and its power and value is rooted precisely in that fact. However, the older children soon begin to openly mock the conch and its value. As soon as the children stop affirming its value it loses all authority. On the flip side, inferior, sick, or unnatural values can actually gain authority, value, and power if they are affirmed by the herd. It is this feature of axiology that makes slave moralities possible.

So if there are no absolute values in nature – with the exception of power itself, which is simply the mark of the living according to Nietzsche (BGE 36) – we are then fully responsible for the values we create and affirm. This I maintain is the essence of master/noble moralities. In contrast to slave moralities, they are focused, not on universal actions, but individuals as representative types, and the creation and affirmation of healthy values. Thus once one is able to emancipate themselves from the herd, in Sartre’s words, “He cannot find anything to depend on either within or outside himself. He discovers forthwith that he is without excuse”¹²³. Consider the example Sartre uses to illustrate this point. He offers the story of a soldier who must decide whether to go to war and fight for his country or stay home and take care of his sick mother. According to Sartre he has duties and obligations to do both that are equally strong and yet he can only do one of them – the choice to do the one is simultaneously the choice not to do the other. So how is he to decide? Sartre argues that there are no objective moral principles to consult in such a difficult case. There is no moral equation to crunch that will tell him what he ought to do. Instead he is forced to choose for himself. Only he can decide – only he can choose for himself which duty supersedes the other. It requires therefore a subjective element of aesthetic taste precisely because objective facts and imperatives are absent.

Here an interesting point arises. This sentimentalism couldn’t be more opposed to Kant’s deontological ethics and is likely the source of much of Nietzsche’s contempt for it.

¹²³ Solomon (2005) *Existentialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 211.

What! You admire the categorical imperative within you? This “firmness” of your so-called moral judgment? This “unconditional” feeling that “here everyone must judge as I do”? Rather admire your selfishness at this point. And the blindness, pettiness, and frugality of your selfishness. For it is selfish to experience one’s own judgment as a universal law; and this selfishness is blind, petty, and frugal because it betrays that you have not yet discovered yourself nor created for yourself an ideal of your own, your very own – for that could never be somebody else’s and much less that of all, all! Anyone who still judges “in this case everybody would have to act like this” has not yet taken five steps toward self-knowledge... (GS 335).

What this passage makes clear is that Nietzsche is far more interested in when to make an exception of yourself – which requires self-knowledge rather than simply going by the book. Consider that Kant’s whole categorical imperative is designed precisely to keep an agent from *ever* making an exception of themselves. In this way it too strips out the unique and aesthetic qualities of any situation. Nietzsche clearly rejects Kantian values with the same zeal as Christian values. In fact, in the context of Christianity and guilt, Nietzsche declares that the categorical imperative “smells of cruelty” (GM II 6).

For Nietzsche, autonomy is not the free submission to a feigned moral law – which I argue Nietzsche would see as a paradoxical case of weakness of will analogous to that of the ascetic ideal’s – rather it is the direct commanding of oneself which is more of an aesthetic kind of self-actualization than a moral kind of self-domestication. Once again, the particulars of circumstances are not always amiable to general rules or facts regarding what one ought to do. As such, the only alternative option is to regard oneself as an individual in unique circumstances. In the absence of prefabricated rules and facts, all that remains are subjective considerations rooted in style and character. I maintain that Nietzsche’s point is that general guidelines and generic rules of thumb are fine, and in fact good, for the herd, but they shouldn’t be allowed to hamstring the higher noble types. As it was argued in Chapter 3, the nobles are defined by the fact that they tend to flourish precisely where rules are lacking. By contrast the average plebeian needs to invent/obey rules that satisfy the need to be commanded.

However, despite all this, Kant too rejected sanction-based moral systems and also emphasized the importance of intentions rather than consequences. Nevertheless, Nietzsche accuses Kant of in fact furthering these kinds of religious moral imperatives under the guise of a secularized morality. In Nietzsche's words:

Nothing is rarer among moralists and saints than honesty... The philosophers are merely another kind of saint, and their whole craft is such that they admit only of certain truths – namely those for the sake of which their craft is accorded *public* sanctions – In Kantian terms, truths of *practical* reason. They know what they must prove; in this they are practical. They know what they must prove (TI 42).

Nietzsche however hedges this point in *Dawn* where he concedes that:

It goes without saying that I do not deny – unless I am a fool – that many actions called immoral, ought to be avoided and resisted, or that what many call moral ought to be done and encouraged – but I think the one should be encouraged and the other avoided *for other reasons than hitherto*. We have to *learn to think differently* – in order at last, perhaps very late on, to attain even more *to feel differently* (D 103).

Passages like this where Nietzsche talks about the reasons behind actions, suggest that, like Kant, Nietzsche is equally concerned with motives. Unlike Kant however, Nietzsche did not see duty as a good alternative to sanction-based hypothetical imperatives. He considers that just a new form of the same old 'social straitjacket' (GM II 2). Rather, he implores us to *think* differently. As the above passage suggests, for Nietzsche to *think* differently is ultimately, in the end, to *feel* and value differently. To reiterate an earlier point, the value of values comes from one's affirmation of them – which is to say, the value of values is a product of how we comport ourselves to them.

So what does Nietzsche offer in place of such imperatives? First, the above passage highlights the importance of *honesty* and *authenticity*. Other important motivators that we have already explored are *responsibility* and *autonomy* – the virtues of the free spirit and sovereign individual (GS 335). It seems clear then that Nietzsche wants to move beyond reward and

punishment, sanction-based (or hypothetical imperative based) moral systems that focus on *actions*, and towards values rooted in *self-knowledge* that focuses on *individuals*. As previously discussed in Chapters 1 and 3 this is the basic structure of master morality – its values apply to individuals as representative types rather than to actions (self-knowledge is important in this regard and will be discussed shortly). The problem is that, while Kant may deserve some credit for this, his deontological ethics is still firmly rooted in the schema of ‘good’ and ‘evil’. But to move beyond ‘good’ and ‘evil’ means that we must overcome all moral systems that involve the schema of good and evil. This of course does not mean to move beyond ‘good’ and ‘bad’ however (GM I 17). From Nietzsche’s perspective the most recent incarnation of this traditional form of morality was Kant’s deontological ethics. To move beyond good and evil, and towards good and bad, means to transcend not only Christian morality but also Kantian.

ii. Free Will, Autonomy, and Kant

When it comes to Nietzsche contra Kant, the status of free will and nature of responsibility are clearly ground zero. In fact Nietzsche’s notion of responsibility is at the very heart of his conception of free will. Freedom and responsibility are things that have to be won and achieved. Nowhere is this clearer than in the section of *Genealogy of Morals* where he discusses ‘the long story of how *responsibility* originated’. There he says:

The task of breeding an animal with the right to make promises evidently embraces and presupposes as a preparatory task that one first *makes* men to a certain degree necessary, uniform, like among like, regular, and consequently calculable... With the aid of the morality of mores and the social straitjacket, man was actually *made* calculable (GM II 2).

