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# **LIVING AS SUBLIMATED DYING:**

## **Understanding Aesthetics and Ethics from Freud and Nietzsche**

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A thesis submitted towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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## Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis and that this thesis is the product of original research done only by me for work towards my doctor of philosophy at the University of Warwick. The section on *Amor Fati* expanded on what I had mentioned in a book review (published in *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 25, “*Nietzsche’s Free Spirit Works*” 2014), written during my candidacy at Warwick. This thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

# Abstract

This thesis aims to examine the connection between aesthetic and ethical valuations. Nietzsche and Freud both claim that values are symptoms of underlying psychical constitutions. I elicit an original understanding of aesthetic and ethical valuations through a synthesis of their works.

Beginning with drive theory, I argue that the death-drive is an entropic principle guiding all psychical life. Another original contribution is my conceptualization of Eros as reducible to the death-drive as the means by which the death-drive manifests itself as a homeodynamic process in open systems. I argue, fundamentally, that the way our drives are expressed in the world entail vicissitudes that are more or less incorporative of stimuli and content as a means of mastery. There is a bifurcation of drive expression concerning incorporation, which I articulate as being egodystonically oriented, as in the case of defense mechanisms; or egosyntonically oriented, as in the case of sublimation. Sublimation is the only indirect vicissitude that can be regarded as egosyntonic because it involves neither repression nor disavowal. Unlike other vicissitudes, then, sublimation is the vicissitude by which Nietzsche's emphasis on incorporation is realized.

Following my analysis of the various vicissitudes, I demonstrate that there is accordingly a bifurcation of valuations. While most ethical theories involve repudiations of self-interest (our primary drives or inclinations), Nietzsche wants us to return to an incorporation of self-interest and an infusion of it into our relations. His arguments against the ethical theories of Kant and Schopenhauer echo precisely his arguments against their aesthetic theories regarding disinterestedness. I thus discuss the ethical as a corollary of the aesthetic. I conclude describing what it means for aesthetic and ethical valuations to emerge from egosyntonic vicissitudes, and I argue that the *Übermensch* is ultimately an archetype of egosyntonic relating. Nietzsche illustrates this with the metaphor of dancing.

# I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to elucidate the persistent, historical associations of aesthetic and ethical valuations, where beauty and the morally good are either viewed as schematic of each other, or one as having a symbolic or analogous relation to the other. Beauty, for Kant, is symbolic of the morally good, for example. And for Wittgenstein, aesthetics, like ethics, “cannot be put into words,” noting, parenthetically, “Ethics and Aesthetics are one and the same.”<sup>1</sup> I look to show how aesthetics and ethics are a concern for psychology. Freud and Nietzsche both regard aesthetic and ethical valuations as symptomatic of our psychical constitutions, and so I turn to them to examine the etiology of these valuations.

Regarding my method, I seek to elicit new meaning and understanding of ethics and aesthetics by synthesizing ideas put forward by Nietzsche and Freud, using each to aid, and expand upon, the understanding of the other. Freud has an unrivaled description of drive theory and defense mechanisms, although much of his own work agreed with what Nietzsche (and Schopenhauer) also expressed. But Freud stops short of having anything substantial to say about ethics or aesthetics, arguing only that it is our defenses that inform various valuations of each. So, I turn to Nietzsche to pick up Freud’s slack regarding aesthetics and ethics after having demonstrated the philosophical affinities of their work. This is in part possible

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<sup>1</sup> Wittgenstein, TLP 6.421



because they both see aesthetic and ethical values as symptomatic of psychodynamic processes, and both use retroductive reasoning to arrive at explanations for phenomena.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, they both generally manage to reason thus without succumbing to the fallacy of myopic retrospect.<sup>3</sup> I use Freud and Nietzsche to add clarity to, and complement, each other's ideas, as well as to expand upon their work with contemporary research in psychology and the sciences. My aim is to procure a new understanding of aesthetic and ethical valuations. In the end, via Nietzsche, I hope to also point towards a potential, positive ethics for the future whilst demonstrating that ethics is a matter of aesthetics and beautification.

Our psychical constitutions are largely formed by the vicissitudes of our drives and defense mechanisms. For a sufficient analysis of the etiology of aesthetic and ethical values, I therefore examine drive theory. Freud ultimately saw drive theory as a provisional description of motivational states by which psychology needed to progress because neurology of his day could not offer anything satisfactory at the time although he nonetheless subscribed to what is now referred

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Sanders Pierce introduced the term 'retroductive' – which he also called 'abductive' – to denote a subcategory of inductive reasoning. A doctor, for example, uses retroductive reasoning in diagnosing possible underlying causes for observable symptoms. Psychoanalysis is particularly engaged in retroductive reasoning.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Dennett refers to this fallacy in his book, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, pg. 180. It is a kind of "false cause" fallacy. I believe Douglas Adams provides the best anecdotal illustration of it. In a speech given at Cambridge University in 1998, Adams personifies a puddle of water, saying, "Imagine a puddle waking up one morning and thinking, 'This is an interesting world I find myself in — an interesting hole I find myself in — fits me rather neatly, doesn't it? In fact it fits me staggeringly well, it must have been made to have me in it!'" (Digital Biota 2, Cambridge Speech, September 1998). He thus argued against creationism or intelligent design.

to as non-reductive physicalism.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, I reference contemporary research in neuro-psychoanalysis, such as the works by Jason Wright and Jaak Panksepp, Lois Oppenheim, and others. Doing so enables me to show that Nietzsche and Freud's theories can be complemented by, and regarded in coherence with, contemporary neurological research that also reinforces my arguments concerning drive theory.

To help articulate drive theory in Freud's works, I also reference Jean Laplanche's masterful work *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* in which he recognized in the death drive an entropic principle that was in Freud's theory from the beginning. Laplanche also pays sufficient attention to the notion of anaclisis, pertaining to the derivation of drives from instincts, and thus locates drives among our primal motivational states.

Psychical processes involve resolving psychical conflicts by the means of acquiring homeostases in relation to environmental or internal stimuli, which is the domain of Eros. However, Freud also writes that Eros is in the service of the death drive, and I argue that these homeodynamic processes emerge through entropic processes in open systems. The purpose of this argument is, first, to reduce Eros to a manifestation of the death drive, and secondly to add credence to Freud and Nietzsche who locate the motivational states of sentient life in not only sentient life but in the organic and even inorganic. Making this argument, I rely on works by the biophysicist Arto Annala, et al., a meta-analysis of entropy by Peter Weiss, both of

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<sup>4</sup> He is "non-reductive" because he believed a mere physical explanation probably couldn't suffice for therapy or for lived experiences, but he is a "physicalist" because he believed that there was nonetheless a physical explanation for phenomena and symptoms.

whom speak of how entropic processes can be responsible for the generation of the appearance of order. And I reference a paper, “Dynamic Homeostasis” by Alfred Emerson, who argues that social systems emerge fundamentally through homeodynamic processes.

I show parallels between Freud and Nietzsche by referencing Bataille’s characterization of life and socio-economic systems in *The Accursed Share* as essentially requiring an expenditure of energy. This is one meeting point for both Freud and Nietzsche because Nietzsche also regards nature as fundamentally entailing an excess of energy that requires expenditure. Furthermore, I draw attention to a neglected concept in Freud’s thought, *Bemächtigungstrieb*,<sup>5</sup> arguing that this should be regarded as related to the will to power for sentient beings. I do this by arguing that the task of the psyche is essentially to master stimuli, and I explain this through references to the efficacy of Imagery Rehearsal Therapy for PTSD, a “disorder” which Freud addressed when introducing the death drive explicitly in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. I reference research done by Carl Nappi and Melynda Casement. I argue against the exposition of the Will to Power by Maudemarie Clark in her book, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, and in doing so argue against conflating desire and propositional attitudes with motivational states. I also reference the book *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation* by Christoph Cox to help clarify Nietzsche’s conceptualization of the will to power and later, when discussing creativity, regarding the notion of interpretation.

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<sup>5</sup> I reference a paper by Kristin White, who points out the significance and neglect of this concept.

I conclude my reconceptualization of the death drive and drive theory by affirming the death drive as a metonym describing entropic psychical trends from which Eros emerges. Eros is nothing more than a *detour* of the death drive. Eros compromises the original “aim” (zero) with one of homeostasis. The same homeodynamic trend is also identified as the will to power by Nietzsche.

My second task is to examine the ways in which drives structure our psychical constitutions. Our vicissitudes of drives are the “paths” by which our drives are expressed. They are the *detours* of the death drive located in Eros. Our vicissitudes are the ways by which we *relate* to ourselves and to our world, conditioning our reception of every eliciting situation and further structuring and organizing our relations. For example, I might relate to the world by disavowing or seeking to destroy this or that aspect of it; I might relate to the world by repressing this or that drive that seeks satisfaction in it. Our vicissitudes are the means by which we engage with the world and with our selves. Every defense mechanism depends upon a particular vicissitude, while each defense can be a particular means by which, or in which, a vicissitude is undergone. For example, intellectualization is a defense that depends upon the vicissitude of repression for its enactment. To begin the discussion of vicissitudes, I reference work done on defense mechanisms by George Valliant, upon whose research the psychiatric Diagnostic and Statistics Manual’s account of defenses strongly relied.

Significantly, I argue that our vicissitudes bifurcate according to the repudiation or incorporation of stimuli or content. I articulate the bifurcation using the terms “egodystonic,” in the case of repudiation; or “egosyntonic,” in the case of

incorporation. Aside from Valliant, I rely mostly on the works of Freud and the book *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, by Laplanche and Pontalis, to articulate and distinguish the various vicissitudes and defenses. I demonstrate that the only vicissitude that can be regarded as egosyntonic is sublimation because it involves neither repression nor disavowal.<sup>6</sup> For this assertion, I reference the book *Sublimation*, by Hans Loewald, as well as works by Donald Winnicott, Anna Freud, and Silvano Arieti. I also reference Ken Gemes' paper, "Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation," to elucidate the meeting point of Freud and Nietzsche's notions of Sublimation. Freud presented Leonardo da Vinci as an exemplar of sublimation, and I argue against this because Leonardo exemplifies failures of incorporation ("obsessional-neuroses" specifically).<sup>7</sup> I thus also need to argue that creativity is possible without sublimation, or that egodystonic vicissitudes can be responsible for prized cultural artifacts. I make this point referencing research on creativity and defense mechanisms done by George Domino and Ingegerd Carlsson.

Bringing Nietzsche into the discussion of creativity that began in the chapter on Leonardo, I examine the ways in which the will to power is fundamentally a creative force, and that our interpretations are essentially products of that force – of the vicissitudes of our drives. Interpretation is thus an artistic product. I reference Alexander Nehamas' work *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, with which I am in

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<sup>6</sup> I do admit that a direct expression of a drive *can be* regarded as egosyntonic, but a direct expression is also involved in aggression or disavowals (the latter entailing delusions), and therefore cannot itself be regarded as an egosyntonic vicissitude. Sublimation, on the other hand, is always egosyntonic.

<sup>7</sup> Gemes also astutely points out Loewald's troublesome concept of "Internalization," which, as articulated by Loewald, can contradict Loewald's own account of Sublimation. I address this issue prior to addressing reaction-formation.

agreement on two fronts: first, the aestheticism of Nietzsche's philosophy; and secondly, his emphasis on incorporation. In the chapters "The Will to Power as Artistry" and "Interpretation as art," and later in the final chapter "*Amor Fati*: an Imperative to Dance," I reference this text to reinforce my assertion that interpretations are creative products, and some interpretations are better than others owing to the degree to which an interpretation can incorporate various stimuli or content. This is addressed in conjunction with the book by Christoph Cox, which I mentioned above, in which Cox argues that Nietzsche is an ontological relativist, and according to his philosophy there is no reality<sup>8</sup> outside of interpretation of that reality.

Another focus of my argument, for which I use Nietzsche and Freud, demonstrates that the ground of aesthetic and ethical valuations are irrational rather than rational. They are psychologically determined. Sebastian Gardner's book, *Irrationality and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis*, is also informative here. This issue also concerns the frequent allusion to 'disinterest' made by Kant, and which I believe is meant to be indicative of judgments that are *objective* and rational, untainted by subjective inclinations. I demonstrate the irrational, interested component by looking at aesthetics and refer to passages in Stendhal's book, *Love*, which greatly influenced Nietzsche's articulation of beauty as something deeply interested.

The third section of my thesis involves the symptoms of our psychical constitutions: aesthetic and ethical values. I contrast Nietzsche's position with that

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<sup>8</sup> This is in contrast to the realist interpretations of Nietzsche put forth by Clark and Leiter.

of Kant and Schopenhauer and demonstrate the bifurcation mentioned above. The same bifurcation is illustrated by Nietzsche aesthetically, whereas he argues that differences between the psychological constitution of the *Übermensch* and the slave spirit obtain different valuations, such that what is beautiful for the one would not be beautiful for the other. The strength of the *Übermensch* to incorporate various stimuli is the distinguishing factor, whereas the psychological weakness of the fettered spirit conditions its inability to incorporate stimuli and therefore results in its repression or disavowal as well as its corresponding valuations.

Our aesthetic encounter involves what Nietzsche refers to as 'instinctive judgments', whereby we evolved to instinctively proclaim something to be agreeable or disagreeable because of that something's historical beneficence or detriment to us throughout our evolution. The immediate encounter with the world is aesthetic, so that our first encounters involve an aesthetic relation of pleasure or displeasure which then structure our vicissitudes. Our vicissitudes are our initial means of repudiation or of mastering the eliciting situations of our aesthetic experiences.

I reference work on the Sublime by Keith Ansell-Pearson and the Dionysian by Gregory Moore. However, I also look to argue against the postmodern reception of Nietzsche that privileges the sublime. In doing so, I argue that Nietzsche privileges Beauty over the Sublime, as the creation of meaning and the giving of form or style to what is otherwise formless and incoherent or dissonant. For this purpose, I reference *Nietzsche, Aesthetics and Modernity* by Matthew Rampley, and "Postmodernism's Use and Abuse of Nietzsche" by Ken Gemes, both of whom argue

against the postmodernist interpretation of Nietzsche. Gemes' account complements my own where I argue that beauty is privileged precisely because it is indicative of the homeostatic trend in psychical life, the generation of order. With Gemes, I also argue against modernist interpretations that finds nostalgia in beauty, which would indicate an egodystonic orientation exemplified by fixation and fantasy.

The same bifurcation in aesthetic valuation is seen ethically, pertaining to interest and disinterest, in such a way that the ethical merely echoes what was observed aesthetically. Ethics can thus be regarded as schematic of aesthetics. The same contrast is made between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche and Kant, as was made previously discussing aesthetics. I further bring this topic into a discussion of contemporary philosophy by referencing Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*. I argue her ethics of care is correct to be based on empirical feeling, but I argue it is dangerously close to Schopenhauer's account, which promotes selflessness and an opposition to suffering.

I reference contemporary research in psychology done by Jonathan Haidt to demonstrate the irrational and empirical ground of ethics. But, unlike Haidt, I argue that the ground is aesthetic rather than "intuitive,"<sup>9</sup> which should have already become apparent by this point. Interestingly, research by Haidt also demonstrates that aesthetic responses influence our ethical judgments. Furthermore, I reference Walter Kaufmann's account of morality and sublimation in Nietzsche's work to

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<sup>9</sup> Or rather, I argue in line with Haidt, but argue that what he refers to as "intuition" is actually an aesthetic ground.



clarify that Nietzsche's 'positive' ethics would require overcoming or mastering what is disagreeable (disgusting) through sublimation, by beautifying existence.

The *Übermensch* is characterized throughout the thesis as one who is able to incorporate stimuli because it relates to itself and the world egosyntonically. I demonstrate that dance is Nietzsche's metaphor for egosyntonic relating in that it requires an attunement to corporeality – one's bodily senses, motivational states, and encounters with the world. I reference Claudia Crawford's paper, "Nietzsche's Dionysian Arts," to articulate this point. And to drive it home I relate this to the first claim of my thesis by referencing the book by Lois Oppenheim, *A Curious Intimacy: Art and Neuro-Pschoanalysis*, in which she speaks of dance. Oppenheim argues that dance is a special performative art that is intimately involved with the embodied homeodynamic processes of our psyche.

My claim is that all of our means of relating are aesthetically grounded, structured by our vicissitudes, and we characterize the action in those relations as a matter of ethics, such that ethics is nothing else but performance art. Sublimation is essentially a self-interested activity. It is only creative weakness and impotence that demands the sacrifice of one's interests or the interests of others. In other words, I show, using Nietzsche's metaphor of dance, how a positive ethics for the future is an aesthetic endeavor that involves beautification by sublimation. What is beautiful and what is good are valuations conditioned by homeodynamic trends of psychical life, all serving the death drive. To live well ultimately requires sublimating the death drive.

## II. DRIVE THEORY

### Introducing the Concepts

My argument begins with how to conceptualize the death drive specifically, and then the nature of drives generally. But some preliminary remarks on what a drive *is* are necessary. In *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, Freud proposes a dualistic conception of drives: “The *ego*, or *self-preservative*, [drives] and the *sexual* [drives].” However, he quickly adds, “It is a *working hypothesis*, to be retained only so long as it proves useful.”<sup>10</sup> Of course, Freud does not retain this conceptualization for too long. In just five years, he combines them into one category – Eros – but stubbornly maintains a duality by introducing the death drive, which is meant to represent what is “beyond the pleasure principle” when Freud became aware that the psyche does not operate strictly according to the procurement of pleasure and avoidance of unpleasure. Freud continues, “I am altogether doubtful whether any decisive pointers for the differentiation and classification of the [drives] can be arrived at on the basis of working over the psychological material.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, the classifications he gives are not only provisional, but he’s not sure what kinds of drives, or how many, belong in each classification. He does write, however, that the “sexual [drives]” are “numerous” and “emanate from a great variety of organic sources, act in the first instance independently of one another and only achieve a more or less complete

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<sup>10</sup> Freud, *Instincts*, pg. 124

<sup>11</sup> Freud, *Instincts*, pg. 124

synthesis at a later stage.”<sup>12</sup> The sexual drives are, at least originally, multiple and only synthesize into coherent or unified aims later.

The first order of business in discussing the death drive is to demarcate the distinction between a “drive” (*Trieb*) and an “instinct” (*Instinkt*). In his book *Life, Death and Psychoanalysis*, Laplanche first tackles the distinction etymologically, pointing out that the “... two terms in Freud’s scientific discovery [comprise] an *analogy*, a *difference*, and also a *derivation* from one to the other. This is a derivation which is not simply conceptual, but which we may ... relate to a real derivation: the derivation in man of drives from instincts.”<sup>13</sup> This refers to the anaclitic relation of a drive to an instinct, where a drive is derived from sensual pleasure in the feeding function of the instinct to feed between the infant and the mother (or her breast and/or milk). He then goes on to define an instinct per Freud’s usage, being a “performed behavioral pattern, whose arrangement is determined hereditarily and which is repeated according to modalities relatively adapted to a certain type of object.”<sup>14</sup> So, with an instinct, there is an inherited behavioral pattern and, significantly, a specified object or group of objects.<sup>15</sup>

Following Freud’s formulation in *Instincts and their vicissitudes*, Laplanche notes that there are four aspects to a drive: its Impetus (*Drang*), its aim (*Ziel*), its object (*Objekt*), and its source (*Quelle*).<sup>16</sup> This generalization of the aspects of a drive, Laplanche recognizes, “allows them to be applied to *both* instincts and

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<sup>12</sup> Freud, *Instincts*, pg. 125

<sup>13</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg. 10

<sup>14</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg. 10

<sup>15</sup> This “specific object” bears relation to what Freud writes in the *Project*, claiming that a “specific action” is necessitating by the “exigencies of life.”