The free spirit, or sovereign individual, is then best understood as an individual with the strength to break out of these old oppressive forms of morality. The herd, which is composed of individually weak wills, becomes strong as a whole through the use of strict rules governing

actions that make them predictable and calculable. This kind of moral system is like a “social straitjacket” – especially for the strong-willed individual. In order to become free and a *sovereign individual* this kind of oppressive morality must be overcome. Nietzsche thus adds:

If we place ourselves at the end of this tremendous process, where the tree at last brings forth fruit, where society and the morality of custom at last reveal what they have simply been the means to: then we discover that the ripest fruit is the *sovereign individual*, like only to himself, liberated again from morality of custom, autonomous and supramoral (GM II 2).

There is, according to Nietzsche, a certain weakness that accompanies *faith in free will* as opposed to the strength that is required to become a *free spirit* or *sovereign individual*. In a sense he diagnoses faith as a weakness of will. A *free spirit* is a will that is strong enough to command *itself* as opposed to a will that is ‘free’ but needs *to be commanded* (as discussed in Chapter 3). He says in *The Gay Science* that:

Wherever we encounter a morality, we also encounter valuations and an order of rank of human impulses and actions. These valuations and orders of rank are always expressions of the needs of a community and herd... Morality is the herd instinct in the individual (GS 116).

Here again the concern is that the values of the herd will have the tendency to hamstring the noble higher types. Instead they should be allowed to explore and experiment with the nuanced details of every unique situation and the aesthetic significance that accompany them. They should be afforded the freedom to bend the rules, as it were, and make exceptions of themselves.

Kant, of course, would disagree with this idea. What this suggests is that, while both Kant and Nietzsche stress the importance of autonomy with respect to morality, Nietzsche’s view of autonomy and its relationship to morality is very different from Kant’s. Not surprisingly, however, the differences no doubt stem from the fact that Kant tended to approach the topic of morality in a highly *theoretical* way whereas Nietzsche approaches it in a highly *pragmatic* and *historical* way. There is indeed a very complex dialectic that must be unpacked and unraveled

when it comes to Nietzsche's and Kant's critiques of traditional forms of morality. According to Nietzsche, slave morality is essentially characterized by the conditional hypothetical imperatives (to use Kant's terminology) of the herd. When it comes to the concept of free will one thing is clear from the beginning: the tension between Nietzsche and Kant on the topic of free will revolves around the issue of *autonomy*. Since Nietzsche views autonomy as something that can only be achieved by a select few 'free spirits', whereas Kant understands autonomy as something that is inherently present in any rational being, it should come as no surprise that they draw radically different normative conclusions. The term in fact picks out a different phenomenon for both. For Kant the idea is that *ought implies can*¹²⁴ and therefore autonomy is already present in any moral (i.e. rational) agent. For Nietzsche, however, autonomy is something that must be won.

The difference plays out in the following way: Kant says to consider your actions with respect to the whole of humanity, whereas Nietzsche says to consider your actions in *contrast* to humanity as a whole (i.e. individually). The idea is that if freedom and real autonomy are things that can only be achieved by a select few, by in fact overcoming the prejudices of morality, it is not surprising that, as previously observed, Nietzsche understands ethics as primarily about knowing *when to make an exception of yourself*. "The taste of the higher types is for exceptions" (GS 3). Nothing however could be further removed from the ideal of the categorical imperative. The following passage from *Dawn* sums up, quite succinctly and directly, this common theme in Nietzsche's critique of Kant.

If an action is performed not because tradition commands it but for other motives (because of its usefulness to the individual, for example), even indeed for precisely the motives which once founded the tradition, it is called immoral and is felt to be so by him who performed it (D 9).

It is clear that both Nietzsche and Kant place the highest value on autonomy. But the difference is that Kant treats autonomy as a given and a presupposition, whereas Nietzsche sees

¹²⁴ See Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* 8: 287 [CPR].

it as something that has to be fought for and earned since many *all too human* obstacles stand in its way. In terms of Kant's predominantly theoretical treatment of morality, he maintained that it presupposes freedom and autonomy for the simple fact that *ought* implies *can*. In a sense it is a weak transcendental argument that takes the following form: if morality is essentially about what one *ought* to do then in so far as morality is even possible or intelligible it requires that humans are, minimally, *capable* of being autonomous and freely acting. In other words, formally, *ought* implies and presupposes *can*, and both are preconditions for the very intelligibility of morality. Thus, for Kant, morality essentially culminates in terms of autonomy. The general metaphysical schema in Kant's deontology is that the true supreme moral law is unconditional and universally binding – which is to say it is *categorical* in nature as opposed to hypothetical. Accordingly he argues that it can only be rooted in something like reason. It is no coincidence for Kant that humans are not only the only rational animals but also the only ones that are capable of making moral evaluations – rationality and morality are intimately related for Kant. Since both reason and our will belong to the *noumenal* realm of things in themselves, reason is universal and unconditional, and our will is free since it stands outside the fully determined causal nexus of the *phenomenal* realm¹²⁵. Accordingly, simply in virtue of our rationality, we can *know* what we ought to do (in virtue of the categorical imperative), and we can in fact *do* so (since our will is free) – in other words, a good will is possible, and it is possible for humans to do the right thing simply because it is the right thing. A good will is in essence a will that is fully actualized *in itself* – which is to say, a will that is as unfettered as possible from the inclinations and desires of the phenomenal realm. A good will is therefore a fully *autonomous* will. This is why Kant stresses so much that it is not enough that one act *in accordance with duty*, one must act *from the motive of duty* for their action to have any moral worth¹²⁶.

In contrast to Kant, Nietzsche seems to define autonomy and freedom, not as the metaphysical preconditions for the intelligibility of morality, but rather, as the act of overcoming

¹²⁵ Kant *Groundwork on the Metaphysics of Morals* 4:452, 4:457 [GMM].

¹²⁶ Kant GMM 4:397-398.

‘Morality’ (slave morality) so as to attain genuine freedom and become worthy of responsibility by taking ownership of and creating values. Recall however that this overcoming is non-reactive in nature – it is rather an affirmative act.

Master morality *affirms* not just as instinctively as Christian morality denies... These contrasting forms of the optics of value are *both* necessary: they are ways of seeing which are unaffected by reasons and refutations. One does not refute Christianity, just as one does not refute a defect of the eyes (CW Epilogue).

So if slave morality is understood as a defect then overcoming it is not reactive in the way that slave morality is with respect to master morality. Consider that the nobles are indifferent to the plebeians – they just don’t want them getting in the way. The slaves however completely react to the nobles (GM I 13). They define the good in opposition to the nobles. In Nietzsche’s words, “Slave morality from the outset says No to what is ‘outside,’ what is ‘different,’ what is ‘not itself’; and *this* No is its creative deed” (GM I 10). Freedom and autonomy are prizes to be won by overcoming this reactive negativity.

For Kant, however, freedom and autonomy are givens that render the very project of morality possible; accordingly, Kant begins with the concepts of freedom and autonomy and ends with the moral law. Nietzsche however begins with *morality* and *customs* and ends with *freedom* and *autonomy* as values, which must be earned, won, and achieved, and are essentially *not* givens. Nietzsche says as much in the following passage from *Twilight of the Idols*:

What is freedom? That one has the will to assume responsibility for oneself... The human being who has *become free* – and how much more the spirit who has become free – spits on the contemptible type of well-being dreamed of by... Christians... The free man is a *warrior*. How is freedom measured in individuals and peoples? According to the resistance which must be overcome, according to the exertion required, to remain on top. The highest type of free man should be sought where the highest resistance is constantly overcome (TI 38).

Thus Nietzsche’s unique conception of free will is antithetical to Kant’s. Though their respective critiques of morality cross paths in terms of the significance of autonomy, its direction

of fit with respect to responsibility and morality is likewise reversed for Kant and Nietzsche. For Kant, the *moral imperative* is designed to never allow an individual to make an exception of themselves; whereas for Nietzsche, the most important question (at least for the nobles) is precisely when one should (prudentially) make an exception of themselves and throw out general rules. Unlike Kant, for Nietzsche this is the way in which one in fact *becomes* autonomous.

Another major recurring theme in Nietzsche's philosophy is that even the genius of Kant was not able to escape the historical prejudices of morality – as a result he simply reinvented them. Thus Nietzsche declares, “Kant's success is merely a theologian's success” (A 10-11). There is no shortage of passages where Nietzsche argues exactly this point.

The tartuffery, as stiff as it is it is virtuous, of old Kant as he lures us along the dialectical bypaths which lead, more correctly, mislead, to his 'categorical imperative' – this spectacle makes us smile, we who are fastidious and find no little amusement in observing the subtle tricks of old moralists and moral-preachers (BGE 5)¹²⁷.

By referring to Kant as an “old moralist” in connection with his categorical imperative, Nietzsche is no doubt observing that in addition to sharing the same objectionable moral postulates with Christian morality, Kant's deontology is also guilty of focusing on actions (i.e. universalizable actions) as opposed to individuals¹²⁸ – as such the moral categories of 'good' and 'evil' are better adapted to Kant's morality than the categories of 'good' and 'bad'. Nietzsche criticized Kant for attempting to preserve the moral postulates of 'God', 'soul', and 'free will' through his notion of *practical reason* even though Kant himself argued in the first *Critique* that none of the theoretical proofs for such postulates work. The very notion of *practical reason*, according to Nietzsche, is, by Kant's own admission, a reinvented form of faith. The following famous passage from the preface of the *Critique* makes it clear that Kant indeed desired to preserve these notions. There Kant says:

¹²⁷ See also A 10-11, and GS 193.

¹²⁸ This was first discussed in section one of Chapter 1.

the *assumption* – as made on behalf of the necessary practical employment of my reason – of *God, freedom, and immortality* is not permissible unless at the same time speculative reason be deprived of its pretensions to transcendent insight... I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for *faith* (CPR B xxx).¹²⁹

And if that is not enough, Kant's deontology also shares the dogmatic quality of Christian morality in the sense that perfect duties and the unconditioned moral law revealed by the categorical imperative seem also to declare "I am morality itself, and nothing is morality besides me!" (BGE 202).¹³⁰

I submit that one of sharpest ways to see the contrast between Kant and Nietzsche is by comparing the categorical imperative with Nietzsche's notion of the eternal return. In the words of Nietzsche's demon in *The Gay Science*, the thought experiment is imagine:

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 (GS 341).

It should be noted that for our present purposes I will only be discussing one aspect of the eternal return – namely its element of universality which it shares in common with Kant's categorical imperative. However the role it plays and the direction of fit with regard to the individual is precisely opposite. The categorical imperative demands that you consider the maxims of your actions as universal laws for all. The eternal return however forces an agent to universalize the significance of their actions. Particular actions are given universal significance qua the individual as an individual under the eternal return. By contrast the maxim of a particular action is given universal significance qua the individual as a token human representative. So the shift is back to *individuals* (considered holistically) rather than *actions* (considered universally). Here again an essentially aesthetic element emerges – the evaluative criteria for individuals is

¹²⁹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Norman Kemp Smith translation).