<sup>16</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg. 10

drives.”<sup>17</sup> This is the point of analogy. The difference and the derivation that Laplanche recognizes between the two terms is in the fact that a “local biological stimulus finds its delegation, its ‘representation’ in psychical life as a drive.”<sup>18</sup> A further difference is presented when Laplanche observes whether or not the name “*drive* is in fact properly applied” to the discussions of “ego-drives” and “self-preservative drives.”<sup>19</sup> This will become clearer further on in the discussion of the evolution of drive theory within Freud’s own thought.

We have arrived at a difference between an inherited, biological impetus with a particular aim, a (somewhat) particular object, and a somatic source; and the psychical manifestation or derivation of such with a rather contingent or arbitrary object as the means towards an abstract, generalized aim of satisfaction. But the source of both is, for Freud, “a theoretically knowable somatic process, whose psychical translation would in fact be the drive.”<sup>20</sup> Laplanche concludes his analysis of Freud’s discussions of instincts and drives observing that the “source” of a drive is in fact the instinct. He writes, “It is the *instinct* in its entirety. The entire instinct with its own ‘source,’ ‘impetus,’ ‘aim,’ and ‘object,’ as we have defined them; the instinct ... is in turn the source of a process which mimics, displaces, and denatures it: the drive.”<sup>21</sup> What Laplanche observes is that the drives, at this point in Freud’s

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<sup>17</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg. 13

<sup>18</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg. 13

<sup>19</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg 13

<sup>20</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg 12

<sup>21</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg 22

work, actually emerge from the instincts.<sup>22</sup> For this reason, it is important to make that distinction and read '*Trieb*' as '*drive*'.

This brings us to what is referred to, in the English translation edited by James Strachey, as the *anaclitic* relation. *Anaclisis* is translated from the German word *Anlehnung*, and is properly understood as a 'propping upon' or a 'leaning on'. In relation to sexuality, Laplanche writes that anaclisis "implies that sexuality ... emerges from nonsexual, instinctual activities: organ pleasure from functional pleasure," as in the case of feeding.<sup>23</sup> In other words, what occurs is that organ pleasure, such as the stimulation of the lips in a process of feeding, becomes associated with the instinctual activity of feeding. The drive forms as an impetus towards the pleasure in satisfaction derived from the object and from the activity itself.

Laplanche observes that it is a quite overlooked aspect of psychoanalytic theory. We are hereditarily given various instincts, but we are not born with drives, only the potential for them; instead, drives develop according to our relations with the world. Sexual objects are "derived ... from experiences of satisfaction,"<sup>24</sup> writes Freud. "The first auto-erotic sexual satisfactions are experienced in connection with vital functions which serve the purpose of self preservation" so that the "sexual [drives] are at the outset attached to the satisfaction of the ego-instincts; only later to they become independent of these."<sup>25</sup> The point at hand is that the drive forms in

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<sup>22</sup> An important note is that Laplanche has only been dealing thus far with Freud's corpus prior to the introduction of the death drive in 1920.

<sup>23</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg. 87

<sup>24</sup> Freud, *On Narcissism*, pg. 87

<sup>25</sup> Freud, *On Narcissism*, pg. 87

an anaclitic relation to what are referred to as “instinctual activities,” and must therefore be distinguished although the relation is, in the beginning, quite an intimate one. They acquire their independence through the experience of sensual pleasure – e.g., the stimulation of the lips in feeding – and henceforth “drives” should be regarded as aiming at the same, or an associated, sensual pleasure. The erotogenic zones that Freud identifies are the oral, anal, and phallic sources, those which provide the infant with sensual ‘pleasures’ and stimulations and are generally the main somatic ‘sources’ of drives.

## **A Genealogy of Drive-Theory within Freud’s works**

There is essentially nothing new put forward by Freud in *Beyond* in terms of concepts or content; rather, all that has *seemed* new to many scholars, whether a notion of aggressivity or the repetition compulsion, had been addressed by Freud in previous works.<sup>26</sup> What *is* new is Freud’s articulation of drive theory and his recognition that the phenomena of ‘pleasure’ and ‘unpleasure’ might be more complicated than originally supposed.

In *The Project for a Scientific Psychology*, Freud introduced two “principles,” which he referred to as the “principle of neuronal inertia” and the “constancy principle.” He writes in the *Project*, “This is the principle of neuronal inertia: that neurons tend to divest themselves of [quantity].”<sup>27</sup> He goes on to note differences

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<sup>26</sup> Freud had explicitly addressed the repetition compulsion and the death drive already a year later in *The Uncanny*, but each is only a different articulation, perhaps a mild variation, of concepts previously proposed.

<sup>27</sup> Freud, *Project*, pg. 296.

between external stimuli, which would entail a “flight from stimulus,”<sup>28</sup> and internal stimuli, which he calls endogenous stimuli, from which “the organism cannot withdraw as it does from external stimuli,”<sup>29</sup> and where the “individual is being subjected to conditions which may be described as *the exigencies of life*.” An example of such exigencies is hunger, which requires a specific action such as taking in nourishment.<sup>30</sup> Endogenous stimuli are thus regarded as instincts (or later, drives).

This requires, however, that the organism maintain a sufficient quantity of energy so as to be able to execute the specific action. And so Freud concludes, “In consequence, the nervous system is obliged to abandon its original trend to inertia...” and instead, “the manner in which it [maintains a sufficient quantity for the specific action] shows that the same trend persists, modified into an endeavor at least to keep the [quantity] as low as possible ... -- to keep it constant.”<sup>31</sup> This is also where he divides the primary and secondary processes.

Laplanche also observes, “As early as the *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, the distinction between the two principles that will later appear in the form of the Nirvana principle and the constancy principle is clearly posited.”<sup>32</sup> The Nirvana principle would correspond to Freud’s “principle of inertia” in the *Project*, which Laplanche accurately depicts thus:

- a) free energy, tending towards discharge by the shortest paths;

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<sup>28</sup> Freud, *Project*, pg. 296

<sup>29</sup> Freud, *Project*, pg. 297

<sup>30</sup> Freud, *Project*, pg. 297

<sup>31</sup> Freud, *Project*, pg. 297

<sup>32</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, pg. 116

- b) the primary process;
- c) the pleasure (or unpleasure) principle: 'Since we have certain knowledge of a trend in psychical life towards *avoiding unpleasure*, we are tempted to identify that trend with the primary trend towards inertia. In that case *unpleasure* would coincide with a rise in the level of quantity or with a quantitative increase of pressure... *Pleasure* would be the sensation of discharge.'<sup>33</sup>

In other words, pleasure is here procured through discharge. By contrast to this, the constancy principle might be presented as:

- a) bound energy, tending towards homeostasis or stability by maintaining quantity at a minimum;
- b) the secondary process;
- c) the avoidance of unpleasure. In other words, pleasure is here procured through avoidance and the maintenance of a constant level (quantity) of energy capable of 'dealing with' external and internal stimuli.<sup>34</sup>

Laplanche writes, "This tendency to a complete discharge, to *inertia*, to a *zero level* will be constantly asserted throughout Freudian theory; first ... under the name of the principle of neuronal inertia; soon thereafter under the term of 'pleasure principle'; finally as the Nirvana principle or the principle of the death drive."<sup>35</sup> In *Beyond*, Laplanche observes, "The term 'pleasure principle' ... with its modification as the reality principle," becomes "situated on the side of constancy. It is 'its most radical form' or it's 'beyond' which, as the Nirvana principle, reasserts itself as the

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<sup>33</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg. 116

<sup>34</sup> Freud, *Project*, pg. 54, (outlined by myself)

<sup>35</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg. 57



tendency towards absolute zero or the 'death drive'."<sup>36</sup> In other words, it becomes associated with the secondary process. And the death drive, following the Nirvana principle, picks up the primary process of a complete discharge of energy. Hans Loewald observes that in the *Economic Problem of Masochism*, Freud identifies "three different *aims*" concerning the vicissitudes of drives. These aims, he writes, "correspond to the three principles involved." They are the "Nirvana principle," which is "a quantitative reduction of the stimulus load;" the "pleasure principle," which is a "qualitative characteristic of [the Nirvana principle];" and the reality principle, which is a "temporal deferment of the discharge of the stimulus and a temporary acquiescence in the unpleasure of tension."<sup>37</sup> And so, what follows are merely new articulations of the characteristics that manifest themselves from original principles of Freud's thought.

Between the works of the *Project* and *Beyond*, most notably in the *Three Essays*, *On Narcissism*, and *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, Freud's formulation of drive theory changes a bit. Here, he tries to explain the psychical conflict of his patients by maintaining a duality – an opposition – of self-preservative and sexual drive forces at work within the psyche, a duality he stubbornly maintains at every turn until the end. He differentiates them because, in the former, one seeks to preserve one's self at all costs, whereas in the latter – the sex drives – one can risk even death in the acquisition of their aim, dying for the object of one's desire.

In *On Narcissism*, which Laplanche observes is a pivotal point in Freud's work, Freud writes that there is an "original libidinal cathexis of the ego, from which

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<sup>36</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg. 117

<sup>37</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 28

some is later given off to objects,”<sup>38</sup> and “not until there is an object-cathexis is it possible to discriminate a sexual energy – the libido – from an energy of the ego-instincts.”<sup>39</sup> He then expands upon the distinction, writing, “The individual does actually carry on a twofold existence: one to serve his own purposes and the other ... which he serves against his will...” where sexuality provides “the extension of individual life into that of the species.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, there are instincts that seek to preserve the individual and drives, originally derived from such instincts, which will risk the individual for the fulfillment of their aim.

When we reach *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the sex drives and the self-preservative instincts are united into a category of *bound* energy – Eros – and the death drive is introduced so as to describe what is *unheimlich* – unhomely or uncanny – about the psyche and in psychoanalysis itself, a continual repetition of behaviors that are felt as unpleasurable and thus cannot be explained by the pleasure principle simply put.

## A Neurological basis

It is important to note that Freud’s education was in neurology of his time. But while a neurologist, he saw that the explanations that neuroscience had to offer were inadequate to deal with the mental ailments of people he wanted to treat. He even advised other analysts not to base research on the neurosciences, despite psychoanalysis’ origin in such, for no quick progress could be made because

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<sup>38</sup> Freud, *On Narcissism*, pg. 75

<sup>39</sup> Freud, *On Narcissism*, pg. 76

<sup>40</sup> Freud, *On Narcissism*, pg. 78

knowledge of the brain was wholly insufficient, and could therefore pose a risk to the emerging field of psychology or the patients themselves. Even still, he yet entertained a view that could be described today as non-reductive physicalism. He writes in a late work *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*:

We know two kinds of things about what we call our psyche (or mental life): firstly, ... the brain (or nervous system) and, on the other hand, our acts of consciousness, which are immediate data and cannot be further explained by any sort of description. Everything that lies between is unknown to us, and the data do not include any direct relation between these two terminal points of our knowledge. If it existed, it would at the most afford an exact location of the processes of consciousness and would give us no help towards understanding them.<sup>41</sup>

Thus while Freud acknowledges that neuroscience can demonstrate an underlying process that corresponds to consciousness and lived experience, it is insufficient to account for lived experiences even if a complete, neurological picture were to be given. Thus, psychoanalysis has had to progress through mostly qualitative observations. Freud appears adamant, however, that a physical, *quantitative* explanation is nonetheless behind lived experiences.<sup>42</sup>

Neuro-psychoanalysis regards drives and motivational behavior as originating in what it refers to as the limbic or dopaminergic system of the brain.

This system has, from Pavlov on through contemporary times, been referred to as

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<sup>41</sup> Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 144-145

<sup>42</sup> Throughout Freud's corpus, and at several moments in the above mentioned work, he speaks of the relationship between quantity and quality, seeing psychology as being justified in progressing qualitatively because quantity is responsible for the quality, but also that psychology should not disengage from quantity altogether and must, at some point, insure coherence of explanations.

the 'Brain reward system'. In an article titled "An evolutionary Framework to Understand Foraging, Wanting, and Desire: the Neuropsychology of the SEEKING system," Jason S. Wright and Jaak Panksepp argue that viewing the neurological system as a "brain reward system" is misleading and produces misconceptions of what this area of the brain actually influences. As a "Brain reward system," a subject is said to engage in a certain behavior because it has somehow associated the behavior with some reward. Classical conditioning, as exemplified by Pavlov's dog or Skinner's pigeons, are examples of this view. They argue instead that a "SEEKING view provides a more coherent understanding of how this emotional system generates *joie de vivre* as well as many psychiatrically relevant vicissitudes of excessive motivational 'drive.'"<sup>43</sup>

Wright and Panksepp observe that evidence for a SEEKING system rather than a brain reward system began to emerge in the 1970's concerning experiments on the hypothalamuses of rats stimulated with electrodes.<sup>44</sup> The consequent behavior displayed by the rats involved chewing on sticks, drinking water, eating food, or just sniffing around their enclosure.<sup>45</sup> In one experiment, rats exemplified 'hoarding' behavior, gathering and collecting but not eating nuts that had been laid out in an attached but separate enclosure.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, and with continued stimulation, "if an experimenter removes the sticks from chewers', ... those rats gradually begin to display another behavior, be it drinking, gnawing, or merely types

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<sup>43</sup> Wright & Panksepp, *Evolutionary Framework*, pg. 5

<sup>44</sup> Wright & Panksepp, *Evolutionary Framework*, pp. 12 - 16

<sup>45</sup> Wright & Panksepp, *Evolutionary Framework*, pg. 16

<sup>46</sup> Wright & Panksepp, *Evolutionary Framework*. pg. 12

of active exploration, etc.”<sup>47</sup> This corresponds to the ‘arbitrariness’ of the object of a drive in Freudian theory, where a drive, inhibited in satisfaction of one object, can find an object to substitute the original.

Further asserting the more conceptually integrative potential of a SEEKING system, Wright and Panksepp write, “Animals indulged in consuming rewards tend to settle down,” and “... there are both semantic and scientifically substantive differences between the idea of hedonic pleasure-reward and the broader idea of a euphoric, foraging action-oriented reward.”<sup>48</sup> The SEEKING system explains both behaviors. Wright and Panksepp further observe that the “SEEKING represents a major category that could be partially symbolized by Eros, since this system participates in all of the specific prosocial emotional systems – LUST, CARE, and PLAY – each of which has shared as well as unique underpinnings.”<sup>49</sup> They treat Eros, here, as representing that which is *driven* in a Freudian sense, rather than what is instinctual.

Then, referencing what Freud would designate as instinctual behavior, Wright and Panksepp write:

Primary drives and incentives are those that are instinctual and therefore unconditioned. [They] receive restricted and preprogrammed input from bodily sources such as levels of bodily energy, heat, and water. But there is also a restricted neural output that, once triggered, brings about a coherent goal-directed SEEKING response that promptly leads to learning. Thus, secondary drives and incentives are learned, providing psychological resolution in the context of specific life events, [and without which] we

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<sup>47</sup> Wright & Panksepp, *Evolutionary Framework*. pg. 12

<sup>48</sup> Wright & Panksepp, *Evolutionary Framework*. pg. 12

<sup>49</sup> Wright & Panksepp, *Evolutionary Framework*. pg. 18

would be stuck with only a preset number of possible basic behaviors, with little ability to adapt to the environment.<sup>50</sup>

This would correspond to the claims made by Freud through psychological observation, to both his drive theory and the anacritic origin of drives with what is regarded as instinctual. Furthermore, Wright and Panksepp observe that such driven behavior is “malleable,” whereas there is a “dissociation between a general urge to interact and a mechanism that connects that urge toward a specific end,” because rats exhibit “preferential behavior” when undergoing the same stimulus, such that some rats prefer gnawing on the cage, others exploring, and others chewing on sticks.<sup>51</sup> This also demonstrates the bound cathexis of an ‘arbitrary’ object that is characteristic of drive theory. In addition to this, Wright and Panksepp write, “Homeostatic detectors generate various [such] drive states” by arousing “the SEEKING system to promote general foraging.”<sup>52</sup> The neurological basis of drives is shown to compel subjects toward the aim of homeostasis, also congruent with psychoanalytic theory.

## **A Reconceptualization: a Metonym for an Entropic ‘Ziel’**

If the death drive is essentially an entropic principle of the psyche, which through Eros tends towards homeostasis, then aggression cannot be attributed to it.

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<sup>50</sup> Wright & Panksepp, *Evolutionary Framework*. pg. 19

<sup>51</sup> Wright & Panksepp, *Evolutionary Framework*. pg. 20

<sup>52</sup> Wright & Panksepp, *Evolutionary Framework*. pg. 13

Aggression never emerges without a relation to an object, whether the object is external (sadism) or internal (the subject, as in secondary masochism). In other words, the most telling argument against attributing aggression to the death drive is that the emergence of any aggressivity would necessarily depend upon Eros. This is so because, as previously addressed, all object relations involve libidinal cathexes, whether self- or object-directed. As such, all object relations are then situated within the structuring and unifying qualities of Eros. Aggression would emerge as a frustration of the bound or binding characteristics of Eros, as a comportment towards removing the cause of the frustration, to master what was otherwise unmastered by other means.

What Freud writes about Eros within the text of *Beyond* further corroborates this view. As noted above, Freud describes Eros (the life and sex drives) as “disturbers of the peace and continually bring along tensions whose release is felt as pleasure.”<sup>53</sup> It can therefore be concluded that aggressiveness is never observed as occurring without some relation to the characteristics that are attributed to Eros. Aggression would correspond to one possible release of the tension for which Eros is responsible. Aggression, then, is contingent upon the success or failure of object cathexes. Positing a death drive as a drive of aggressiveness and destruction or dismemberment almost explicitly depicts the drive as a drive towards conflict; this actually contradicts its nature as an entropic principle tending towards the metaphorical peace of non-tension, non-conflict, Nirvana. This will all be more

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<sup>53</sup> Freud, *Beyond*, pg. 99

clearly discussed below in the chapter on aggression in the section on the Vicissitudes of Drives.