¹³⁰ See discussion of B moralities in section one of Chapter 1.

aesthetic in nature. It forces one to consider what type of life would be worth reliving – presumably it would be one with great *style*. In other words, it forces us to rethink the things we value in life and the ways in which we value them. What makes this contrast so interesting in contrast to Kant is that wants, interests, and desires are factored back into the equation with Nietzsche *but precisely not* in the superficial manner of hypothetical imperatives and sanction-based moralities since they have now been given universal significance. So while the categorical imperative is engineered to remove such contingent elements, the eternal return is engineered to render them universal in nature. In this manner, we move beyond *good* and *evil* – though not beyond *good* and *bad*.

In his article “Nietzsche on Free Will, Autonomy, and the Sovereign Individual”¹³¹ Gemes also touches on the idea that there is an aesthetic element involved. He argues that Nietzsche has a naturalistic account of the will in which humans are understood as collections of “disparate forces” and strong wills “actively collect, order and intensify some of those disparate forces and create a new direction for them, thereby, in fortuitous circumstances, reorienting, to some degree, the whole field of forces in which they exist” – in so doing they “exercise a form of free will and genuine agency”¹³². Gemes rightly concludes that “Nietzsche, then, should not be seen simply as one who rejects received metaphysical notions of free will, autonomy, agency, personhood, and soul, but as one who replaces them with immanent naturalistic accounts”¹³³. According to Gemes this naturalistic account includes an aesthetic element and states, “Nietzsche offers what might be called, a naturalist-aestheticist account: To have a genuine self is to have an enduring coordinated hierarchy of drives”¹³⁴. Most people fail to have this element of style (GS 290) and are just a “jumble of drives” – or average plebeian types. But the sovereign individual is able to rise above all this.

¹³¹ In Gemes and May (2009) *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) [NFASI].

¹³² Gemes NFASI 42.

¹³³ Gemes NFASI 45.

¹³⁴ Gemes NFASI 46.

To understand how this works, let us focus on this aesthetic element specifically. *First*, what is it exactly? *Second*, why is this aesthetic feature necessary? I submit that it goes back to the issue of responsibility and the significance of particulars. Consider the previously discussed case of Sartre's soldier. He found himself in unique and complicated circumstances. Sartre's soldier had no specific rules or guidelines to consult. However, he took seriously the particulars of his circumstances. Accordingly he took ownership of the situation and became responsible for his actions. The idea is to consult one's conscience and, through self-knowledge (GS 335), question it, and then finally act. Conscience plays an important role but not a decisive one for the sovereign individual. The conscience should be considered only an internal interlocutor with whom one can have a dialogue about the appropriate course of action. I would argue that an over-dependence on the conscience can lead to what the behavioral economist Dan Ariely calls "self herding"¹³⁵. Though Nietzsche does not describe it in these terms, I am confident that he is concerned with the same phenomena. The problem is that if one takes their conscience only at face value, they neglect the prehistory that established it. Self herding results when one allows their past actions to arbitrarily dictate future behavior. Moreover, past actions may not even be relevant to every situation, and in such cases the conscience actually does more to obfuscate the prudent course of action than inform it.

Consider Sartre's soldier. How useful is his conscience going to be in deciding what to do? It's such a unique and difficult case that it probably won't be of much assistance. This is not to say that the soldier's conscience will be neutral. Far from it, it could probably push for either course of action. But even if it did favor one course of action over the other, it would probably be due to something arbitrary. For instance, maybe he recently heard a story of a heroic soldier in the news – or a story of a fallen soldier killed by friendly fire. The arbitrary fact that he recently heard one story or the other should not influence his decision one way or the other, and yet if he uncritically listens to his conscience it likely will. Sartre's account of the

¹³⁵ Ariely, Dan (2010) *The Upside of Irrationality*.

soldier presents him as an agent in a contextual vacuum, burdened by the weight of his radical free will. Nietzsche's view however would be that the soldier isn't confronted with his own radical free will but the thoroughly messy entanglements of his own conscience and prehistory. For Nietzsche, individuality emerges precisely out of one's engagement with their conscience. So these are the three steps involved in moral actions discussed in Chapter 1 in connection with GS 335. Nietzsche's concern is that people all too frequently neglect the middle step and take the immediate voice of their conscience as gospel. The problem is that when this happens one neglects to consider the origins of that voice and that it has a "pre-history in your instincts, likes, dislikes, experiences, and lack of experiences"; accordingly, "there are a hundred ways in which to listen to your conscience" and so if one is not careful they may end up "accepting blindly what you have been *told* ever since your childhood was right" (GS 335). This is important because it involves an exercise of creativity, and freedom, and therefore also of power.

In his article "Nietzsche's Freedoms"¹³⁶ Richardson asserts that "*Power* is Nietzsche's ur-value"¹³⁷ and appropriately cites GM II 2, and WP 770. He also emphasizes the idea that freedom is always evolving according to Nietzsche¹³⁸. In Richardson's words:

Freedom is not, it becomes. It must be studied as a long cultural process, within which we now discover ourselves to stand at a certain point. Freedom now means what its history has shaped it to mean – and the latter is what genealogy discovers. But freedom is still becoming, and we can participate in this, by carrying out a reevaluation of it in the light of that genealogy (Richardson NF 132).

I think these two points (that power is Nietzsche's ur-value and freedom is an evolving process) are indispensable for understanding Nietzsche's notion of autonomy and the sovereign individual. Richardson goes on to describe this evolving process in three stages. *First*, the unifying of drives or 'drive synthesis'. The unifying of drives involves the element of style (GS 290) discussed in Chapter 2, and is synonymous with Gemes' naturalistic-aestheticist account.

¹³⁶ In Gemes and May (2009) *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) [NF].

¹³⁷ Richardson NF 129.

¹³⁸ Richardson NF 130.

The *second* stage according to Richardson is the ‘deliberative self’ where an agent becomes aware of the cultural prehistory of their values and the way in which they value – the idea is to ‘demoralize’ them and naturalize them. In light of this analysis an agent consciously chooses their direction. The problem with slave moralities is that they confuse both stages of this process according to Richardson. In his words:

The development and rise to dominance of slave morality – which Nietzsche often just calls ‘morality’ – has made such masterly harmony between drives and agency much harder and perhaps impossible. Where morality is strong, it makes agency (conscious thinking and choosing) an avowed enemy to the drives; agency has the task of repressing and indeed eliminating these drives... Nietzsche thinks that we moderns have been drive-damaged by morality’s long rule (Richardson NF 144).

The inability to assess and organize drives makes the *third* stage, ‘self-genealogy,’ nearly impossible. The final stage is to engage with one’s own prehistory and how one comports oneself to one’s values – as Nietzsche discusses in GS 335. However, if slave morality is overcome, this evolving process culminates in freedom. Richardson describes it as follows:

Most broadly, freedom is something historical: an ability – with a linked idea of itself – that has been built very gradually through human history, and in such a way that earlier stages are layered beneath more recent ones. To say freedom ‘is’ we must tell this history, and also show how this history is now embodied in us, in a layered capacity that works in our drives, in our agency, and now also in our genealogical insight into that agency (Richardson NF 149).

I think Richardson’s analysis is exactly right and highlights the fact that, much like Nietzsche’s views of the will, his account of freedom and autonomy is complicated and messy. Unlike with Kant, there are no absolutes when it comes to autonomy; rather, the very concept is highly contextual and relative. Nevertheless, the achievement of freedom is a singular process (of organizing drives) and once obtained it is an ever evolving state.

Earlier in this chapter I tentatively agreed with Richardson’s notion that power is Nietzsche’s “ur-value” but I maintain that an important, though frequently neglected,

qualification needs to be made. Nietzsche may speak at times as if power has purely intrinsic value (A 2, BGE 36) but I think this is misleading. If power for power's sake were truly Nietzsche's highest value then he would have no grounds to criticize Paul, nor would he have any grounds to reject the rising force of German nationalism throughout the 19th century. Nietzsche had to be aware of this. Accordingly, as discussed in Chapter 2 in connection with Reginster, I maintain that it is not just that resistance is to be overcome for Nietzsche, but resistance in the face of a choice-worthy end. So what makes one end choice-worthy and another not? I think for Nietzsche it is whether or not the desired end promotes health or not. Therefore Nietzsche would not regard Paul as a free spirit despite his accomplishments (many of which were difficult) and his creation of new values and a new type of man. He was for Nietzsche, in the final analysis, merely a sick "improver" of mankind. Power is simply measured by the ability to achieve desired ends. For Paul, this desire was to spread his particular vision of Christianity; and he was clearly very successful in that endeavor. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, what matters is not just the difficulty of desired ends, but their value. This is where the question of health versus sickness emerges yet again. Paul's legacy has been a long and far-reaching one but since his values were unhealthy and sick it is objectionable.

To reiterate a point from the first chapter, given the nature of valuing and the essential element of affirmation, if individuals are not determining their values for themselves, someone else or some institution is doing it for them – often under the guise of so-called 'absolute' values. So the problem is that, when this happens, the agent comes to see the voice of their conscience as a "condition of their existence"; and since everyone has a right to exist such values immediately become "right" in their estimation. "Moral strength" he argues is really a form of stubbornness and a fear of new ideals (GS 335). In this way, one precisely does not take responsibility for themselves and their values. This is one of the fundamental features of slave morality in whatever form it takes. Consider now our cardinal case types previously discussed. The ascetic obeys his sick conscience blindly, the malcontent throws it out completely and acts always in direct opposition to it, and individuals like Paul attempt to modify and exploit it. Paul

established a new way to relate to one's conscience. Over time, with the creation of a new type of man that is to be valued, a new conscience was created. This is why Nietzsche insists that we must learn not just to think differently but to "feel differently" (D 103). Nietzsche's liberated free spirit, however, merely *questions* it and this is what sets him apart. I maintain that it is this direct engagement with values that lies at the heart of Nietzsche's revaluation of values, and allows the free spirit to win his autonomy and become self-actualized.

By its very nature this type of questioning is aesthetic in nature. Consider it in the context of the eternal return previously discussed. Is a life where one lived precisely according to the book of averages and generalizations worth reliving? Certainly not according to Nietzsche – it wouldn't even be worth living in a single iteration. Rather, the life of the free spirit is defined by a lack of averageness and mediocrity. To put it another way, the life of a methodical 'go by the book' agent is profoundly boring and uninteresting – there is nothing creative about it. Consider that creative art, by its nature, either challenges received assumptions or carves out new territory in unprecedented contexts. So it is with the free spirit and, much like art and aesthetics, the project of becoming a free and self-actualized spirit is never brought to completion. Moreover, the very essence of aesthetics is meaning and significance. In music, for instance, the aesthetic significance arises out of the interplay between harmony and discord. Likewise for Nietzsche the significance of life arises out of the interplay of joy and suffering – a piece of music without discord is pointless, and, for Nietzsche, a life without suffering is meaningless. "As deeply as man sees into life, he also sees into suffering" (Z III "Riddle" 1). Just as a great piece of music resolves its discord in creative ways, so too must a great life overcome suffering in a way that elevates and justifies joy. Life-affirmation is essentially holistic in nature. In Nietzsche's words:

Have you ever said Yes to a single joy? O my friends, then you said Yes too to *all* woe. All things are entangled, ensnared, enamored; if ever you wanted one thing twice, if ever you said, "You please me, happiness! Abide, moment!" then you wanted *all* back. All anew, all eternally, all entangled, ensnared, enamored – oh, then you *loved* the world. Eternal ones, love it eternally and evermore; and to

woe too, you say: go, but return! *For all joy wants – eternity* (Z IV “The Drunken Song” 10).

By contrast, the ascetic, in his sick state, is able to endure the suffering of their present only because of the promise of paradise. Accordingly it is the ascetic who gnashes his teeth and curses the demon for speaking of the eternal return (GS 341) – it renders him forever trapped in his flesh and his suffering. Unlike the free spirit their suffering is not overcome but psychologically fled from. In Nietzsche’s words, “It was suffering and incapacity that created all afterworlds... Weariness that wants to reach the ultimate with one leap, with one fatal leap, a poor ignorant weariness that does not want to want any more: this created all gods and afterworlds” (Z I “Afterworldly”). Interestingly enough, to carry the analogy between life and music one step further, is not the measure of the aesthetic value of a piece of music the degree to which it cries out “*da capo!*”? Likewise, the greatness of a life can be measured by the degree to which it would be worth reliving. The eternal return therefore serves as a litmus test for life affirmation. “How well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?” (GS 341). And this is where it all finally comes together. In order to be properly disposed to life (i.e. healthy) one must first become disposed to oneself (i.e. question their conscience and obtain self-knowledge). These elements are intimately connected because becoming disposed to oneself involves adopting a view of life – for instance, the view that life is “ ‘will to power’ and nothing else” (BGE 36). This is what it means to be responsible and self-actualized – one embraces rather than flees from the particulars of themselves and their life circumstances. It is only in this way that suffering is overcome and life truly affirmed.