In section five of *Beyond*, Freud gives his speculative account of abiogenesis, which is worth quoting at length:

At some time, and though the influence of a completely inconceivable force,<sup>54</sup> the characteristics of life were awakened in nonliving matter. Perhaps this was a process similar in type to that other process which later brought about the emergence of consciousness in a particular layer of the living matter. The tension then arising in the previously inanimate substance strove toward equilibrium. Thus arose the first drive: the drive to return to the nonliving. For the substance living at that time, dying was still easy; there was probably only a brief course of life to be run through, whose direction was determined by the chemical structure of the young life. For a long time, then, living substance may have been created again and again, and may have died easily, until there was a change in definitive external influences, forcing the still surviving substance toward greater and greater deviations from its original path of life and toward more and more complex detours before reaching its goal: death. These detours to death... would offer us today the image of the phenomena of life. ...<sup>55</sup>

This speculative account is perhaps the most far-reaching within Freud's theories, but I hope to show, in what follows, how prescient it might very well be.

From the exegesis and the preceeding commentary above, a few observations can be made: First, Freud's dualism collapses; then, the notion of aggression cannot

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<sup>54</sup> An 'unconceivable force' would seem to correspond most closely with what Freud also states is the more conceivable force: Eros, which found former expression in his constancy principle and later discussions of libidinal (energetic, to be more true to his theory) binding. 'Unconceivable' would thus appear to be merely rhetorical and absent of meaning itself, a reading that is further justified by the following sentence.

<sup>55</sup> Freud, *Beyond*, pp. 77- 78



be linked as an inherent quality to the death drive, whereas it emerges from the secondary process; third, the death drive cannot be derived from Freud's theory of the repetition compulsion, which is shown to be in relation to the process of binding and thus bears a direct relation to the secondary process while displaying a "(conservative) nature of drives in general" in the manifestation of it; and finally, the plurality of death drives, as well as ego-drives, is reduced to a singularity, a drive that is neither instinct nor a drive in the strict sense, but rather an underlying principle of entropy beneath all processes. We might call it a "meta-drive." But however it might be that life emerged, it was pressed for internal reasons towards alleviating tension, towards attaining equilibrium, Freud writes. Biologically, there might be many different instincts; and psychically, there might be a plethora of drives (which also have a somatic foundation), but all of these can be shown to be evolutionarily (biologically) and environmentally (psychically) influenced manifestations of the one, singular impetus referred to first as the principle of inertia, then the pleasure principle in general, and finally the Nirvana principle – the principle of entropy – which is metonymically represented by the death drive.<sup>56</sup>

I propose a reconceptualization of the death drive, which is an impetus or principle of motion towards an aim that occurs for internal reasons and is articulated as an inherent disposition – a "tendency towards zero." The principle cannot just be transposed from physics to psychology without sufficient reason, lest one run the risk of making a categorical error. But there are reasons which, taken together, prove sufficient. These are:

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<sup>56</sup> See, for example, diagram 3 below

1. It is empirically verifiable in the domain of psychology via clinical observation,
2. It finds coherence with the physical and biological sciences,
3. It is pragmatic; viz., it's postulation enables the development of a coherent picture of psychical (individual and social) phenomena that otherwise would lack a unified explanation.

This reconceptualization of the death drive coheres with an omnipresent line of thought throughout psychoanalytic theory that also finds correspondence with the physical and natural sciences as well as other social sciences. Walker writes, "Twenty years before W. B. Cannon invented the word homeostasis ... the notion is clearly developed in Freud's mind."<sup>57</sup> The death drive is essentially a principle of entropy and it most often shows itself as a tendency towards homeostasis – as vicissitudes of the death drive serviced by the secondary process, Eros.

The death drive emerges as a representation of the nirvana principle, appropriately named thus because it is a tendency towards the cessation of all drives and desires, which is itself a new guise given to what was originally termed the "principle of inertia" in Freud's *Project*. Laplanche writes that, from the very beginning, in the *Project*, the principle of inertia represents "a model of *death* and not of life."<sup>58</sup> It is derived from the 2<sup>nd</sup> law of thermodynamics, the law of entropy, and Freud's consequent discussions of psychical energetics and economics that follow from this form the core of what is called his metapsychology.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Walker, "Freud and Homeostasis," pg. 61

<sup>58</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg. 58

<sup>59</sup> Hans Loewald criticizes the term 'metapsychology,' seeing it as a pejorative term for what is, or should be, theoretical science, if even a social science. Loewald thus

Before moving on, it might be necessary to briefly account for Freud's energetic descriptions of drives and instincts or psychical life in general. How are readers supposed to regard Freud's economic model of the psyche? Is Freud speaking metaphorically about energy? Or is he speaking literally? There are many signs for each interpretation, but I think it is illuminating to look at a particular, recurring theme for Freud: the relationship between quantity and quality. Freud writes that psychoanalysis must proceed *qualitatively*, although there is nonetheless a *quantitative* explanation under the qualitative observations and experiences.<sup>60</sup> This was implied in the above quotation on the neurological basis of drive theory. Psychoanalysis must proceed thus because the neurological sciences of his time were impotent to explain anything sufficiently or offer any kind of treatment to sufficiently aid patients. For Freud, then, one must proceed qualitatively when the option to proceed quantitatively is not open or helpful. But even were it open, one must still proceed qualitatively, alongside and in coherence with the quantitative aspects, for quantitative explanations cannot approach the lived experiences with which each patient is learning to cope.

When Freud describes an energetic, hydraulic model of the psyche he is probably providing a *qualitative* description (i.e., non-physical). As such, it would be

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asserts that the more appropriate term would be theoretical psychology, in line with the term 'theoretical physics.' See Loewald, *Sublimation*, pp. ix-x

<sup>60</sup> Freud returns to this point again and again. He goes into more detail concerning this aspect near the end of his life in *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*. Freud writes that generalizations are necessary to "attain intellectual mastery of our environment," and "bring order into chaos" (*Analysis Interminable*, pg. 228). Phenomena are thereby simplified, and we "cannot avoid falsifying it especially if we are dealing with processes of development and change. What we are concerned with is a *qualitative* alteration, and as a rule in doing so we neglect ... a *quantitative* factor" (*Analysis Interminable*, pg. 228).

a mistake to interpret it literally as a description of the physical – i.e., quantitative – about which Freud has repeatedly asserted science hasn't sufficient knowledge yet. On the other hand, Freud's emphasis on the quantitative aspect would seem to indicate that he actually regards the energetic, hydraulic descriptions of the psyche as literally applicable. This, too, is evidenced by *The Project*, his attempt at a scientific – i.e., quantitative, measurable – psychology. This coheres with Freud's most frequent observations of hysterics. Hysterics presented symptoms that portrayed erratic and highly energized behavior, and the symptoms would subside after having been acted out, *as if* what had occurred was the expulsion of energy – a quota of affect – that had become burdensome, leaving the hysteric exhausted and/or more composed. It is a *qualitative* description that is meant to also simultaneously correspond to a possible quantitative explanation.

Returning to Freud's literary intention, as to whether he thought he was describing psychological processes metaphorically or literally, I don't think that a sufficient answer is possible, and it could be that he himself alternates between the two. However, I think it might be reasonably inferred that such is a recurring pattern in Freud's work, and we can interpret the 'metaphorical-or-literal' question similarly to the death drive: both the metaphorical and the literal are occurring, even simultaneously. This will be discussed in the following section. This might be frowned upon as exemplifying conceptual confusion, but it is remarkably consistent and coherent. For example, the neurological sciences have largely succeeded in locating the phenomena of drives in the dopaminergic part of the brain – the SEEKING system referenced previously. Drives, *simply* speaking, are not energy

pressing for release, but instead are physically reducible to quantities of neurotransmitters (particularly dopamine) and neurological stimulations of portions of the brain association with such. That is to say, drives are grounded in quantifiable brain chemistry and neuronal stimulation. However, what are chemicals except a particular quantity and/or arrangement of energy? According to thermodynamics of Freud's day,

1. Everything is energy (there is nothing that is not theoretically reducible to energy), everything is physical rather than material.
2. All energy functions according to the laws of thermodynamics.
3. The brain and all its chemical and material aspects are therefore reducible to energy and thermodynamic processes (like that of entropy).

Therefore, drives can be said to be, literally, expressions of energy tending towards discharge – towards entropic dispersal. The problem, however, would occur in the actual reduction. And Freud did attempt such a speculative reduction a number of times, one such circumstance being in *Beyond* where he attempts a brief account of how life emerged.<sup>61</sup> To sufficiently establish the connection between the quantitative, physical, literal meaning and the qualitative feeling of a rise in energy that needs to be expended or put into use – the 'metaphorical sense' – requires a simple supposition. One need only suppose that the human psyche – brains in general – are evolved into mechanisms of dealing with energy only in increasingly more complex and indirect ways than the inorganic. The brain is viewed as a structure that evolved from entropic processes in an open system, where more energy enters than leaves, which demands action to "use up" the energy, and which

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<sup>61</sup> See Freud, *Beyond*, pp. 77-78 quoted above at fn. 46. It is enlighteningly in coherence with the *Project*.

has increased its complexity in relation to the ways in which it follows those entropic processes. Freud reasonably proposes that organisms were originally 'mutants', deformities, of uninhibited entropic processes affecting the inorganic, altered in such a way that organisms *absorbed* energy and collected it, but in so doing needed to either put it to use or expend it along *detours* to the original entropic aim. The brain's 'purpose', one might say, is to expend energy and to follow the very process that it had apparently compromised in its very formation. It has evolved more and more complex ways of using and expending energy.

In other words, the brain came to be through entropic processes in an open system, the brain operates according to entropy in that system, and could theoretically have its processes described quantitatively (physically), i.e., denoting how every neuro-chemical process is actually the expression of entropy in that system. This, however, does not seem very practical or useful, nor does it appear as yet even possible, and the meaningfulness of such explanations for psychology is highly questionable. But it nonetheless is sensible to speak economically and hydraulically of the drives *qualitatively*, to describe the lived experience of phenomena metaphorically. In summary, Freud's descriptions are metaphorical – *qualitative* – but at the same time imply a literal coherence and are therefore metonymical instead of simply metaphorical. For Freud, the qualitative or metaphorical descriptions are possible in virtue of the quantitative, and the qualitative can be explanative only in virtue of that connection.

Now let us return to a clarification of how the death drive, and its relation to Eros, should be conceived. Duncan Barford quotes the late-twentieth century

biologist Lyall Watson as saying, “Death is not an all-or-nothing phenomenon’,” and Watson “goes on to cite a whole range of clinical and everyday phenomena where it seems reasonable to claim that the human individual ‘trades a temporary “little death” for the more permanent big one’.”<sup>62</sup> This corresponds to Freud’s statement that the emergence of life is a “*detour* to death.” Entropy and homeostasis are almost explicitly exemplified in Freud’s theory by the dualism between the death drive and Eros. But to see them – the “little deaths” and the “big one” – as opposing factors is a mistake, and it is one place where Freud goes wrong in his theory.

*Pertaining to physical systems:* Referencing the physicist Sadi Carnot, the biophysicists Arto Annilla and Erkki Annilla write “high entropy” cannot necessarily be equated with “high disorder,” for “order or disorder is a consequence of energy dispersal, not an end in itself or a motive force.”<sup>63</sup> They likewise go on to argue, “The concepts of entropy and order have become mixed with each other. Owing to the confusion, it has become accustomed to say that living systems would export entropy to maintain their internal high degree of order.”<sup>64</sup> But the characterization of entropy as a tendency towards the increase of disorder only makes sense in a closed system. In relation to evolutionary theory, Annilla and Annilla further argue, “Often the universal thermodynamic principle and natural selection in the theory of evolution are viewed as opposing forces. This is a misconception.”<sup>65</sup> Nothing in the universe exists in an entirely closed system, especially our planet. Sunlight warms the planet, and life itself consumes its environment while the energy it takes is

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<sup>62</sup> Watson, quoted in Barford, “In Defense of Death,” pg. 35

<sup>63</sup> Annilla & Annilla, “Why did life Emerge?,” pg. 3

<sup>64</sup> Annilla & Annilla, “Why did life Emerge?,” pg. 3

<sup>65</sup> Annilla & Annilla, “Why did life Emerge?,” pg. 12

recycled and portions are replenished. The earth is an open system that receives more energy than it uses or than escapes it. Thus, the association between 'entropy' and 'disorder' falls apart.

In a short article titled, "Another Face of Entropy", Peter Weiss discusses various experiments being done by biophysicists that show entropy producing order. This would fly in the face of those who crudely define entropy as the "increase of disorder." He writes, "Scientists have known since at least the 1940s that entropy can act as an unseen hand to create order," but "only in the last few years have they begun to suspect – and demonstrate – how elaborate its handiwork can be."<sup>66</sup> In one experiment done by Arjun Yodh, Weiss writes that while the entropy of a few parts in the experiment decreased, the "calculations show that the overall entropy" of the system, all of its parts, *increased*.<sup>67</sup> Weiss further references research done by Minton and Steven B. Zimmerman, at the National Institute of Health in Maryland, USA, who "tied entropic forces to the clustering of DNA in cells lacking a nucleus."<sup>68</sup> This shows that such speculation of the ordering potential of entropy, often operating as a constraint or as a trajectory of energy dispersal, is entirely grounded in, and coherent with, the natural and physical sciences.

*Pertaining to Natural systems:* In an article, "Ecological Succession as an energy dispersal process," Peter Würtz and Arto Annilla observe that entropy, as a principle of motion in energy diffusion, can be used to describe evolutionary processes. They write, "Ecological succession ... can be described as any other

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<sup>66</sup> Weiss, "Another Face", pg. 108

<sup>67</sup> Weiss, "Another Face", pp. 108-109

<sup>68</sup> Weiss, "Another Face," pg. 109



natural process that progresses by flows of energy toward a thermodynamic stationary state where all energy density differences have vanished.”<sup>69</sup> Following from this, homeostasis can be viewed as this ‘ordering’ phenomena observed in evolution, all the while following the law of entropy. Entropy still operates at the core of the dynamics in such open systems, but in a system such as the earth, entropy acquires a new characteristic: it becomes the tendency towards homeostasis, trending towards balance and stability in the environment.

*Pertaining to Social Systems:* The constancy principle, which can be observed throughout the physical, the biological, and the social sciences, is a principle of homeostasis, brought into existence by the ‘exigencies of life’, and expressed with what Freud call’s ‘Eros’. It is affected by the primary entropic principle and born from it, governed by it. It becomes apparent that, in Freud’s proposition, what is observed as the *binding* element, allowing the perpetuation of a degree of tension, corresponds to Eros, is the new guise for the constancy principle and is ultimately “in the service of [the death drive].”<sup>70</sup> It seeks a compromise – a homeostasis that can only be dynamic, i.e., fluctuating.<sup>71</sup> In an Article titled “Dynamic Homeostasis,” the zoologist Alfred Emerson attempts to show that, proceeding by analogy from the convergent evolution observed between ants and termites, biological systems and social systems can be shown to be following the same principle of homeostasis. He

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<sup>69</sup> Würtz & Annillia, “Ecological Succession,” pg. 71

<sup>70</sup> Freud, *Beyond*, pg. 58

<sup>71</sup> Patricia Kitcher, in her criticisms and profound misunderstanding of Freud, writes, “Freud never wavered in his acceptance of evolutionary naturalism as the proper approach to questions of social organization” (Freud, pg. 204).<sup>71</sup> This would be one (of many) numerous instances, contrary to Kitcher, where Freud’s speculation, based on his knowledge of the chemical and neurological sciences and clinical experiences, would be shown to be proven prescient.

writes, "It seems that value systems and attitudes evolve and are directed by dynamics similar to those found in biological systems," and further, "Biology should be able to supply us with basic principles underlying social coordination."<sup>72</sup> Freud is thus not alone in thinking that biological references are important for studying what emerges in human psychical and social life.

The life processes, both the physical and the psychical, involve the development of relationships with the environment – a development that is characterized by Freud through processes of libidinal cathexes and vicissitudes of drives, by Darwin as exemplifying 'fitness' or successes or failures of adaptation. Würtz and Annilla observe, "The 2<sup>nd</sup> Law of thermodynamics ... expresses interdependence among species, i.e., the ecological integrity where no species is detached from its surroundings."<sup>73</sup> This is remarkably in line with what Emerson writes of the interdependence of life on earth as a whole, or as members of a species, or in interspecies relations. He writes, "Both exoadaptation to the physical and biotic environment, and endoadaptation within the organismic system show evolutionary trends toward increased homeostasis."<sup>74</sup> Thus, in homeostasis, we see the flipside of the entropic coin – a production of order via discharge or cathexis that tends towards equilibrium, whereas an increase of homeostasis can arise in an open system through entropic energy dispersals. Homeostasis appears as both the 'detour' *from* 'death', and also the detour *to* death, as Freud writes of Eros in *Beyond*. In both cases, if we are to take their expressions to their *ideal* extremes, there is the

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<sup>72</sup> Emerson, "Dynamic Homeostasis," pg. 68

<sup>73</sup> Würtz & Annilla, "Ecological Succession," pg. 73

<sup>74</sup> Emerson, "Dynamic Homeostasis," 81

tending towards absolute equilibrium – *zero*. But “Homeostasis is not complete and static equilibrium,” writes Emerson, and “homeostasis may result from the maintenance and control of periodic fluctuations.”<sup>75</sup> Therefore, *Dynamic* homeostases, rather than equilibrium, result from entropy in *an open system*.

The death drive is an amoral and indifferent undercurrent guiding what we recognize in nature and psychology as homeostatic tendencies (and where what is regarded as benefiting such homeostasis is valued as good). Emerson ends his essay writing “The scientific principle of homeostasis assists in the resolution of many controversies and dilemmas. ... It is both mechanism and trend of life processes.”<sup>76</sup> What we observe are the homeostatic processes. But underneath these, as Freud writes of the death drive, is a guiding principle that operates silently – is mute – but which governs ‘order creating’ Eros. That is to say, Eros is to the death drive as homeostasis is to entropy. Homeostasis itself functions according to entropy although the result – order – might appear as contradictory to the result one would expect from entropy (disorder). Homeostasis, as a *trend* in psychical life, might be best conceptualized as the will to power or *Bemächtigungstrieb*, which will be described in the following chapters.

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<sup>75</sup> Emerson, “Dynamic Homeostasis,” 75

<sup>76</sup> Emerson, “Dynamic Homeostasis,” 84

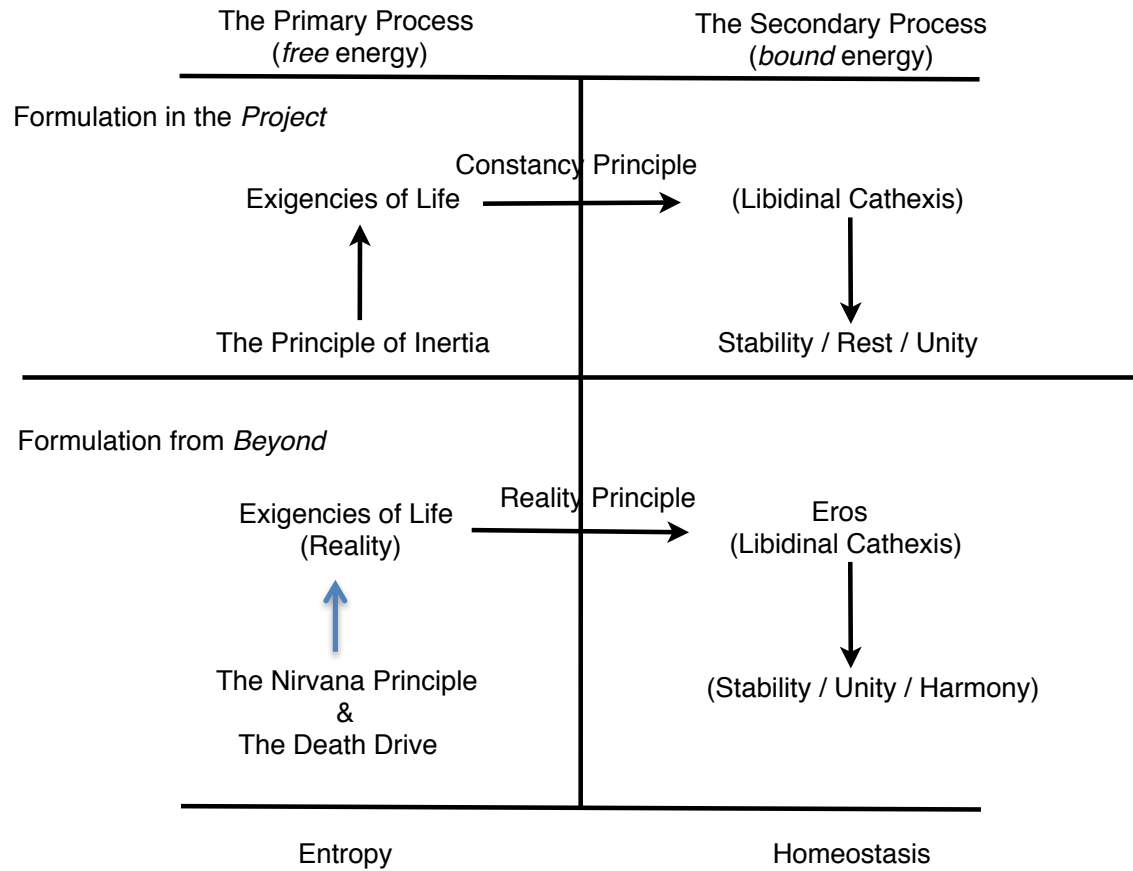


Figure 1

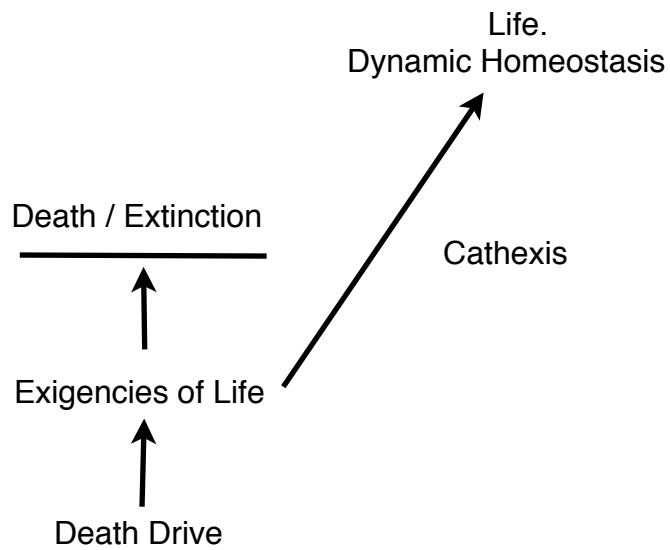


Figure 2

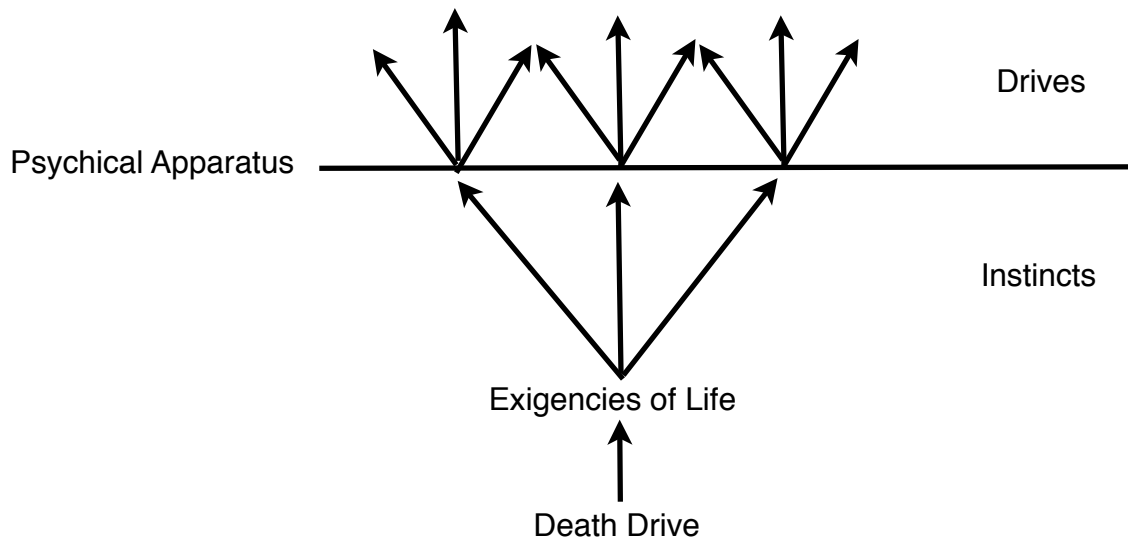


Figure 3

Figure 1 illustrates a comparison of the various terms employed by Freud to describe the dynamic processes of the psyche in the Earliest writings, such as the Project for a Scientific Psychology, and the later writings, the formulations of which first truly emerge in Beyond the Pleasure Principle.

Figure 2 illustrates the reconceptualization that markedly differs little from what is observed in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, subtracting, of course, precarious concepts such as the repetition compulsion and aggression, as well as dethroning the life drives, Eros.

Figure 3 illustrates the reconceptualization concerning the relationship between inherited dispositions of behavior (instincts) and environmentally influenced dispositions (drives). The death drive, while rooted at the level of uni-cellular organisms by Freud, or in even inorganic matter by myself, is shown as neither an instinct nor a drive. It is called a drive, perhaps, because it has its impetus, its aim, arbitrary objects as means towards that aim, and at least a somatic source (Freud) or merely all energy in general as the source (me).

## ***Bemächtigungstrieb***

Freud claims the concept of a “drive” is “somewhat obscure but ... is indispensable to us in psychology.”<sup>77</sup> He and Nietzsche were both engaged in “depth psychology,” and so the concept of a drive – an unconscious *pulsion* – became indispensable to them. In my opinion, when Nietzsche writes “All psychology so far has been stuck in moral prejudices and fears: it has not ventured into the depths,”<sup>78</sup> I believe this is a criticism not only persistently prescient in the field of psychology and analysis, but can also be a charge leveled against Freud as well. As Winnicott observes, through taking the death drive seriously, Freud and Klein actually returned to a theme similar in kind to *original sin*,<sup>79</sup> which, for Nietzsche, is antagonistic to his thesis concerning the *innocence of becoming*. However, despite this difference, Freud and Nietzsche both appear to be similar regarding the concepts of the will to power or drive to mastery. “To grasp psychology as morphology and the *doctrine of the will to power*,”<sup>80</sup> is something that both Freud and Nietzsche have done.

A quite neglected or taken-for-granted term in Freudian theory is the drive for mastery. Freud’s ‘drive to master’, however, actually has its roots in the *Project* as the constancy principle – the psychical mechanisms by which stimuli are ‘mastered’. In Freud’s later works, the ‘drive to master’ is in fact a characteristic of all drives in general – the life- or self-preservative drives/instincts as well as the sex

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<sup>77</sup> Freud, *Instincts*, pg. 118

<sup>78</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §23

<sup>79</sup> See Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*

<sup>80</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §23

drives. He writes of it at the time of *The Three Essays*, and then mostly abandons the description in favor of the cathecting, binding, and counter-cathecting activities of drives, which later become subsumed under Eros. In the *Three Essays*, he writes:

According to some authorities this aggressive element of the sexual instinct ... is a contribution derived from the apparatus for obtaining mastery, which is concerned with the satisfaction of the other and, ontogenetically, the older of the great instinctual needs.”<sup>81</sup>

And further:

... the preference for the hand shown by boys is already [indicative of] the important contribution which the instinct for mastery is destined to make to masculine sexual activity.”<sup>82</sup>

Then again in reference to voyeurism, exhibitionism, and cruelty in childhood, Freud writes, “Cruelty in general comes easily to the childish nature, since the obstacle that brings the instinct for mastery to a halt at another person’s pain – namely a capacity for pity – is developed relatively late.”<sup>83</sup> And although he claims this drive for mastery has not been sufficiently analyzed as of yet, “It may be assumed that the impulse of cruelty arises from the instinct for mastery...”<sup>84</sup> This is of course involved in Freud’s analysis of Leonardo as well. This becomes clearer when Freud notes that the drive for knowledge, what in Nietzsche is referred to also as the drive for truth as well as the drive for knowledge, “cannot be counted among the elementary

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<sup>81</sup> Freud, *Three Essays*, pg. 159

<sup>82</sup> Freud, *Three Essays*, pg. 188

<sup>83</sup> Freud, *Three Essays*, pg. 193

<sup>84</sup> Freud, *Three Essays*, pg. 193

instinctual components, nor ... classed as exclusively belonging to sexuality. Its activity corresponds on the one hand to a sublimated manner of obtaining mastery, while on the other hand it makes use of the energy of scopophilia,” but might be said to be aroused by a preoccupation with sexual ‘problems’.<sup>85</sup> Scopophilia itself, however, is also a manifestation of a need to master.

In *Beyond*, Freud introduces the term *Bemächtigungstrieb* – the drive for mastery/domination – which Strachey unfortunately translated as *instinct* for mastery. Freud introduces the term, possibly influenced by Alfred Adler’s insistence on a compensatory striving for power,<sup>86</sup> in his discussion of his grandson’s ‘game’ in order to illustrate the motivation for play as well as the phenomenon of repetition. Freud locates this ‘drive for mastery’ as a manifestation of the death drive, as what is *beyond* the pleasure-unpleasure principle.

The second section of *Beyond* predominantly concerns what Freud calls “traumatic neurosis” or what we today call “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder” (PTSD). For Freud, “traumatic neurosis” appears to be produced after an encounter with a horrific experience that endures, finds no resolution, and exemplifies material with which the psyche cannot perform its *binding* function. This point is further demonstrated by Freud’s brief discussion of fright in contrast to fear and anxiety. He claims that in “ordinary traumatic neuroses ... the weightiest element in their causation seemed to be the factor of surprise, of fright,” and a physical wound,

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<sup>85</sup> Freud, *Three Essays*, pg. 194

<sup>86</sup> Adler was considerably influenced and inspired by Nietzsche’s works. This is one of several indirect contacts between Freud and Nietzsche throughout Freud’s career. See, for notes on the complex relation between Freud and Adler concerning the dual-drive theory, Kristin White’s paper (2010) on *Bemächtigungstrieb*.



if acquired at the same time, “seemed to counteract the development of a neurosis.”<sup>87</sup> The physical wound itself introduces to the victim an embodied experience, one with which, however painful, can be come to terms. In other words, and injury is an experience with which a victim can relate libidinally as a concrete experience, fostering a capacity of bound cathexis, even a negative cathexis. Without the accompanying physical trauma, the victim is less able to develop a coherent perception of the experience – is without sufficient means of relating to it – and thus develops a ‘neurosis’. “*Anxiety*,” writes Freud, “denotes a certain state of expecting danger and preparing for it, even for an unknown danger. *Fear* requires a definite object to be feared. *Fright*, though, designates the state of a person who encounters danger unprepared; it emphasizes the factor of surprise.”<sup>88</sup> The distinction he makes between anxiety, fear, and fright further illustrates the diminished capacity of the victim to cathect – *to bind with* – his/her experience. That is to say, there is a failure to make sense of, to make meaningful, experience. Fright involves surprise. Anxiety and fear, on the other hand, involve anticipation of a (potentially) cognizable object or experience, both of which would further one’s ability of cathexis or counter-cathexis and thus integration.<sup>89</sup>

Immediately following his introduction of traumatic neurosis in *Beyond*, Freud recalls an experience of his when he went to visit his daughter, Sophie, and was able to observe his grandson at play. He recalled that his grandson, who was

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<sup>87</sup> Freud, *Beyond*, pg. 55

<sup>88</sup> Freud, *Beyond*, pg. 55

<sup>89</sup> Anxiety generally involves repression, however, and so would denote a *counter-cathexis*, rather than a mere cathexis. It is also interesting to note the Sartre makes a similar distinction between anguish and fear in *Being and Nothingness* as Freud makes between anxiety and fear (see Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pg. 53).

ordinarily well behaved, had an “annoying habit” of throwing his toys away into hard-to-reach places. When playing with a spool of thread, the child would throw it away, but by holding onto the thread would then pull it back with an expression of joy. Freud’s analysis of this incident was that the child’s game was in part analogous to his mothers’ departures and returns from his presence. Many children, Freud notes, “express similar hostile impulses of throwing objects away from themselves as substitutes for people.”<sup>90</sup> The child was trying to master, control, or come to grips with the experience of physical transience. Libidinal cathexes, as Freud discusses in *Mourning and Melancholia*, are central to coming to terms with experiences, particularly of transience, and require the redistribution of libidinal energy or the learned capacity to do so.<sup>91</sup> Further, Freud writes, “It can be seen that in play children repeat everything that has made a great impression on them in life, and that here they are abreacting the strength of that impression – mastering the situation, as it were.”<sup>92</sup> Such behavior should be regarded as an attempt to come to terms with an experience that is first felt as unpleasurable by understanding it and/or otherwise neutralizing it through the mastery of it. This is the point at which Freud introduces the term ‘*Bemächtigungstrieb*’ to denote a repetition of an event that is experienced as unpleasurable, but which, through the repetition, appears to display the aim of trying to master or obtain control of the unpleasurable

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<sup>90</sup> Freud, *Beyond*, pg. 58

<sup>91</sup> Freud writes in *Mourning and Melancholia*, “The libido’s attachment to the lost object is met by the verdict of reality that the object no longer exists; and the ego... is persuaded by the sum of the narcissistic satisfactions it derives from being alive to sever its attachment to the object” (pg. 255), allowing a redistribution of the libido.

<sup>92</sup> Freud, *Beyond*, pg. 58

event by some means, and thereby extracting from the repetition a degree of pleasure.

This discussion of the 'repetitive' behavior of children within the same section in which Freud discusses 'traumatic neurosis' is meaningful. Relating these two different circumstances to each other, Freud sees an underlying principle at work. Since his next section is on the repetition compulsion, the reader can assume that these two situations are meant as introductions to it. Freud writes of the repetition compulsion thus: "We would like to know ... what function it corresponds to, under what conditions it can emerge, and in what relation it stands to the pleasure principle."<sup>93</sup> In neurology, pathways between neurons are formed by experiences – the stronger the experience the more impressionable they are, carving out grander pathways from neuron to neuron. As such, the emotion or thought caused, and the consequent behavior effected, becomes the more predictable pattern of behavior under similar circumstances in the future, require only certain triggers to commence the neuronal connections. This explains the repetition Freud observes during transference in clinical practice, and it also explains the 'fixation' of those with PTSD or even of children throwing away objects, all of which appear as attempts to master – to neutralize – stimuli. Freud is pointing out that in each situation there is a tendency to come to terms with an experience. These operations are attempts at mastering that which is outside a subject's control.

With a curious appeal to Nietzsche in his discussion of the repetition compulsion, Freud further illustrates, "This 'eternal recurrence of the same' does

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<sup>93</sup> Freud, *Beyond*, pg. 65

not surprise us when it is an active behavior of the person involved, and when we can discover in his being the unchanging character trait that must express itself in the repetition of the same experiences. We are much more strongly affected by those cases in which a person seems to experience passively something over which he has no influence."<sup>94</sup> With the compulsion to repeat, a person undergoes a kind of helpless 'fatalism', one that analysis is supposed to bring about the power or the ability to alter.<sup>95</sup> I'm not sure to what extent Freud understands or misunderstands Nietzsche by way of his allusion. Certainly, Nietzsche indicates a need to overcome prior ways of 'becoming', towards healthier horizons. And there is also in Nietzsche a realization that a symptom of illness or decadence is precisely the inability to alter anything. It appears to me as though they might be on the same page, even if Freud somewhat misappropriates Nietzsche's terminology. According to my reading of Freud, his emphasis on the use of analysis after introducing the term *Bemächtigungstrieb* appears to imply that analysis provides a healthier means of mastering a cycle by which one was previously mastered, as it were.

Freud reiterates the differences between *bound* (resting) energy and *unbound* (free) energy – a distinction that was yet again already made in the *Project*, where the principle of inertia consisted of *free* energy, and the principle of

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<sup>94</sup> Freud, *Beyond*, pg. 64

<sup>95</sup> Interestingly, Freud also incorporates, implicitly, a personal anecdote in his illustration of a repetition compulsion; namely, that of his relationship with Carl Jung and/or Alfred Adler. He writes, "Everyone knows people whose human relationships all end up in the same way," such as "benefactors who are eventually deserted in resentment by ever one of their protégés – as much as these protégés may otherwise differ from one another, and who thus seem fated to taste to the dregs all the bitterness of ingratitude. This includes men whose friendships all end in the same way: betrayal" (*Beyond*, pg. 64).

constancy implied a *binding* of energy. Freud writes, “The ‘binding’ of the energy streaming into the mental apparatus consists in its conversion from the free-flowing state to the resting state.” In other words, the cathectic process appears to be geared towards the stabilization or incorporation of energy (or content) that is unstable and unorganized by organizing it. Further, Freud writes, “A system that is itself highly charged is capable of receiving new streams of energy and transforming it into resting charge – mentally ‘binding’ it.”<sup>96</sup> Thus again, he is repeating what was referred to as the principles of inertia and constancy in the *project*, characterized as consisting of free and bound energy, an entropic principle of discharge and a homeostatic stability respectively.

‘Binding’ is what can serve as a means of protecting the organism, in a sense protecting it from a ‘traumatic’ experience by enabling it to sufficiently cope with stimuli. ‘Binding’, Freud appears to say, is a means of mastery. We’ve thus returned to a discussion of the topic with which Freud had opened section two – that of traumatic neurosis. Freud writes, “The higher the resting charge of the system itself, the greater will be its binding force; conversely, the lower its charge, the less it will be capable of receiving new streams of energy and the more violent will be the consequences of such a breach of the shield against stimuli.”<sup>97</sup> Freud follows this, saying, “binding” is itself that transformation of free energy into a “resting state” – bound energy.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Freud, *Beyond*, pg. 70

<sup>97</sup> Freud, *Beyond*, pg. 70

<sup>98</sup> Freud, *Beyond*, pg. 71. Interestingly, Freud goes on to link the “higher resting charge” with what he then calls a “super charge of the receptive systems” that exemplifies “anxiety,” and which “constitutes the last line of defense for the shield

Freud claims that dreams of those with traumatic neurosis, which cause the patient to relive the traumatic event, cannot be seen to obey the pleasure principle, and so there is thus a *beyond*, which, as mentioned earlier, is indicated by the repetition compulsion. He writes, “The aforementioned dreams of traumatic-neurotics cannot be considered wish fulfillments.” Instead, “... they obey the repetition compulsion.”<sup>99</sup> And so Freud concludes writing, “If there is a ‘beyond the pleasure principle,’ it is only logical to admit a time before the wish fulfilling tendency of dreams,” but that “this is not to contradict their later function.” So the wish-fulfilling characteristic of dreams is still maintained, but the repetition compulsion is regarded as indicative of something prior to it, prior to the *pleasurable* aims of those wishes at least, as a motivating factor and, in Freud’s view must then be beyond – *underneath* – the wish-fulfilling function. Interestingly, Freud’s claim of a repetition occurring as a tendency towards mastery has a lot in common with new work being done in ‘imagery rehearsal therapy’ for patients with PTSD.