So what can we conclude about how power, aesthetics, and autonomy come together for Nietzsche? First, just as there is an aesthetic element involved in choice-worthy life, there is also an aesthetic element involved in choice-worthy actions. Consider that the mark of the aesthetic or beautiful, across all cultures and sensibilities, universally involves symmetry and balance. When it comes to actions then, this symmetry and balance relate to a sense of justice and fairness

– or in more general terms, a choice-worthy act is attractive and desirable. In many respects I think this view is similar to Hume’s sentimentalism. The crucial difference however is that for Nietzsche we have to be skeptical and question our intuitions. This explains his critique of pity. Pity is not wrong *per se* – the problem is that under slave morality the conscience is trained to overvalue things like pity. So our aesthetic optics can become askew in the context of values – just as it can in more straightforward aesthetic arenas. Consider the way Nietzsche reassesses his own aesthetic view of Wagner and concludes that all his early intuitions (articulated in *The Birth of Tragedy*) were wrong. As he put it in the *Case of Wagner* “Only sick music makes money today” (CW 5). I think Nietzsche’s choice of words is particularly telling. It suggests that sickness is related to ugliness and health is related to beauty. Once again, in any arena, the idea is not just to reevaluate our values but to reevaluate the very ways in which we value. The sovereign individual then is like a skilled artist with highly refined intuitions that pushes the envelope of the received rules and boundaries. What is important for Nietzsche is “the discovery of values for which no scales have been invented yet” (GS 55). This is not to say that such an artist will simply throw out all the rules; rather, they will skillfully determine when it is prudent to make an exception of themselves and their art as they pioneer new territories of value and meaning. Consider the following passage from *The Gay Science*:

Examine the lives of the best and most fruitful people and peoples and ask yourselves whether a tree that is supposed to grow to a proud height can dispense with bad weather and storms; whether misfortune and external resistance... and violence do not belong among the *favorable* conditions without which any great growth even of virtue is scarcely possible (GS 19).

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, Nietzsche thinks that adversity and resistance are essential when it comes to the production of great and noble individuals. This sort of adversity presumably includes difficult, complex, and unique circumstances in which an agent must make tough decisions. Consider for instance Sartre’s example of the soldier. It is up to him and him alone to determine what few rules (if any) apply or do not apply to him in the course of making

an incredibly difficult decision. If he wants to be autonomous he has no alternative other than to critically consult his conscience and pre-history. If anything can prepare an individual to make difficult decisions, it is previous adversity and uniquely complex circumstances.

There is no question that power was a core value for Nietzsche but is it truly his only “ur-value” as Richardson maintains? I think my analysis of Paul, the ascetic, and slave morality suggests that it is not. What it has revealed is the equal importance of health, and the problem of sickness. As discussed in Chapter 4 Nietzsche would not be able to critique Paul in the way that he did simply in terms of power. Wills for Nietzsche are simply functions of power (BGE 36) but irrespective of power they can be healthy or sick. So, while power is necessary for any revaluation of values (including Paul’s) it alone is not sufficient for the type of revaluation Nietzsche envisages. The entire project of revaluing is essentially filtering the healthy values from the sick. Nietzsche in fact describes his highest type and highest ideal in terms of health.

The great health – Being new, nameless, hard to understand, we premature births of an as yet unproven future need for a new goal also a new means – namely, a new health, stronger, more seasoned, tougher, more audacious, and gayer than any previous health. Whoever has a soul that craves to have experienced the whole range of values and desiderata to date, and to have sailed around all the coasts of this ideal “mediterranean”... needs one thing above everything else: the great health (GS 382).

In this passage it is clear that the highest values are rooted in health. So power and health are the core for Nietzsche but other significant values/virtues orbit around them. The constellation includes many we have discussed: autonomy, responsibility, individuality, aesthetics, and style. Health and power are necessary but not sufficient conditions for the most noble of free spirits (*Übermensch*). They must also be autonomous, and have the self-knowledge that can only be won by critically engaging with their own pre-history and conscience. This is what sets them apart from Paul’s ideal man, or the ascetic, or the malcontent, or the plebeian. It’s not only about health and power but also about style. So ultimately what allows them to overcome slave morality is their willingness to not only question their values but the value of those values.

Unlike the ascetic who desires to be commanded, such an agent is a liberated sovereign individual, and is marked by ‘great health’.

So how are the values Nietzsche affirms different from the MPSs (in particular B moralities) Nietzsche rejects? Recall from Chapter 1 that B moralities have a number of distinguishing features. *First* they are born out of retaliation to some external stimuli. *Second*, they are robust forms of moral realism. *Third*, they operate with the absolute moral categories ‘good’ and ‘evil,’ which are thought to be ontologically rooted. *Fourth*, they are non-reflective and refuse to acknowledge its own prejudices and arbitrariness. And *fifth*, they declare themselves as morality itself and insist on an absolute monopoly when it comes to moral values (i.e. BGE 202). Also, unlike A moralities, moral values and facts are not understood as products of interpretation; rather, moral values and facts are seen as dictated from without (usually in religious contexts).