In an article reporting research done by Carl Nappi et al., It is reported that veterans who suffered from symptoms of PTSD such as nightmares and insomnia showed marked improvement after undergoing imagery rehearsal therapy.

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against stimuli” (Freud, *Beyond*, pg. 72). This is interesting because it links anxiety, contra common sense and Freud’s earlier formulation of anxiety resulting from unbound energy, with bound energy, as an ‘anticipation’ of sorts. And so one might ask, with what is anxiety bound? It would seem that, since anxiety involves the *anticipation* of a danger, the energy in a sense is bound with what is perceived as dangerous, or, abstractly, danger itself. In other words, anxiety is *bound* in a negative cathexis with aspects of the environment. Freud remarks that the dreams of those with traumatic neuroses “seek to master the stimulus by developing anxiety, the lack of which was the cause of the [condition]” (Freud, *Beyond*, pg. 72).

<sup>99</sup> Freud, *Beyond*, pg. 72

“Veterans reported significant reductions in nightmare frequency and intensity, insomnia severity, and PTSD symptoms following a full course of [Imagery Rehearsal Therapy].”<sup>100</sup> This, the authors note, expands on and validates previous research done to indicate benefits of such therapy. In a meta-analysis of various research done on the topic, Melynda D. Casement and Leslie M. Swanson observe the same results. They write:

The results from this meta-analysis indicate that IR improves sleep and reduces PTSD symptoms across a diverse range of samples and treatment protocols. As expected, both nightmare frequency and general sleep quality improve with treatment. Perhaps less expected, IR produces large decreases in PTSD symptoms even though global PTSD symptoms are not directly targeted by this treatment. Furthermore, analysis of long-term treatment outcomes indicated that the benefits of IR for both sleep and PTSD symptoms were sustained for 6 to 12 months following treatment completion.<sup>101</sup>

What this would appear to indicate is that imagery rehearsal reduces the symptoms through providing *a means of mastering* the unpleasant stimuli. Casement and Swanson also suggest efficacious methods for IRT: “Proposed mechanisms of IR include habituation, emotional catharsis/ abreaction, mastery, cognitive reappraisal, competitive retrieval, and improved sleep regulation.”<sup>102</sup> All of these methods are intended to deal with either the ideas that threateningly present themselves (such as cognitive reappraisal), or cathartically diminishing the nervous energy.

What cannot be doubted, according to research, is the efficacy of mastering

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<sup>100</sup> Nappi, Carl, “Effectiveness of Imagery Rehearsal,” pg. 242

<sup>101</sup> Casement, Melynda, “A Meta-Analysis of Imagery Rehearsal,” pg. 572

<sup>102</sup> Casement, Melynda, “A Meta-Analysis of Imagery Rehearsal,” pg. 573

stimuli. Is this enough, though, to suppose that this is what Freud noticed in dreams? I'm not sure it is; the *purpose* of the dreams or nightmares might or might not be to master unpleasurable events by repeating them. The nightmares might result merely from an *inability* to master, to bring all that *free* energy into a *bound* state, for example. But I think it is nonetheless significant that the persistence of what is *not* mastered *is unpleasurable*, implying that what is felt as pleasurable *would be mastery*, and that mastery would, in imagery rehearsal therapy, appear to alleviate the symptoms if not also treat the underlying causes.

Observing the repetition compulsion at work in his grandson's play as well as in PTSD and therapy in general, Freud writes, "The repetition compulsion ... reproduces past experiences that include no possibility of pleasure, and which at no time can have been gratification even of subsequently repressed drive impulses."<sup>103</sup> In her paper on the term *Bemächtigungstrieb*, Kristin White acknowledges that Jeremy Holmes writes there are two different ways in which power might be conceived:

... Power can be used for good or ill, captured in a series of binary oppositions: tyranny versus democracy; heteronomy versus autonomy; master / slave relationship versus a contractual relationship freely entered into; power over versus power to; conformism versus agency; omnipotence / impotence versus limited but real potency.<sup>104</sup>

What is really interesting is that it is not the repetition compulsion itself that is new and 'beyond the pleasure principle'; rather, what is beyond the pleasure principle is

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<sup>103</sup> Freud, *Beyond*, pg 62

<sup>104</sup> Jeremy Holmes, *Exploring in Security*. London: Routledge, 2010 pg. 66, quoted in White, Kristin, "Notes on *Bemächtigungstrieb*," pg. 818



in fact *Bemächtigungstrieb*. This is the reasoning behind Freud's reference to his grandson in a discussion of repetitious behavior in which he introduces the mysterious term.

However, White points out, Strachey's translation does not do the term justice, for it is intended in a dominating, sadistic, and destructive sense, so that what Freud recognizes in his grandson's behavior is the attempt to exact revenge upon his mother for abandoning him as a means of mastering the unpleasure of that abandonment.<sup>105</sup>

Eros is actually more responsible for psychical disturbances than the death drive, for the death drive aims at peace, at Nirvana, and Eros prevents this through a secondary process that inhibits direct discharge. Freud writes:

The life drives have so much more to do with our internal perception since *they act as disturbers of the peace and continually bring along tensions whose release is felt as pleasure*, while the death drives seem to do their work inconspicuously. *The pleasure principle seems to serve the death drive directly*. It does guard against external stimuli, considered dangers by both types of drives, but guards especially against increases in internal stimuli aiming to make the task of living more difficult.<sup>106</sup>

Eros, not the death drive, is responsible for 'disturbing the peace'.

*Bemächtigungstrieb* is an essential aspect of aggression, hence the term's

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<sup>105</sup> What will be made clearer later is that 'revenge' is something secondary, which Nietzsche articulates well, and is the manifestation not of aggression but of passive aggression.

<sup>106</sup> Freud, *Beyond*, pg. 99

introduction by Freud in *Beyond* as what is beyond the principle of pleasure – as an expression of the death drive filtered *through Eros* and object relations.

A place where this term makes another appearance is in *The Economic Problem of Masochism*. There, Freud writes, “The libido has the task of making the destroying instinct innocuous, and it fulfills the task by diverting that instinct to a great extent outwards ... towards objects in the external world. The instinct is then called the destructive instinct, the *instinct for mastery, or the will to power*.”<sup>107</sup> What Freud is describing is the death drive served by Eros in its relations with external objects, and those relations are characterized as manifestations of a ‘will to power’. What begins as the death drive, which Freud writes is loosely identifiable with primary masochism, is redirected outwards, and is regarded as sadism. But, this sadism can “be once more introjected, turned inwards, and in this way regress to its earlier situation. If this happens, a secondary masochism is produced, which is added to the original masochism.”<sup>108</sup> As I hope to explain sufficiently below in the section on *Aggression*, primary masochism is neither aggressive nor destructive, but is really confused (and confusing) because of such a description. Primary masochism is only a metonym for what occurs in entropic dissolution, which is an apparent destruction, although destruction is not the aim of the tendency. That is, entropic dissolution might manifest in the appearance of a kind of ‘destruction’ or dismemberment without actually aiming at such.

I’d like to suggest that Freud’s concept of a drive to mastery, referred to as *Bemächtigungstrieb* in *Beyond*, indicates the same observation that Nietzsche makes

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<sup>107</sup> Freud, *Economic Problem of Masochism*, pg. 163 (my emphasis).

<sup>108</sup> Freud, *Economic Problem of Masochism*, pg. 164

with his reference to *der Wille zur Macht*, a will to power that is retroductively inferred from empirical patterns and trajectories of drives. Both appear to manifest themselves in conscious awareness as a drive to dominate, and/or have power *over*. And Nietzsche describes the will to power in thermodynamic terms closely paralleling the descriptions that Freud uses to describe the death drive and Eros.<sup>109</sup> Freud sometimes describes the epiphenomena of pleasure similarly to Nietzsche as well, as corresponding to the attainment of mastery. For example, in *Group Psychology*, Freud writes, “There is always a feeling of triumph when something in the ego coincides with the ego ideal. And the sense of guilt (as well as the sense of inferiority) can also be understood as an expression of tension between the ego and the ego ideal.”<sup>110</sup> In other words, pleasure is a consequence of mastery and unpleasure of the inability to master. In short, I’m suggesting that the *Wille zur Macht* is identical with what Freud sees as the servitude of Eros to the death drive – the death drive interpreted *through* Eros. It is an entropic principle that can only proceed by means of objects and relations with them, either discharging upon them, identifying with them, introjecting them (as in the case of melancholy), or otherwise binding with them.

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<sup>109</sup> This will be demonstrated in the following section.

<sup>110</sup> Freud, *Group Psychology*, pg. 131

# The Will to Power is Entropic and Empirical

The book that is most known for Nietzsche's introduction of the will to power, perhaps because he articulates it less ambiguously there, is *Beyond Good and Evil*. There, he writes of an "old, eternal story" where people, for example philosophers, are always creating the world in their own image, and it cannot happen otherwise; "philosophy is this tyrannical drive itself, the most spiritual will to power, to the 'creation of the world', to the *causa prima*."<sup>111</sup> It is articulated, so to speak, as the 'first cause', but which should not be regarded so much as the 'unmoved mover', for it is always moving, changing, becoming. Rather, it is '*il primo motore*', the primary engine or driving force.<sup>112</sup> But the most notorious passage on the will to power describes it as an underlying physical 'truth' to the universe, a passage that is highly contentious, controversial, and from which a wide range of readings concerning what Nietzsche means by 'will to power' are derived.<sup>113</sup> What leads Nietzsche to refer to a '*will to power*' is likely also what led Freud to refer to a death drive and *Bemächtigungstrieb*: the realization that human beings and sentient life in general do not strive *first and foremost* for pleasure. Also similarly, they both discover their respective hypotheses in non-sentient life and even loosely in the inorganic.

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<sup>111</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §9

<sup>112</sup> Freud uses this word in reference to Eros (roughly) in *Leonardo*. It is not my intention to conflate the Will to Power with self-preservative instincts or sex drives; it is neither, and coheres best with Freud's *Bemächtigungstrieb*. What I intend is to express the inspirational, creative force by which the will to power is characterized.

<sup>113</sup> This is in *Beyond Good and Evil*, §36, and I will address it below.

Like Freud, Nietzsche also initially regards pleasure and unpleasure as somewhat determinative. Although Nietzsche writes in his notebooks of 1872-1873 that he doubts pleasure and displeasure are universal sensations,<sup>114</sup> a recurring theme throughout much of his early work asserts that pleasure and displeasure are influential factors in all of nature. “All *logic* of nature [reduces to] a *system of pleasure and displeasure*. Everything grasps for pleasure and flees from displeasure, these are the eternal laws of nature.”<sup>115</sup> This, of course, is a similar theme taken up by Freud in his theory, where Freud asserts that the psyche essentially functions by warding off unpleasurable sensations by seeking at least a negative pleasure – the negation of unpleasure – if not seeking a positive pleasure, such as being in love, which is also illustrated by Nietzsche in his discussions of Dionysian intoxication.

This theme recurs in Nietzsche throughout his works with slight variations. For example, in *Human*, Nietzsche writes, “In our primary condition, all that interests us organic beings in anything is its relationship to us in respect of pleasure and pain.”<sup>116</sup> But soon, like Freud, he recognizes that pleasure and displeasure are *not* motivational factors, or at least not *the primary aims*. Pleasure becomes an *affect* of at least the *illusion* of an increase of power. Nietzsche sees that, according to empiricists, “every living thing is supposed to be striving” towards happiness.<sup>117</sup> However, Nietzsche observes that it is “notably enlightening to posit *power* in place of individual ‘happiness’,” – that “there is a striving for power, for an increase of

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<sup>114</sup> Writings from the Early Notebooks, 19[142]

<sup>115</sup> Writings from the Early Notebooks, 19 [161]

<sup>116</sup> Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, 1.18

<sup>117</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §688 see also *The Will to Power*, §657, 658, & 669

power” instead.<sup>118</sup> Why does Nietzsche think this is enlightening? He is correct that humans have generally thought that the *end*, the general *aim* of all striving is, or ought to be, happiness. This is the case from at least Aristotle through Kant and the Utilitarians. Kant and the utilitarians also both saw that happiness would seem to coincide with what brings one pleasure; it is an ‘empirically’ derived notion that refers to at least the absence of unpleasure if not the procurement of pleasure as its qualification. But Nietzsche observes, “Pleasure is only a symptom of the feeling of power attained, a consciousness of a difference.”<sup>119</sup> The consciousness of a difference is the consciousness – the affective awareness – of being better off than one was previously. Nietzsche goes on to note, parenthetically: “There is no striving for pleasure: but pleasure supervenes when that which is being striven for” – that is, ‘*power*’ – “is attained: pleasure is an accompaniment, pleasure is not the motive.”<sup>120</sup> How can Nietzsche claim that pleasure is not striven for? Empirically, it is an absurd claim that is refuted by numerous counter-examples, some of which he himself provides acknowledging libertinism and hedonism. What are these if not the act of pursuing pleasure for the sake of pleasure?<sup>121</sup>

The libertine, in the acquisition of his/her aim – pleasure – is conscious of a difference, of a betterment of his/her lot. Rather, I think Nietzsche’s point here is *not* that people *don’t* strive for pleasure; people do. His point is that every striving for pleasure is misguided, that what people are *really* after, even when they believe what they want is pleasure, is actually underneath pleasure, the attainment of which

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<sup>118</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §688

<sup>119</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §688

<sup>120</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §688

<sup>121</sup> See, for example, *The Will to Power*, §42

gives rise to it. The feeling of pleasure is an *affect* of the enhancement of power, caused, one might say, by the attainment of power or mastery. The libertine, however, confuses cause and effect and seeks to have the effect without its cause. This is something Nietzsche lists as one of the general types of decadence: One who “confuses cause and effect.”<sup>122</sup> One can think of a drug user who artificially attains the ‘feeling of power’ without having done what is necessary to procure it authentically.

So how can one make sense of this in light of the passage from *Human* above? I think one can make sense of this by recognizing that we relate to the world according to our affects. Our affects are in the sensation or feeling of pleasure and displeasure. It does not mean that this is what striving, reductively, is *towards*, but rather that *through which* we are able to infer our aim: mastery. In such away, a decadent spirit will feel pleasure in turning away from life, either as a libertine or ascetically. This is how they ‘master’ their existence, and they receive their compensation for it. Stronger spirits, however, rather than shut out the world or repudiate their desires, will take on challenges in life and acquire mastery, rewarded by pleasure rather than compensated with it.

The ‘doctrine of *will to power*’ has largely been misinterpreted as metaphysical. But, this invites several misunderstandings of Nietzsche who simultaneously criticizes metaphysics. Nietzsche abandons metaphysics after *the Birth* and does not return to it. Nietzsche is not reengaging in metaphysics as he had dabbled in it before, but has consistently repudiated it from *Human* on through the

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<sup>122</sup> See, for example, *The Will to Power*, §44

rest of his career. Also, I do not think that Nietzsche ever veered away from believing that art and creativity were central aspects, indeed the fulcrum, of existence. Even while he valued science, it was in relation to art and creativity, such as when he writes, “The scientist is the further evolution of the artist.”<sup>123</sup> So art still, in varying ways, is always ‘the proper task of life’, but it shouldn’t, after *The Birth*, be regarded as a metaphysical activity.

Christoph Cox correctly observes, “[The] will to power is *not a metaphysical theory*,” but is instead “an empirical theory – a broad, hypothetical attempt to provide a unifying explanation for the observable features of the natural world. In this sense, it is akin to scientific theories such as mechanism, thermodynamics, and evolutionary theory; and Nietzsche affirms it as such.”<sup>124</sup> Rather than a metaphysical claim, Nietzsche derives it from his interpretation of patterns he observes – a repeating theme in the various ‘effects’ or affects he observes in relations between things. Cox writes, “Nietzsche proposes will to power as the naturalistic theory par excellence, a rigorously anti-metaphysical attempt to account for the multiplicity and perpetual becoming of the natural world without recourse to ontotheological [postulations].”<sup>125</sup> Heidegger might still be right that “will to power constitutes Nietzsche’s answer to the metaphysical question concerning the essence of what is,” as Clark observes,<sup>126</sup> but it appears to me that the answer need not be metaphysical; an answer might be an empirical theory, which the *will to power*

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<sup>123</sup> Nietzsche,

<sup>124</sup> Cox, *Nietzsche Naturalism and Interpretation*, pp. 214-215 emphasis mine

<sup>125</sup> I have changed Cox’s word from ‘posit’ to ‘postulation’ because I believe that is the meaning intended, particularly with reference to ‘ontotheology’.

<sup>126</sup> Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, pg. 206



actually is, by denying some metaphysical essence, although it will leave those who need to believe in a stronger foundation unsatisfied.

This view is in agreement with Kaufmann's work on Nietzsche where will to power is presented as an empirical theory.<sup>127</sup> Maudemarie Clark agrees to an extent with this view. She claims the *will to power* is inductively inferred from experience. She emphasizes the psychological relevance of it. "When Nietzsche first talks about the will to power, it is in psychological contexts," she writes. "His point is to explain specific kinds of human behavior. There is no attempt to give a cosmological theory ... in these works. Nietzsche's concern is the human world, not the cosmos."<sup>128</sup> I think she is correct to *emphasize* psychology, as Nietzsche's chief concern throughout his career pertains to the psychical constitution of individuals and their interrelations. I think she also is correct to regard the will to power as providing an empirical theory rather than a metaphysical one. However, I think Clark is wrong to imply that Nietzsche does not also attribute the will to power to inorganic and even cosmological aspects. Numerous passages demonstrate that Nietzsche sees will to power in *everything*. Below, I offer my account of will to power. Clark is hostile to this description that Nietzsche provides in BGE §36, and I will address her hostility (and misinterpretation) in the following section. For now, I merely wish to illustrate how Nietzsche conceives of the will to power.

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<sup>127</sup> There are moments where Kaufmann implied something metaphysical, and moments when he appears to claim its usefulness is only psychological, but explicitly Kaufmann refers to it as an empirical theory.