Despite his talk of “higher moralities,” Nietzsche in fact does not offer a normative theory to replace MPSs. While it is clear that Nietzsche endorsed certain values (i.e. health, strength, self-overcoming, and power etc.) I maintain that a mere set of values does not constitute a moral system. To qualify as a moral system, a specific normative principle has to be articulated and established. Nietzsche never attempts this. But even if one endeavored to derive a normative principle from Nietzsche’s constellation of values after the fact, I submit that it would fail for a couple of reasons. *First*, to qualify as a normative principle it has to apply universally. Superficially it may seem that willing power would be an obvious candidate for a universal norm according to Nietzsche; but one must immediately consider that Nietzsche is an unapologetic elitist. According to him, the majority of individuals simply do not have the capacity to be exceptional – they are either sick or plebeian in nature. Thus, pragmatically, morally, or otherwise, it is simply not the case that everyone can or ought to pursue power in the healthy way Nietzsche envisages. *Second*, the only individuals Nietzsche implores to engage in self-overcoming and express the will to power are the noble higher types. So any attempt to derive a principle from this notion would make for a very disjointed, jarring, and dissonant,

normative principle – and again, Nietzsche himself never attempted to do this. Ironically, however, I submit that this is just how Nietzsche would have it be. In the final analysis, Nietzsche considers himself an ‘immoralist’ precisely because he does not offer his own unique normative principle to compete with other moral systems. In contrast, he simply advocates a constellation of values that emphasize the importance of health, power, and strength for a specific set of individuals – this is what he means by a revaluation of values. I submit that, though Nietzsche himself never puts it this way, one of the most pernicious prejudices of morality is that any value worthy of value must be explicitly normative in nature. In the final analysis, Nietzsche is clearly engaged in moral psychology, but does not offer a new moral system or normative theory.

iii. Conclusions

Unfortunately we will never know exactly how Nietzsche would have further developed these ideas. He had just begun his great positive work on the revaluation of all values when he collapsed in Turin in 1889. One thing however we can say for sure is that Nietzsche is not a nihilist. In fact he himself saw much of his philosophical project as a direct confrontation with nihilism and discovering life-affirming ways to overcome it. In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche describes this confrontation: “When you gaze long into an abyss the abyss also gazes into you” (BGE 146). Clearly he is optimistic about this project and views the death of God as a positive phenomenon. “The meaning of our cheerfulness. – The greatest recent event – that ‘God is dead,’ that the belief in the Christian god has become unbelievable” (GS 343). For Nietzsche this is a liberating event. He views the dominance of Christianity in Europe throughout the Middle Ages as a dark, and oppressive age that had kept humanity in a perpetually sick state with the plebeians at the helm. Its foundations however were finally collapsing under their own weight. Consider that, if the concept of God was nothing but a manmade conjecture and idol into which man had invested all meaning and value to human

existence, then value and meaning would not perish with it; rather it would in fact be liberated – hence the title of his book *Dawn*. Nihilism would only follow the death of god for the Christian with no God. But Nietzsche’s whole point is that the revaluation all values forces us to abandon not only the Christian God but also all of Christian metaphysics – including the schema of good and evil. The problem with Kant and others is that they simply found new ways to reinvent old moral categories and concepts. I submit that this is why Nietzsche has the self-proclaimed non-believers in the marketplace mock the madman as he speaks about the death of God (GS 125). Enlightened 19th century Europeans may have paid a lot of lip service to the trendy notions of atheism and agnosticism but they failed to appreciate what it meant and entailed. They were not ready to reevaluate any values at all.

So what does our analysis of Paul tell us about the revaluation of values? For one, it has taught us that it’s not all just about a singular notion of brute power. Rather there are many dimensions of power. So it’s all about how we value and how those values relate to power. Paul himself pursued, won, and retained much power in his own day and was instrumental in establishing an institution that has profoundly affected the world for the last 2000 years. This makes Nietzsche’s criticism unique and unlike his critique of, say, Socrates or even Kant. Paul did have power in one sense. He could not be considered impotent like Nietzsche considers most priests to be (GM I 7). He had power in the very general sense that he achieved desired ends but this alone does not entail health for Nietzsche. His critique of Paul made it clear that power even when coupled with the rich element of style can still be destructive and unhealthy if the values promulgated are sick and at odds with the will to power. Once again, it all comes back to health and sickness for Nietzsche.

While Nietzsche is clearly focused on Paul’s slave morality, there is no shortage of examples in history of the oppression of slave morality. Particularly throughout the Middle Ages the huge vacuums in understanding created a great many gaps to be filled in by God. The consensus was that any question could be answered by either consulting the Bible, Aquinas, or

Aristotle's metaphysics. As a result, anyone who challenged any part of this world-view threatened the whole system. During this long period of time countless brilliant minds were likely snuffed out and suppressed or were simply too afraid to publicly challenge the accepted worldview. Fortunately there were numerous great minds like Galileo, Copernicus, and Newton that did stand up and challenge the powers that be but it was not easy, and Galileo in particular paid a heavy penalty. Even more contemporary figures paid a price for their progressive views. Hume was never able to hold a teaching position because of his "dangerous ideas"¹³⁹. And Darwin was deeply concerned about the backlash he would face after publishing *Origin of Species* and even delayed its publication.

Nietzsche's general view of history is that the early Greeks were on the brink of incredible breakthroughs and discoveries, and had also developed a healthy and life-affirming way of dealing with suffering (BT). However their healthy values began to turn with Socrates and before they could come to fruition the corrupted form of Judaism that became Christianity swept across Europe and plunged it into the dark ages. There were brief moments where this oppressive morality was challenged by a spontaneous life-affirming movement like the Renaissance but they were quickly suppressed. The pressure however continued to build throughout the modern period until at last Christianity's strangle-hold on Europe was challenged by the Enlightenment (TI "History of an Error"). This is what ushered in the death of God and made it possible at last for humanity to get back on track. Although many Enlightenment values also had to be overcome according to Nietzsche, they nevertheless set the stage for the possibility of this reevaluation. For this reason, as previously discussed, Nietzsche views this period optimistically. Nietzsche envisions a time when the nobles and elites are no longer hamstrung by the morality and dictates of the herd. Instead they are free to excel and flourish without fear of the oppression of slave morality. Nietzsche poetically describes his optimism as follows:

¹³⁹ This was the title of a pamphlet circulated by the principal of the University of Edinburgh that cost Hume a teaching appointment because of his atheism.

Indeed, we philosophers and “free spirits” feel, when we hear news that “the old god is dead,” as if a new dawn shone on us... at long last the horizon appears free to us again, even if it should not be bright; at long last our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never been such an “open sea” (GS 343)¹⁴⁰.