<sup>128</sup> Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, pp. 209-210

There are several aspects of this passage that require elucidation. And I'll explain as I go along the importance of each aspect within Nietzsche's thought as concerning the ensuing discussions. Nietzsche writes:

Assuming that our world of desires and passions is the only thing 'given' as real, that we cannot get down or up to any 'reality' except the reality of our drives ... – aren't we allowed to make the attempt and pose the question as to whether something like this 'given' isn't *enough* to render the so-called mechanistic (and thus material) world comprehensible as well?<sup>129</sup>

Nietzsche's point here is in coherence with his view that we need to focus on the *appearances* of things and not postulate some underlying metaphysical truth behind the appearances. We need to examine the world as it *appears* to us, to focus on the 'given', to examine life empirically. And the 'given' world of appearance involves not only sense perception but our feelings, affects, and passions as well. These are also 'givens', and we can't suppose that there is any other reality *other than* the given, at least not until other efforts prove futile.

... I mean, it might allow us to understand the mechanistic world as belonging to the same plane of reality as our affects themselves –, as a primitive form of the world of affect, where everything is contained in a powerful unity before branching off and organizing itself in the organic process. ... We would be able to understand the mechanistic world as a kind of life of the drives, where all the organic functions ... are still synthetically bound together – as a *pre-form* of life?<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §36

<sup>130</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §36

Here, Nietzsche's speculating that such an empirical inference would allow us to be able to interpret and understand the 'given' without recourse to anything metaphysical or supersensuous.

At this point Nietzsche writes that the will to power can provide a simpler explanation, using 'Occam's Razor', instead of multiplying unnecessary or *ad hoc* explanations. He then asks if we can regard the will to power as efficacious. The belief in 'causality' is justified because causality is part of the 'given'; we see this or that effect that or this, for example. We feel our own affects and passions as effects of certain causes.

... we must venture the hypothesis that everywhere 'effects' are recognized, will is effecting will – and that every mechanistic event in which a force is active is really a force and effect of the will. – Assuming, finally, that we succeeded in explaining our entire life of drives as the organization and outgrowth of one basic form of will (namely, the will to power, which is *my* claim); assuming we could trace all organic function back to this will to power and find that it even solved the problem of procreation and nutrition (which is a single problem); then we will have earned the right to clearly designate *all* efficacious force as: *will to power*. The world seen from inside, the world determined and described with respect to its 'intelligible character' – would be just this 'will to power' and nothing else.<sup>131</sup>

First, why 'will to power' and not just 'will'? 'Will to power' is an inference from the 'given' world of appearances, such that all the becoming, transformations, etc., exemplify a pattern that coheres with the notion of a 'will to power'. This empirical inference describes the universe as essentially a 'will to power', 'drive to master'; a

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<sup>131</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §36

tendency towards growth and expansion, towards expenditure, towards stability. Furthermore, it would explain human affects, passions, drives, and willing. Everything would be reducible to complex *expressions* of the 'will to power'. This inference would be confirmed, for Nietzsche, if it is *useful* for understanding the various phenomenon in the given world. In other words, its confirmation *could* entail a pragmatic theory of truth, being true insofar as it is useful. But it can only be useful if and only if, as an explanation, it also *coheres* with the 'given', and all other accepted interpretations. Thus there is, one could say, synthetic unity of coherent and pragmatic notions of validity.<sup>132</sup> Pragmatism, however, depends upon coherence, and so validity – what one takes to be the truth – depends more than anything on coherence, and coherence serves as the basis for pragmatism. This will be explained further below in the section on "Will to Power as Interpretation."

Clark observes that a reason for Kaufman's psychological interpretation of the will to power was to "answer the objection that ... the will to power does not explain anything," if it is found everywhere, because it "empties it of all meaning" and makes it "devoid of explanatory power."<sup>133</sup> I don't think that either Kaufman or Clark are correct in their approach; rather, I think it is because will to power *is* everywhere, including in the dynamics of inorganic entities, that it actually gains, rather than loses, explanatory power, although the explanations also gain

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<sup>132</sup> A correspondence theory of truth is involved only regarding the correspondence to particular interpretations which are themselves only pragmatic and/or coherent. An aesthetic valuations normally decides their coherence. And does not take into consideration a 'realist' notion of validity. This will become clear in the next chapter on aesthetics.

<sup>133</sup> Clark, Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy, pg. 210

complexity in reference to it, such as, comparably, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Law of Thermodynamics (which I've already demonstrated to be complex in a very simplistic way).

So *what* is will to power? Nietzsche writes, "The victorious concept of 'force', by means of which our physicists have created God and the world, still needs to be completed: an inner world must be ascribed to it, which I designate as 'will to power'."<sup>134</sup> Nietzsche is *not* a materialist. He no-where adheres to an atomistic view of the world.<sup>135</sup> Rather, he is a *physicalist*, emphasizing the role of energy and forces, rather than material bodies. His physicalism also can be regarded as mechanistic to an extent, with regard to the play of forces and the relentless expenditures and transformations of energy, but the mechanism is *distinct* from the kind that he has criticized. And Nietzsche's physicalism is actually quite compatible with the 2<sup>nd</sup> law of thermodynamics, even complimentary to it with respect to the will to power as is the appearance of *Bemächtigungstrieb* in Freud as a synthetic operation of Eros serving the death drive.

Cox observes that the 2<sup>nd</sup> law of thermodynamics appears to counter the ontotheological aspects of mechanism, but writes, "Even if the thermodynamic revolution ... alters this picture by introducing time, irreversibility, and openness, it does so only to reintroduce stasis, indifference, and being as the *telos* of the system: entropic equilibrium."<sup>136</sup> I do not think that this conceptualization of a *telos* is accurate, however. First of all, there isn't and cannot be stasis, according to

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<sup>134</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §619. Christoph Cox (Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation, pg. 220) observes that Kaufmann & Hollingdale have mistakenly mistranslated *eine innere Welt* as 'an inner will'. I have used Cox's correction.

<sup>135</sup> See, e.g., Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §635

<sup>136</sup> Cox, *Nietzsche Naturalism and Interpretation*, pg. 220

thermodynamics, but a trajectory *towards* stasis. Then, while it does describe a *tendency* or *trajectory*, it does not depict a *purposiveness* one observes in the metaphysics of Kant or of Aristotle. The *telos* of entropy, if one can call it that (and I don't think one can, strictly speaking) posits nothing that is not also posited by Nietzsche's reference to the will to power, which can be said to have a *telos* as well on the same (loosely meant) grounds as entropy. But I think this risks conflating what is a *principle* – that is, an empirically observable phenomena, a pattern of appearances that relentlessly displays itself in nature – with *purposiveness* or *telos* as conceptualized, for example, by Kant or Aristotle.

Furthermore, entropy pertains to energy and actually can be regarded as contrary to the very atomism that Nietzsche also criticizes. Cox writes:

In place of an ontology of atomic unities each of which contains 'will' as an effective capacity, Nietzsche substitutes a holistic ontology of relatively stable power-complexes essentially bound to one another by lines of force (resistance, domination, submission, alliance, etc.). Hence, each of these complexes exists in an intricate web of tension with neighboring power-complexes; and 'will – 'will to power' – is just a name for this state of tension, this straining 'towards which' and 'away from which'."<sup>137</sup>

According to Cox, Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power postures itself as an alternative theory. "The dynamic force of will to power," writes Cox, "is a function of the difference of powers and the tension between them. A generalized equivalence or equilibrium of forces, then, would signal an end to this power-struggle and,

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<sup>137</sup> Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*, pg. 221

hence, an end to becoming,” the possibility of which Nietzsche denies.<sup>138</sup> In this light, Cox writes, “Nietzsche challenges both the mechanistic hypothesis of God the watchmaker and the thermodynamic hypothesis of thermal equilibrium or ‘heat death’.”<sup>139</sup> But a ‘heat death’ is only one such possibility of entropy in the universe. Another is the ‘rubber band’ effect, where the universe could ‘snap back’ to where it had begun to expand and begin again its endless sea of becoming. There are several possibilities. And as already described above, Cox’s ‘refutation’ is based largely on a misconception of thermodynamics. The unfortunate formulation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> law of thermodynamics originally described the dynamics of a closed system. But even in a closed system, there is no postulation of an ‘unmoved mover’ at the origin of force and movement and change. Only in a closed system, which the earth is *not* because of the continuous import of energy from the sun, can Cox’s (and Nietzsche’s?) misapprehension be entertained that Biological evolution seems to “contradict the trajectory of thermodynamics.”<sup>140</sup> As described above, in an open system entropy can actually be regarded as an ordering principle, much like the will to power.

Cox observes that Bataille sees the same forces at play in nature of which Nietzsche conceives in positing the will to power. For Bataille, “the dynamic force of nature (that which propels growth, sexuality, procreation, struggle, and death) and of culture (production, form-giving, creativity, and play) is the superabundance of energy in the biosphere and the compulsion to expend it.”<sup>141</sup> “It’s not necessity but

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<sup>138</sup> Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*, pg. 222

<sup>139</sup> Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*, pg. 223

<sup>140</sup> Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*, pg. 224

<sup>141</sup> Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*, pg. 231

its contrary, 'luxury', that presents living matter and mankind with their fundamental problems," writes Bataille,<sup>142</sup> thus observing the same need to expend. In my opinion, Bataille gives excellent descriptions of entropy in an open system, very much aligned with Nietzsche's physical conception of will to power. Bataille's description of the organic in *The Accursed Share*, for example, reads thus:

The living organism, in a situation determined by the play of energy on the surface of the globe, ordinarily receives more energy than is necessary for maintaining life; the excess energy ... can be used for growth of a system (e.g., an organism); if the system can no longer grow, or if the excess cannot be completely absorbed in its growth, it must necessarily be lost without profit; it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically.<sup>143</sup>

Elsewhere he writes, "On the surface of the globe," and "for living matter in general, energy is always in excess,"<sup>144</sup> identifying the play of energy on earth as an open system because it results from the endless light from the sun, receiving from the sun without return.<sup>145</sup> The will to power is, when Nietzsche offers a physical explanation, always described as entropy in an open system.<sup>146</sup> Aside from the above, one can look at the prologue of *Zarathustra*, where Zarathustra speaks to the Sun (implying an affinity between himself and the sun), likening himself to a bee

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<sup>142</sup> Bataille, *Accursed Share*, vol. 1 pg. 12

<sup>143</sup> Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, vol. 1 pg. 21

<sup>144</sup> Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, vol. 1 pg. 23

<sup>145</sup> Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, vol. 1 pg. 23 & 28

<sup>146</sup> See above references to *Beyond Good and Evil*, §36, or below reference in the section on the Dionysian.



with an excess of honey, and must consequently '*go under*' and expend his energy, his wisdom, with others because he has become 'over-full'.<sup>147</sup>

Nietzsche is very hostile to teleological suppositions made in the sciences and philosophy, in particular concerning 'life-preservative' or 'self-preservative' instincts. Nietzsche writes, "Physiologists should think again before positing the 'instinct of self-preservation' as the cardinal drive in an organic creature. A living thing wants above all to *discharge* its force: 'preservation' is only a consequence of this. – beware of superfluous teleological principles! The entire concept 'instinct of preservation' is one of them."<sup>148</sup> Here, however, we can observe the close affinity between what Nietzsche describes and what Freud has described, as a 'discharge of strength' for Nietzsche, a discharge of 'tension' or 'surplus energy' for Freud. In Nietzsche, as with Freud, this can be seen to follow the entropic principle. Nietzsche does not repudiate mechanism entirely, but only atomistic mechanism; as BGE 36 demonstrates, Nietzsche's 'claim' is that the will to power provides a non-atomistic and *mechanistic* explanation for phenomena.

Nietzsche's point, really, is that it is a mistake to think that forces move *towards* anything. As I've argued elsewhere, this is an example of myopic retrospect. Correspondingly, things cannot be described or explained as *progressive*. Nietzsche often takes aim at Darwin and evolutionary theory on this point, although he seems to understand the theory mostly through the eyes of 'Darwin's' spin

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<sup>147</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, prologue §1

<sup>148</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §650 and also *Beyond Good and Evil*, §13

doctors',<sup>149</sup> such as Herbert Spencer. According to Spencer, "natural selection gradually promotes an increasingly better fit between organisms and their environment."<sup>150</sup> However, Nietzsche counters this, arguing, "Humanity does *not* represent a development for the better, does not represent something stronger or higher the way people these days think it does. 'Progress' is just a modern idea, which is to say a false idea."<sup>151</sup> One might add as well, it is a decadent idea, an interpretation that would allow weaker spirits the illusion of being 'better' than preceding spirits.<sup>152</sup> All of this is meant to emphasize how Nietzsche's philosophy avoid myopic retrospection, and his alignment of the will to power with entropic forces allows for the prevalent teleological illusion that many have historically believed, but also explains it away as mere illusion.

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<sup>149</sup> Cox, *Nietzsche Naturalism and Interpretation*, pg. 224. Cox attributes this term to Stephen Gould, referring perhaps to Spencer.

<sup>150</sup> Cox, *Nietzsche Naturalism and Interpretation*, pg. 226

<sup>151</sup> Nietzsche AC §4, see also, for a lengthy tirade, *The Will to Power*, §684-685

<sup>152</sup> Darwin, however, as Cox and Daniel Dennett observe, was 'antiprogessivist'.<sup>152</sup> That is, Darwin did not see evolution as purposively projecting progressively 'better' organisms into the future. It is all a matter of chance. As Dennett writes: stupidity.<sup>152</sup> Evolution is a 'game of chance' or a dice roll, to use Nietzsche's metaphor, and does not have an ontotheological or Hegelian progressivism in view. Dennett observes that Nietzsche, while often aiming at Darwin, actually defended Darwin's views from spin doctors such as Spencer. Dennett does not offer a great understanding of Nietzsche, misunderstands, for example, Eternal Recurrence and its significance in his book. However, I does observe and appreciate Nietzsche's position on evolutionary theory.

## Drive or Desire?

Freud observes that we can never be conscious of a drive. He writes, “A [drive] can never become an object of consciousness – only the idea that represents the [drive] can. ... If the [drive] did not attach itself to an idea or manifest itself as an affective state, we could know nothing about it.”<sup>153</sup> The aspect of the drive of which we *can* become conscious, for him, is the idea with which a drive is cathected or the affect/feeling associated with it. But a further complication is that rarely, if ever, is an idea such a direct representative of the drive, but instead representative of a representative, such as when a snake substitutes the idea of a penis, and where the penis itself can denote something else about the drive (denoting a wish, or fear, etc.).

In his work *The Unconscious*, Freud describes repression as the censorship of content; that is, the refusal to allow unconscious content into consciousness by restricting it at a preconscious level. He writes, “The censorship that takes place in the system *Pcs.*, repression, “is essentially a process affecting ideas.”<sup>154</sup> This is central to Freud’s introduction of the notion of an *anticathexis*. An anticathexis first involves the withdrawal of cathexis from the idea in the unconscious, and is substituted by another idea. It is the means in which “the system *Pcs.* protects itself from the pressure upon it of the unconscious idea. ... It is this which represents the permanent expenditure [of energy] of a primal repression, and which also

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<sup>153</sup> Freud, *The Unconscious*, pg. 177

<sup>154</sup> Freud, *The Unconscious*, pg. 180

guarantees the permanence of that repression.”<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, it would appear that the “cathexis which is withdrawn” from the primary idea “is used for anticathexis.”<sup>156</sup> A great anecdote to serve as an example of this process is the case study of Anna O. The *Nachträglichkeit* that takes place in her preconscious substitution of laughter for being sexually abused is a significant example of this process. The main point that I am trying to argue here is: *desire* is conscious, and integral to desire and is the *idea* of the thing that we believe we desire. A drive, which largely determines what is desired, and with which an original idea is cathected, is *not* conscious and cannot be conscious. But the idea, as well as the affects, associated with desire, are ‘refractions’ of the unconscious material (drives and unconscious ideas), so that a distinction *must* be made between that which one *desires* and that towards which one is *driven*.

Nietzsche also observes that desire is not the same as will to power, and that we are only conscious of desire although behind desires are drives of which we are hardly conscious. He writes:

*That one desires to combat the vehemence of a drive at all ... does not stand within our own power; nor does the choice of any particular method; nor does the success or failure of this method. What is clearly the case is that in this entire procedure of our intellect is only the blind instrument of another drive which is a rival of the drive whose vehemence is tormenting us ... While ‘we’ believe we are complaining about the vehemence of a drive, at bottom it is one drive which is complaining about another; that is to say: for us to become aware that we are suffering from the vehemence of a drive presupposes the existence of another equally vehement or even more*

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<sup>155</sup> Freud, *The Unconscious*, pg. 181

<sup>156</sup> Freud, *The unconscious*, pg. 181

vehement drive, and that a *struggle* is in prospect in which our intellect is going to have to take sides.<sup>157</sup>

Gemes claims that Nietzsche “seems to have subpersonal units engaged in acts of recognition that we normally ascribe to consciousness.”<sup>158</sup> Gemes points out, however, that modern psychology and philosophy of mind “have little trouble ascribing the functional equivalent of recognition capacities to subpersonal units.”<sup>159</sup> Gemes presents another solution to the problem. The *finite quota* of energy that each individual has at their disposal provides a solution because if one drive appropriates most of the energy resources, then the other drives are thereby weakened, and no kind of recognition or choice, subpersonal or otherwise, is needed.<sup>160</sup>

It is possible, however, to read this in another way. Gemes finds the above passage appears to “allow that our conscious selves may be aware of the drive that is causing us distress,” even while it “emphasizes another drive, not the conscious I, as the repressing force.”<sup>161</sup> However, where Nietzsche writes that our ‘intellect is blind’ and that neither the choice nor the success or failure is within our power, it appears that it is something of which we are not conscious. And here, he precisely differentiates between desire and drive. He speaks of one *wanting*<sup>162</sup> to combat a drive. Who wants this? How is it thus desired? It is *desired* only because of a

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<sup>157</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, §109

<sup>158</sup> Gemes, *Sublimation*, pg. 50

<sup>159</sup> Gemes, *Sublimation*, pg. 50

<sup>160</sup> for Gemes’ account, see Gemes, “Sublimation...,” pg. 51

<sup>161</sup> Gemes, “Sublimation...,” pg. 50

<sup>162</sup> The German *will* has in this edition been translated as ‘desire’.

configuration of drives of which one is not conscious. It appears in *consciousness* as an *opposition*, a *desire* to repress. This is sufficiently addressed by Gardner's distinction between motivational states and propositional attitudes addressed above. It seems to me that where one *wants* to combat a drive at all, it denotes an ascetic standpoint, and therefore is – as is the desire – a product of reaction-formation.<sup>163</sup> But this reaction-formation would be one particular instantiation of desire, and not indicative of desire in general.

The will to power is, for Nietzsche, a component of all drives and desires. In *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche writes, "The old word 'will' only serves to describe a result, a type of individual reaction that necessarily follows from a quantity of partly contradictory, partly harmonious stimuli."<sup>164</sup> 'Will', as in willing or desire, is a terminal phenomenon. "Everything of which we become conscious is a terminal phenomenon, an end – and causes nothing."<sup>165</sup> Mere *willing* is something of which one is cognizant and is therefore allowed into consciousness by the ego. Nietzsche writes, "The will to power is the primitive form of affect, that all other affects are only developments of it."<sup>166</sup> The will to power is thus not identifiable with affects, passions, and feelings directly, but is instead the 'primitive form' of them – their origin or source, as it were.