The new and open horizons in passages like this clearly represent the possibilities available to the noble free spirits and lovers of knowledge once the herd is deposed.

As optimistic as Nietzsche was, however, history did not unfold exactly as he had hoped. While Europe did become progressively more secular, new forms of slave moralities emerged throughout the 20th century. Nietzsche would have no doubt been horrified by the rise of the Third Reich and everything it stood for – especially his unfortunate and unfounded association with it. Consider that he famously referred to himself as a “good European” because he detested German nationalism. And his falling out with Wagner was due not only to his increasing nationalistic beliefs but also his Antisemitism. Nietzsche clearly had no patience with Antisemitism. Venting frustration with Antisemitism Nietzsche ended one of the last letters he ever wrote, to his lifelong friend Franz Overbeck, with the proclamation that, for his sake, “I have just had every Antisemite shot”¹⁴¹. I have no doubt that Nietzsche would have viewed the entire Nazi movement as slave morality *par excellence*. It was born out of retaliation and swept through Germany like a sick virus – like a herd, for the most part, the masses simply followed orders under the dictates of a new morality. In Nietzsche’s own prophetic words he cautioned: “one day my name will be associated with the recollection of something frightful – with a crisis such as there never has been on earth before” (EH IV 1). For similar reasons I am confident Nietzsche would have detested the 20th century’s attempts at communism and socialism. If for no other reason than Nietzsche’s commitment to elitism, he would have rejected the idea of absolute equality. While he may have endorsed its critique of religion, he would have

¹⁴⁰ See also GS 124, 283, 289, and 291.

¹⁴¹ Hollingdale, R. J. (1999) *Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press) 238.

considered the empowerment of the herd as just another form of slave morality and likely scoffed at the very notion of a classless society. In Nietzsche's words, "Socialism is the fanciful younger brother of the almost expired despotism whose heir it wants to be" (HAH 473).

With respect to slave moralities in the 20th century in America, Nietzsche would have no doubt been highly critical of the tent revivals that swept across the United States in the early part of the last century. And even today we are not free of slave moralities. Recently yet another form of slave morality has spontaneously emerged – namely the Tea Party movement. Clearly born out of negation, this party of No has rallied the herd in an attempt to hamstring the current administration. The pervasive tactic is to rely on the principle that it is hard to prove a negative. For instance, they employ arguments like: you can't prove President Obama's healthcare plan won't lead to rationing of care and "death panels", and you can't prove that his other policies won't bankrupt the country. The result is a purely obstructionist movement that avoids critique by simply abstaining from offering any positive ideas – the ultimate "party of no" as it were. Such movements are the reason Nietzsche is so skeptical about democracy. Like John Stuart Mill, he feared the tyranny of the majority – especially when that majority is mediocre and largely misinformed. Consider, for instance, the manufactured "debate" between evolution and creationism, and politicians' attempts to force intelligent design into school textbooks – an alarming 40% of Americans do not believe in evolution. The same sort of tyranny has recently rewritten the history books in Texas, pushing Thomas Jefferson out of the discussion of the Enlightenment because of his agnostic sentiments and separation of church and state rhetoric.

All of these contemporary examples resonate with Nietzsche's belief that most people (including philosophers) are not interested in the truth. Rather than rigorously pursuing it, the majority filter experience through a pre-established filter so as to justify an ideology, narrative, or dogma. In Nietzsche's words:

I do not believe a 'drive to knowledge' to be the father of philosophy, but that another drive has, here as elsewhere, only employed knowledge (and false

knowledge!) as a tool... For every drive is tyrannical: and it is as such that it tries to philosophize (BGE 6).

The idea is that, whether conscious or subconscious, everyone is driven by an agenda and a narrative, which shape their perception of knowledge and truth. Such narratives (much like the need to be commanded) simply make life easier and reduce anxiety. They also draw a decisive and black and white line between perceived friend and perceived foe. All of this however at once invites obfuscation and cognitive dissonance. Consider the remarkable fact that the Tea Party movement is composed largely of a schizophrenic marriage between middle class Evangelical Christians and Ayn Rand Objectivists,¹⁴² who agree that nothing is more important than tax cuts for the rich and slashing all government spending, save funding the military-industrial-complex.

Slave moralities are everywhere in history and continue to emerge today. Given Nietzsche's own concession that the mediocre herd will always make up the majority, slave moralities in various forms will always plague human societies. The hope however is that by better understanding the psychological mechanics at work in them, the breadth of their sway can be mitigated and the negative effects minimized. Nietzsche's great hope was that the death of God would open up room for a resurgence of the will to truth which, in turn, would allow us to finally revalue the very ways in which we value and supplant sick moral values with healthy life affirming secular values. Once again Nietzsche does not view the death of God as a negative and nihilistic event, but rather as an optimistic event and a turn towards the will to truth. As he puts it in the *Genealogy*, atheism has no ideal "except for its will to truth" and concludes that "as the will to truth gains self-consciousness, morality will gradually *perish*" (GM III 27). In such rarified air the free spirit, sovereign individual, and Übermensch will be free to flourish. "At long last the horizon appears free to us again... At long last our ships may venture out again,

¹⁴² Rand and Objectivists are a committed group of atheists who believe that no one has any moral obligations to help anyone else whatsoever, and refer to Christianity pejoratively as a "morality of self sacrifice".

venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an ‘open sea’” (GS 343).

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Abbreviations	Titles
A	<i>The Antichrist</i>
BGE	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i>
BT	<i>The Birth of Tragedy</i>
CW	<i>The Case of Wagner</i>
D	<i>Dawn</i>
EH	<i>Ecce Homo</i>
GM	<i>The Genealogy of Morals</i>
GS	<i>The Gay Science</i>
HAH	<i>Human All Too Human</i>
TI	<i>Twilight of the Idols</i>
UM	<i>Untimely Meditations</i>
WP	<i>The Will to Power</i>
Z	<i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i>

All translations are by Walter Kaufmann except *Beyond Good and Evil* which is translated by R.J. Hollingdale and *The Birth of Tragedy* which is translated by Ronald Speirs.

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