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<sup>163</sup> This will be made more clear below in the section on the vicissitudes of drives. What I am claiming is that *desire* is, for Nietzsche, a *formation* in consciousness that occurs in the *reaction* against another drive (or group of drives) in order to reinforce the *reaction* – a reaction that involves the operation of repression. What I'm claiming, then, is that desire is often the result of a reaction-formation.

<sup>164</sup> Nietzsche *The Anti-Christ*, §14

<sup>165</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §480

<sup>166</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §688

When Nietzsche speaks of a “Free Will,” he is speaking of *willing* as it corresponds to *desire* rather than to drives or a component factor of drives. This is evident by the fact that one of Nietzsche’s reasons for denying a free will is expressed by the assertion that what one believes one is free to will is actually determined by what one is *driven* to will, over which one has little control. Willing is conscious, but for Nietzsche, all conscious thought and feeling, all desire, is rooted in the drives or instincts.<sup>167</sup> In BGE §19, Nietzsche explicitly speaks of *willing* as an *affect* of several distinct psychical and embodied phenomena.<sup>168</sup> First, he is criticizing the supposition of a free will. The will that is identified with ‘free will’ is distinct from the will to power. Secondly, and in relation to this, this ‘free will’ is an *affect*. As such, it is what is consciously recognized from all these underlying elements. Will, as *affect*, is essentially what we know as *desire*.

Maudemarie Clark thinks that Nietzsche does not believe in the most well-known passage in which Nietzsche introduces the will to power in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Her claim is virtually impossible to justify, however, since Nietzsche does note, parenthetically, that *it is [his] claim*. Clark claims that Nietzsche rejects the view of

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<sup>167</sup> see Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §3

<sup>168</sup> *Beyond Good and Evil*, §19. Nietzsche writes, “Philosophers tend to talk about the will as if it were the most familiar thing in the world,” attributing such a view to Schopenhauer. But, Nietzsche continues:

Willing strikes me as, above all, something *complicated*, something unified only in a word ... in every act of willing there is ... a plurality of feelings, namely: the feeling of the state *away from which*, the feeling of the state *towards which*, and the feeling of this ‘away from’ and ‘towards’ themselves. But this is accompanied by the feeling of the muscles. ... Just as feeling – and indeed many feelings – must be recognized as ingredients of the will, thought must be as well. In every act of will there is a commandeering thought ... Third, the will is not just a complex of feeling and thinking; rather, it is fundamentally an *affect*: and specifically the affect of the command. ... We are ... both the one who commands *and* the one who obeys.

*will to power* that he provides because of two premises.<sup>169</sup> The first premise, she writes, is that “only the world of our desires and passions is ‘given’ as real, and that we cannot get up, or down, to any other ‘reality’ than that of our drives,” and this suggests “we have knowledge regarding the existence and nature of our drives, but not regarding anything else, that is, the external or material world.”<sup>170</sup> She is trying to understand the will to power as the postulation of something external or material as a *realist*.<sup>171</sup> Clark claims that ‘knowledge’ of the drives must entail an *a priori* postulation of them, rather than seeing them as being a hypothesis inferred from the ‘given’. She then incredibly claims that it would suggest a kind of Cartesian priority of the *res cogitans* over the *res extensa*.<sup>172</sup> This absurd interpretation I hope I’ve already explained away implicitly. Nietzsche is concerned with *appearances*, the ‘given’, and as such; he is concerned with the *affects* as well as sensory experiences of the external world. *This* is his point. Both what I feel of myself and what I observe are included in an empirical understanding. Knowledge of the drives is empirically *based*, inferred retroductively from experience and observation; there is no *a priori* postulation, but an *a posteriori* retroduction.

Clark does come close to recognizing the solution I propose here, that the will to power, like the drives, is not conscious. However, she argues, “If will is not conscious, it becomes impossible to understand how BGE 36 would support its first

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<sup>169</sup> Please refer again to my description of *Beyond Good and Evil*, §36 above

<sup>170</sup> Clark, Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy, pg. 213

<sup>171</sup> Notice, here, that what Nietzsche claims we can ‘know’ are the *affects* – desire and passion. But as affects, such are refracted aspects of *drives*. Drives are inferred retroductively from the existence of desires and passions that are complexes and otherwise inexplicable.

<sup>172</sup> Clark, Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy, pg. 213



premise: that only willing is 'given', and that we cannot get up or down to any world beyond our drives."<sup>173</sup> She's thus conflated *willing* with the drives, and the drives with the will to power, the same mistake that Sartre makes in conflating motivational states with propositional attitudes. The *will to power*, however, is precisely what is not consciously known and only inferred from patterns of observation, analogous to the inference of dark matter or entropy. *Desire* is known, or felt, and is generally available to conscious/self-conscious awareness. But as addressed previously, desire is only a refracted drive, or the refracted result of a collection of drives and affects. The *will to power* is a component aspect to drives and instincts, and even a physical principle that explains the patterns of tendencies to stability and a reduction of tension in even the inorganic (as Eros appears to be for Freud in the service of the death drive).<sup>174</sup> Richard Schacht, Clark observes, makes a similar point. She writes:

Schacht denies that Nietzsche's use of 'will' to describe the world's 'intelligible character' conflicts with his dismissal of will as 'just a word' on the grounds that 'will' is used here as a metaphor, with the conceptual content of 'will to power' specified and exhausted through the idea of a tendency or disposition of forces 'to extend their influence and dominate others'.<sup>175</sup>

Although I disagree with the final word on the matter, that the disposition to 'dominate others' is anything other than secondary to the *will to power*, I think

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<sup>173</sup> Clark, Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy, pg. 217 fn. 1

<sup>174</sup> as, for example, *Bemächtigungstrieb*. As a reminder, that 'tendency to stability' that determines drives and instincts is, in psychical life, a will to mastery – to organize and to unify where possible, or to annihilate where impossible.

<sup>175</sup> Clark, Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy, pg. 217

Schacht makes a similar point that I am trying to make. Clark, however, disagrees with it, arguing that it would “appeal to our intuition of ourselves as causal in the act of willing as a basis for interpreting the material world as will to power,” but which, in GS 127, “Nietzsche accused Schopenhauer of enthroning a ‘primeval mythology’.”<sup>176</sup> In other words, Clark only sees in this interpretation a metaphysical conception of the will to power, precisely the metaphysical interpretation – of things-in-themselves – which Nietzsche rejects.<sup>177</sup> But this is mistaken. The will to power, like the drives (which display the pattern of it), is an empirical inference, a retrodution.

She also takes issue with what she claims is Nietzsche’s ‘second premise’. She objects to Nietzsche’s assertion that we “must attempt to explain the rest of the world in terms of the will’s kind of causality.”<sup>178</sup> She objects because she thinks this amounts to projecting the conscious will into the operations of the physical world. Notice, too, this is a conflation people often make in reading Schopenhauer as well.<sup>179</sup> Rather, Nietzsche sees in *willing* a pattern towards expansion and growth also observable in the organic and inorganic, and applies the word ‘will’ – empty of its sentient content, as a term – a metonym, even – to describe such patterns in

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<sup>176</sup> Clark, Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy, pg. 217

<sup>177</sup> Danto attempted this interpretation, and Clark correctly criticizes it: Clark, Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy, pg.217 fn. 1

<sup>178</sup> Clark, Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy, pg. 214

<sup>179</sup> Clark actually makes this conflation concerning Schopenhauer as well. She writes that the first premise would “be incompatible with BG 19’s criticism of philosophers like Schopenhauer who ‘speak of the will as if it were the best-known thing in the world.’” Clark, Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy, pg. 214. For Schopenhauer, the ‘will’ is the best known, but this is not to be conflated with *The Will*, which is postulated as the thing in itself behind all conscious *willing*. (SEE CRITICISM)

nature. However, Clark writes, concluding her argument, that BGE 36 cannot therefore be attributed to Nietzsche. “The problem,” she writes, “is not that it makes use of the idea of will, but that it depends crucially on what Nietzsche has explicitly and repeatedly rejected, a belief in the causality of the will.”<sup>180</sup> Here, it becomes clearest that she conflates the *will* of will to power with *willing* or *desire* and intentionality in general.

Clark raises an interesting point in her objection to Kaufmann’s account of *will to power* as ‘psychological’ and empiricist. She writes that in instances of rape, the desire for power is often contrasted with a desire for sex, where a rapist seeks to have power over, and dominate, another. The fact that this contrast exists suggests that there are behaviors outside the scope of a power dynamic.<sup>181</sup> Clark suggests that Kaufmann’s empiricist interpretation of the will to power “can be maintained in the face of this kind of objection only if the will to power is defined so that at least some possible motives are not instances of it.”<sup>182</sup> But this, of course, would severely deform Nietzsche’s notion of it, for he writes, “The world is will to power – and nothing besides!”<sup>183</sup> I don’t think her objection stands to scrutiny. Aside from the persisting view of will as desire, the ‘will to power’ is *not* a need to dominate others, but might manifest itself as such *in consciousness*, such as in Hegel’s life and death struggle. Her problem again is attributing to the will to power a conscious representative, only now concerning the ‘power’ instead of the ‘will’ of will to power.

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<sup>180</sup> Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, pg. 215

<sup>181</sup> See Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, pg. 210

<sup>182</sup> Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, pg. 211

<sup>183</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 1067

Clark then experiments with the notion of power as “the ability to do or get what one wants,” and contrasts it with the *satisfaction* of the will to power, “a sense of power,” which she writes “has then nothing essential to do with power over others, but is a sense of one’s effectiveness in the world.”<sup>184</sup> This is precisely how, I argue, it should be interpreted, absent the propositional attitude in ‘wanting’. However, she claims this amounts to “thinking of the will to power as a second-order desire for the ability to satisfy one’s other, or first order, desires.”<sup>185</sup> She thus understands it entirely backwards. What has happened here is her inability to correctly understand the *will* of will to power has had the effect of misunderstanding *power* as well, for she can only see power as something other than dominance if ‘will’ is regarded as a ‘second-order desire’.

In instances where humans are craving power in terms of *dominance* or power *over* others, this does often appear as a conscious, or at least pre-conscious, pursuit. So it would suggest that there are two orders of willing, comparable to the ‘drive vs. desire’ discussion addressed above. And Clark claims that it seems absurd to suppose that a desire for power – as in dominance or power *over* X – could emerge unless other pre-existing desires were left unsatisfied.<sup>186</sup> But there are no ‘pre-existing *desires*’, only *drives* (which also express will to power) and *affects*. Otherwise, this is congruent with the discussion of aggression below, where it manifests only in the frustration of the secondary process; that is, *it is itself*

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<sup>184</sup> Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, pg. 211

<sup>185</sup> Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, pg. 211

<sup>186</sup> Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, pg. 211

*secondary*, and contingent on the impotence in direct discharge or the binding qualities of Eros. Nietzsche himself writes:

... I have found strength where no one previous searched, in simple, mild, and pleasant people, without the least inclination to rule – and, vice versa, the inclination to rule has often seemed to be an indication of inner weakness; they fear their own slave soul and throw over her a royal coat ... Powerful natures dominate, it is a necessity for which they needn't lift a finger. Even if, during their lifetime, they bury themselves in a garden house!<sup>187</sup>

Thus for Nietzsche, those who *are* strong or *are* powerful never *desire* strength or power; it is part of their nature or constitution to be so, although they, too, are full of 'will to power'. However, Clark – along with Sartre – relegates all human psychical experience to that realm of conscious striving.

Clark observes that if the will to power is to be consistent with the rejection of metaphysics, then it must, as Kaufmann suggests, be empirical. She also agrees that it is explanatorily illuminating for some aspects about human behavior; and yet, where everything is viewed as an expression of will to power, she finds it implausible or uninteresting, and suggests Nietzsche could not have believed such.<sup>188</sup> She concludes, "Nietzsche's doctrine of will to power may be construed as an empirical hypothesis ... but only at the cost of depriving it of all plausibility," and rendering Nietzsche "less astute about psychological matters than many (including

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<sup>187</sup> Nietzsche *Nachlass Fragment*, Fall 1880 6[206] (my translation. Taken from 'Nietzsche Source' <http://www.nietzschesource.org>)

<sup>188</sup> Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, pg. 212

Freud).”<sup>189</sup> Rather, it is only her *misinterpretation* of Nietzsche that renders the empirical interpretation implausible. Her conclusion seems to be derived from her inability to cognize the *will* or the *power* of “will to power” as anything other than conscious; that is, she fails to see that Nietzsche is doing exactly what Freud had also done: retroductively infer from empirical phenomena.

The empirical phenomena that Nietzsche observes involve relentless expansions and growths of forms of life, even non-sentient life. And he also makes a similar observation of the inorganic; otherwise he would not claim that *everything* is will to power. But in saying *everything* is will to power, he is not asserting that there is in the inorganic or non-sentient life a *desiring* or an aspiration for *power*, let alone a *feeling* of power. Rather, he observes the desire for power among humans, and recognizes that it is *an expression of the same patterns of phenomena observable in everything*. What I hope to have demonstrated is that Clark’s misinterpretation of the will to power, particularly in passages such as BGE §36, hinges on two factors: her conflation of *conscious* desire and *conscious* power with *unconscious* drives (aspects of the will to power) or physical trends towards homeostasis. She misunderstands both the *will* and the *power* of Nietzsche’s “will to power.”

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<sup>189</sup> Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, pg. 211, it is interesting that She makes this allusion to Freud, for Freud actually has very similar views regarding a *will to mastery*, evident in both sadism and masochism, which I argue is a false dilemma between the two orientations of a *drive for mastery* – oriented towards others in the case of the former, and towards the self in the case of the latter. Freud himself introduces the term ‘*Bemächtigungstrieb*’ in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* to explain what is ‘beyond pleasure’, much as Nietzsche’s ‘will to power’ is beyond pleasure. See above for a discussion of this.

## Dionysos: The Affectations of the Will to Power

‘The grand old eternal writer of the comedy of our existence.’<sup>190</sup>

In his late notebooks, Nietzsche identifies the Dionysian with the will to power. There are two important aspects to the passage to which I refer below; the second concerns the identity of the Dionysian with the will to power. The first I will address because of its importance to the scope of this thesis, where Nietzsche describes the will to power (and the Dionysian) as a play of forces endlessly transforming, as if describing his take on energy, never created or destroyed, but continuously altering the forms it takes. Nietzsche writes:

This world: a monster of force, without beginning, without end, a fixed, iron quantity of force which grows neither larger nor smaller, which doesn’t exhaust but only transforms itself, as a whole unchanging in size, an economy without expenditure and losses, but equally without increase, without income, enclosed by ‘nothingness’ as by a boundary, not something blurred, squandered, not something infinitely extended;<sup>191</sup>

Importantly, this is an interpretation that references, or is grounded upon, science and in particular in relation to thermodynamics. He describes the entropy in a closed system,<sup>192</sup> with ‘nothingness’ as its only boundary because energy and the play of forces is all there is – or rather, *all we may suppose there is*. But it is a closed

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<sup>190</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, preface §7

<sup>191</sup> Nietzsche, Writings from the late notebooks, [38] 12 June – July 1885, pg. 38

<sup>192</sup> Nietzsche description, as will be discerned below, appears to pertain more to the fluctuations of energy in an open system, such as in an ecosystem discussed above. However, he describes it holistically as a fixed quantity, and for that reason is a ‘closed system’. It seems to me, that Nietzsche might be conflated the two scenarios.

system that is not, and perhaps could never become, 'stable' or attain equilibrium. This depiction is indicative of Nietzsche's empiricism. The 'size' never changes because, according to a holistic view of the world, energy is not created or destroyed but transforms, engages in economies of transference, but holistically neither increases nor diminishes. And then, he describes entropy as it might function in an open system, writing:

... as a determinate force set into a determinate space, and not into a space that is anywhere 'empty' but as force everywhere, as a play of forces and force-waves simultaneously one and 'many', accumulating here while diminishing there, an ocean of forces storming and flooding within themselves, eternally changing, eternally rushing back, with tremendous years of recurrence, with an ebb and flood of its forms ... then coming home from abundance to simplicity, from the play of contradiction back to the pleasure of harmony... affirming itself even in this sameness of its courses and years, blessing itself as what must eternally return, as a becoming that knows no satiety, no surfeit, no fatigue – this, my *Dionysian* world of eternal self-creating, of eternal self-destroying, this mystery world of dual delights, this my beyond good and evil, without goal, unless there is a goal in the happiness of the circle, without will, unless a ring feels good will towards itself – do you want a *name* for this world? A *solution* to all its riddles? A *Light* for you too, for you, the most secret, strongest, most intrepid, most midnightly? – *This world is the will to power – and nothing besides!* And you yourselves too are this will to power – and nothing besides!<sup>193</sup>

Describing entropy in an open system, Nietzsche observes that energy oscillates back and forth from multifarious and often conflicting configurations into harmony and back again. And rather than equilibrium, there is a *dynamic homeostasis*, and

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<sup>193</sup> Nietzsche, Writings from the late notebooks, [38] 12 June – July 1885, pg. 38



one that is only transitory. It is necessarily 'dynamic' because it is always in flux. In this sense, Nietzsche closely describes what was addressed above: energy dispersal in ecosystems as described by Anilla, and evolutionary dynamics described by Emerson.

Nietzsche first says that this world is his 'Dionysian' world view. But then, he suddenly names it instead 'will to power'. This "world of eternal self-creation, of eternal self-destruction," as Nietzsche writes of it, is the world as will to power – an endless play or dance of energy and force. Adrian Del Caro writes, "Since we are in the world, and since the world is will to power, we, too, are nothing but will to power, with the admixture of the human element"<sup>194</sup> so that the "will to power and eternal recurrence both fall into the current of the Dionysian and are carried by it as a symbol carries meaning."<sup>195</sup> I'd rather, pedantically, clarify that it is the Dionysian that is located in the current of the will to power – the Dionysian elements are those aspects of will to power that are prescient for sentient beings.

For sentient beings, I argue, the will to power is recognized as Dionysos, as *desire, feeling, passion* – as all *affective* aspects of the will to power in psychical life. The world as will to power is a relentlessly transforming world of energy. The Dionysian aspects are the 'creative' and inspirational aspects, *feelings* of intoxication that we experience as artists, although these, too, are also only will to power, pulsating and coursing through us. I argue that the Dionysian, after *The Birth*, should be thought of as the *affective* aspect of will to power. The Dionysian is what

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<sup>194</sup> One might, rather, say "the admixture of the sentient animal element," because Nietzsche is often keen on deflating the distinction humans make between themselves and the rest of nature.

<sup>195</sup> Del Caro, "Nietzschean Self-Transformation," pg. 79

is felt in the ‘festive joys of mankind’, and which, for better or worse, are expressions of the will to power, expressing itself in us or through us as passion, as what is driven in desire, as inspiration, and as feelings of need.

For Nietzsche, passion, feeling, and affect are all *affective* presentations of the will to power in consciousness. This will become clearer below. But for now, it should suffice just to quote Nietzsche, “... The will to power is the primitive form of affect, that all other affects are only developments of it.”<sup>196</sup> And Nietzsche also goes on to write that the feeling of pleasure (an affect) is epiphenomenal to the attainment or increase of ‘power’ (or mastery).<sup>197</sup> The will to power is a ‘doctrine’ that physically describes the patterns of homeostasis, towards mastery psychically – homeostasis in both respects – and is *affectively* depicted as the Dionysian.

In BGE §23, for example. Nietzsche describes the lust for power as an *affect*.<sup>198</sup> The lust for power, as an *affect*, is a refraction of the will to power that is experienced as the Dionysian, just as desire is a refraction of a drive. The Dionysian are aspects of will to power that we *experience*. It is, to put it another way, the clay we’re given to mold in intentionality. It is the inspiration we feel to over-come an obstacle, whether intra- or inter-psychically. In the sections on aesthetics, I’ll explicitly associate this feeling with the feeling of sublimity.

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<sup>196</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §688

<sup>197</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §688

<sup>198</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §23

### III. VICISSITUDES of DRIVES

#### Defense Mechanisms

Our vicissitudes are the trajectories or paths of drives attributable to Eros. They are the means by which we relate with ourselves or with the world as essentially *driven, motivated* subjects. There are two ways of regarding our vicissitudes of drives and the more specific defense mechanisms attributed to them. One way to view defense mechanisms might be: the means by which we incorporate stimuli, such that internal stimulus x will be incorporated through a particular mechanism that might repress, disavow, or otherwise filter out threatening aspects of stimuli. In this sense, a 'compromise formation' emerges as a kind of remnant of threatening stimuli, generally maintaining a kind of 'symbolic' linkage. In this sense, a defense mechanism is a *means of mastery*. Another way of viewing defenses, however, is generally as failures of incorporation, failures to make meaning and a conservative endeavor to perpetuate a meaning previously cathected. 'Meaning', here, should be understood as an interpretation that obtains a kind of psychical homeostasis.<sup>199</sup> In this sense, defense mechanisms are also *means of mastery*, but the emphasis is on an inability to make meaning. There is still a product, a

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<sup>199</sup> According to the second view, Sublimation cannot be regarded as among the defenses because the vicissitude of sublimation – on its own – does not involve any kind of repudiation. Sublimation is the vicissitude by which content can be maximally incorporated or integrated whilst nonetheless occurring via detours or indirect expressions – a diversion of stimuli to another destination, as it were, instead of a damming up of its flow (repression) or the attempted to eradicate it (disavowal and some forms of aggression). This will become more clear in the following discussions of vicissitudes.

compromise, in which meaning is located, but there is much that has been sacrificed or repudiated for the sake of that meaning. And all of our defenses – means of mastering by repudiating – are determined by the vicissitudes of repression or disavowal (or aggression).

Our vicissitudes essentially structure and organize the stimuli we receive into a whole that is palatable to us. Our vicissitudes are the ways by which we *relate* with ourselves and our world, conditioning our reception of every eliciting situation. For example, I might relate to the world by disavowing or seeking to destroy this or that aspect of it; I might relate to the world by repressing this or that drive which seeks satisfaction in it. Our vicissitudes are the means by which we engage with the world. They structure our relations and are further the means by which we relate. The vicissitude of repression structures one's sexuality, for example, and the consequent sexuality – the product of that repression – is the means by which one consequently relates sexually to objects in the world.

Freud lists four basic vicissitudes that a drive might 'undergo'. These are:

Reversal into its opposite.

Turning round upon the subject's own self.

Repression.

Sublimation.<sup>200</sup>

Freud observes, however, that the first two processes appear to at least over-lap, to "converge or coincide."<sup>201</sup> And further on, when they become affiliated with the feeling of *pity*, the vicissitude of reaction-formation is described. And reaction-

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<sup>200</sup> Freud, *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, pg. 126

<sup>201</sup> Freud, *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, pg. 127

formation is defined as a drive's "reversal into its opposite," underpinned by repression.

One of the more recent and prominent researchers in defense mechanisms is Georges E. Vaillant. He observed that some defenses were healthier than others, some more mature, while others were more pathogenic or disruptive. He thus classified defenses according to four different categories. His classifications are as follows:

I. 'Psychotic' Defenses

1. Delusional projection – delusions about external reality
2. Denial – denial of external reality
3. Distortion – reshaping of external reality

II. 'Immature' Defenses

4. Projection – attributing aspects of oneself to others
5. Schizoid Fantasy – the use of fantasy for gratification in 'autistic retreat'
6. Hypochondriasis – transformation of negative feelings into physical symptoms or concerns.
7. Passive-Aggressive behavior – aggression towards others expressed indirectly
8. Acting Out – impulsive, disruptive behavior that inhibits conscious awareness of affects.
9. Dissociation – the exclusion of content associated with undesirable emotions

III. 'Neurotic' Defenses

10. Repression – unconscious inhibition of impulse memories, or ideas and preventing expression of instincts and feelings.
11. Displacement – redirecting one's feelings to less threatening content

12. Reaction formation – “Conscious affect and/or behavior that is diametrically opposed to an unacceptable instinctual impulse”
13. Intellectualization – Thinking or speaking about emotionally laden content that “leaves the associated affect unconscious”

#### IV. ‘Mature’ Defenses

14. Altruism – constructive and instinctually gratifying service to others
15. Humor – “overt expression of feelings” without the effect of discomfort neither on others nor in oneself.
16. Suppression – the capacity to be conscious of conflicts but “postpone action, affective response, or ideational worrying.”
17. Anticipation – “Realistic anticipation of or planning for future inner discomfort.”
18. Sublimation – “Indirect or attenuated expression of instincts without adverse consequences or marked loss of pleasure”<sup>202</sup>

The Diagnostic and Statistics Manual IV TR expanded its descriptions of defense mechanisms after research done by Georges E. Vaillant, largely incorporating his categorization of mature defenses.<sup>203</sup>

At first glance, it becomes obvious that any Nietzschean would take issue with the inclusion of ‘Altruism’ as a ‘Mature’ defense. It seems the sole reason that makes it ‘mature’ is that altruistic behavior is just socially and/or personally valued as ‘good’, and is thus included among the mature defenses despite the fact that, as will be shown in the last section of this thesis, it generally arises through the use of several immature and neurotic defenses.<sup>204</sup> For the moment, suffice it to say that

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<sup>202</sup> Vaillant, George E. *Ego Mechanisms of Defense*, pp. 243-248

<sup>203</sup> DSM IV TR pp. 808-811

<sup>204</sup> See the chapter on Ethics. I demonstrate the etiology of altruism as originating with reaction-formation in particular.

Vaillant is here making the same mistake as Kohlberg by injecting personal or cultural values into the evaluation of content. Furthermore, altruism and others (e.g., delusional projection), appear to be *symptoms* of defenses rather than actual defenses.

There is also a considerable over-lap with some defenses. For example, intellectualization (neurotic) appears to require dissociation (immature) of affect, and the dissociation itself depends upon repression. How intellectualization can then be categorized as 'neurotic' when it depends upon a mechanism that is 'immature' (less healthy), or upon another 'neurotic' defense, is questionable. The only justification would be that intellectualization can, in some areas, be regarded as socially valuable, such as in academic circles, and of which Kant's emphasis on disinterestedness is a good example. And again, I wouldn't even classify humor as a 'defense' or 'coping' style absent other defenses, but instead see it as possibly healthy and more of an *attitude* or general disposition, more of a *symptom* than a defense,<sup>205</sup> unless it is used as means of repressing or disavowing content.

There are minor practical issues with the inclusion of anticipation and suppression among the mature defenses, although there is ample reason for their inclusion there as well. Suppression *can* be healthy. There are appropriate times and places for dealing with issues, and suppression allows for deferment so that issues can be faced when and where appropriate. But its inclusion among the mature defenses can, for practical purposes, be a naiveté. It attributes too much

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<sup>205</sup> This is a good example of Nietzsche's criticisms concerning the confusion of cause and effect.

control to the defensive agent and overlooks significant pathological consequences.<sup>206</sup>

What is important are the implicit reasons for Vaillant's taxonomy of defenses. The classifications of 'mature' and 'immature', and what is included among them make this more apparent. He classifies at least some of the defenses based upon what is more or less societally accepted or valued. This is mistaken, for what is societally valued, such as altruism, might yet be significantly harmful to an individual, a product of further dysfunction, and ironically unhealthy for society. I agree with Vaillant's classification of defenses pertaining to those that are psychotic and those that are neurotic. Those defenses that are psychotic refer to the relation

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<sup>206</sup> A few words might be said on the defense 'suppression' and the misuse of 'repression' in place of it or 'oppression'. Oppression is an externalized action, such as the 'oppression of minorities' in a society, or the 'oppression of slaves', or even the 'oppression of human nature' by society, and so forth. It is analogous to repression and suppression in that it is meant to keep down, and repudiate, some aspect or keep it in a place that does not disturb the ego. But suppression and repression are, by contrast, internal operations. Marcuse conflates all three in *Eros and Civilization*, although he acknowledges that he does not distinguish between suppression and repression. However, one of the objectives of his is to deal with societal *oppressions* of human nature, which then *prompt* repressions or suppressions. Suppression, conceptually, appears to be an action analogous to the unconscious-preconscious operation of repression, only that it occurs as a conscious attempt to repudiate endogenous stimuli (ideas, feelings, compulsions, etc.). Suppression itself cannot strictly be regarded as egodystonic, for it can be used merely as a 'deferment', such that, perhaps, a circumstance might be inappropriate in dealing with such stimuli and therefore one 'suppresses' it *temporarily* to focus on a task at hand. But the key is the temporary nature of such an arrangement, as well as the flexibility and a non-pathological nature of such an operation. But in this sense, it can hardly be regarded as a defensive operation at all. Then, were suppression to become chronic, or extended beyond a temporary deferment, and become an actual avoidance of stimuli/content, then it should be regarded as an egodystonic, defensive operation. In such instances, it is pathological, and can very well lead, as a slippery slope, to actual repression through the habituation of avoiding certain content/stimuli in consciousness.



between the subject and *external* reality. What is neurotic pertains to how the individual expresses (or not) his or her *inner* reality – one's instincts, drives, desires – in relation to environmental concerns. In other words, implicit in every psychotic defense is the repudiation of at least some aspects of external reality; implicit in every neurotic defense is the repudiation of one's instincts, drives, or desires. Relying solely on this classification and the mechanisms mentioned by Vaillant, as well as some he omitted but are extremely important (rationalization) we then arrive at the below:

- I. Psychotic Defenses
  - 1. Delusional Projection
  - 2. Denial
  - 3. Distortion
  - 4. Projection
  - 5. Rationalization
- II. Neurotic Defenses
  - 6. Repression
  - 7. Dissociation
  - 8. Schizoid Fantasy
  - 9. Reaction Formation
  - 10. Intellectualization
  - 11. Humor
  - 12. Passive-Aggression
  - 13. Acting Out
  - 14. Displacement
  - 15. Hypochondriasis

Among the psychotic defenses, Disavowal (or denial) is primary, and every other one is a means of disavowing (as in the case of delusions or projections) or a means

of justifying or reinforcing a disavowal (as in the case of rationalization). Among the Neurotic defenses, repression is primary, and the others are intended to either support or reinforce the repression (as in the case of reaction-formation); deal with the remainder of the repressed (as in the case of schizoid fantasies); or otherwise respond to the repressions (as in the case of conversions, acting out, passive-aggression, or hypochondriasis; the latter being masochistic, and passive-aggression and acting out either sadistic or masochistic). For the purposes of this thesis, I look at the more significant vicissitudes – disavowal and repression – at times making mention of other particular expressions of psychotic or neurotic defenses for the sake of precision where relevant. I have, it can be observed, included ‘schizoid fantasy’ as neurotic defenses, for as Freud observes, “The neurotic often chooses to ignore the troubling, threatening aspects of reality and may come to create one that is satisfying in a *world of phantasy*, of a domain which became separated from external reality at the time of the introduction of the reality principle.”<sup>207</sup> This domain, Freud writes, is like a “reservation,” and “has since been kept free from the demands of the exigencies of life.”<sup>208</sup> What differentiates the phantasying at play in psychoses and neuroses, Freud observes, is the phantasies of psychotics actually replace external reality, whereas for the neurotic they are an addendum to it or a refuge from it.

What is apparent in the above classification is that all of these aforementioned defenses entail the *indirect* satisfaction of a drive; the psychotic is satisfied directly but only by means of disavowal, and for that reason may be

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<sup>207</sup> Freud, “The loss of Reality” pg. 187

<sup>208</sup> Freud, “The loss of Reality” pg. 187

thought of as indirect despite the drive following the primary process. The neurotic is satisfied through the formation of symptoms as a compromise formation or through a displacement of energy in other directions. And so we end up with a contrast between defenses that require the vicissitudes of repression or disavowal, and those that are conducive to the ego but do not have the same requirement. The former will be referred to as egodystonic and the latter as egosyntonic.<sup>209</sup> But aggression also involves a kind of existential disavowal. In aggression one acts against, existentially opposing, those aspects of reality that are disturbing or threatening to the ego, frustrating it in its aspiration for satisfaction. It is a direct expression of drives opposed to the reality of things. For this reason, it will be regarded as egodystonic although neither psychotic nor neurotic. *Passive-aggression* is of course neurotic. So what we have left to work with, for the purposes of this paper, are vicissitudes classified as follows:

- I. Egodystonic
  - a. Psychotic
    - i. Disavowal
  - b. Neurotic
    - i. Repression
    - ii. Reaction-formation
    - iii. Passive-aggression
  - c. Aggression
- II. Egosyntonic
  - a. Sublimation

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<sup>209</sup> These terms will be explained more clearly in what follows

## Terminology: Egodystonic or Egosyntonic

By way of introducing this unpopular terminology, I will enumerate a few examples from Strachey's translations of Freud's texts. First, In *Autobiographical Notes on a Case of Paranoia*, Freud speaks of a particular category of *drives* as egosyntonic.<sup>210</sup> Then, in *On Narcissism*, Freud writes that two different "cases must be distinguished, according to whether the erotic cathexes are egosyntonic, or, on the contrary, have suffered repression."<sup>211</sup> Here, the term 'egosyntonic' is used to denote the character of a particular constitution with respect to vicissitudes of drives that have or have not been followed. Then, in *The Unconscious*, Freud writes of the unconscious becoming egosyntonic when "repression is removed" and the "repressed activity is admitted as a reinforcement of the one intended by the ego."<sup>212</sup> And in *Some Character Types*, Freud writes that a neurosis develops from a "conflict between a person's libidinal wishes and the part of his personality we call his ego," which "includes his *ideals* of personality. A pathogenic conflict of this kind takes place only when the libido tries to follow paths and aims which the ego has ... prohibited." The libido then manifests itself in neurotic symptoms only when it is thus "deprived of the possibility of an ideal egosyntonic satisfaction."<sup>213</sup> Then in *The Introductory Lectures*, Freud describes a psychical conflict between divergent sexual trends as being between one that is, "we might say, 'egosyntonic', while the other

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<sup>210</sup> Freud, *Notes on a Case of Paranoia*, pg. 67

<sup>211</sup> Freud, *On Narcissism*, pg. 99

<sup>212</sup> Freud, *The Unconscious*, pg. 195

<sup>213</sup> Freud, *Some Character Types*, pg. 316

provokes the ego's defense."<sup>214</sup> Thus in his metapsychological papers (and the following *Introductory Lecture*), Freud speaks of 'egosyntonic' as pertaining to a configuration of drives or their vicissitudes.

In *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, Laplanche and Pontalis write thus about the term 'egosyntonic':

It connotes the idea that the psychical conflict does not imply an opposition between the ego *in abstracto* and all instinct, but rather one between two kinds of instincts, those which are compatible with the ego (ego-instincts) and those which are antagonistic to it (*ichwidrig*) or dystonic (*nicht ichgerecht*) and consequently repressed.<sup>215</sup>

And central to the use, it "implies a view of the ego as total, integrated, ideal – as it is defined, for example, in 'On Narcissism'."<sup>216</sup> In the original German, 'egosyntonic' appears as *ichgerecht*, 'egodystonic' as *Ichwidrig* and *nicht Ichgerecht*. These terms are generally of common usage in German, but, like many other terms used by Freud, were translated into English by Strachey with terms that sound more clinical.

The terms 'egosyntonic' and 'egodystonic' have generally been appropriated for use by ego-psychology and object-relations theorists as adjectives characterizing an object, idea, or symptom with regard to its conduciveness to the integrity of the ego (or ego ideal). They further are made use of in psychiatry. In the DSM IV-TR, One of the ways of distinguishing Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder from Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder is, for example, by the former causing disturbance

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<sup>214</sup> Freud, *Introductory Lectures*, pg. 250

<sup>215</sup> Laplanche & Pontalis, *Language of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 151-152

<sup>216</sup> Laplanche & Pontalis, *Language of Psychoanalysis*, pg. 152

to the ego – characterized as *egodystonic* – whereas the latter, the personality disorder, generally doesn't cause such disturbance and is therefore regarded as *egosyntonic*. In fact, many Personality Disorders are difficult to assess, the DSM states, in virtue of the fact that the "characteristics that define a Personality Disorder may not be considered problematic by the individual (i.e., the traits are often egosyntonic)." <sup>217</sup> Considering Nietzsche's numerous descriptions of noble spirits and 'higher types', the use of these terms that I am proposing becomes a bit dangerous in that light. Especially concerning noble spirits, arguably exemplified by Cesare Borgia, the use of the term 'egosyntonic' could easily be misinterpreted as valorizing a personality disorder; and in the case of Cesare Borgia, Anti-Social Personality Disorder specifically. Controversially, homosexuality was once described in previous versions of the DSM as 'egodystonic', although this has since been removed as a diagnosis entirely.

The reason for characterizing something as egosyntonic or egodystonic quickly becomes clear, however: it pertains to, respectively, the harmony or dissonance with which stimuli or content – drives, behaviors, ideas, or external aspects of reality – are experienced in relation to the ego (or ideal ego). But I think the use of the terms in such a fashion only serves a tautology. (What is egosyntonic? That which is compatible with the ego. What's compatible with the ego? That which is egosyntonic). Rather, I think it is possible to use these terms in ways that are more useful and open up horizons of meaning that might otherwise lie concealed. I find the terms more valuable in a theory that depicts them as central not only to

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<sup>217</sup> American Psychiatric Association, DSM IV-TR pg. 686

object relations but also characterizing *relations* rather than merely the *feeling* of such relations. According to former use, the terms denote only *content* that is troubling to the ego (or ego ideal). According to my use, the terms refer to the way in which content is *related* to the ego. Central to this is the *relationship*. So, for example, if the ego does regard a drive as threatening, and does not repress it, then the ego's relation to the drive is egosyntonic. If the ego represses the drive, then the relation to the drive is egodystonic. Regarding external stimuli, if some aspect of reality is disturbing to the ego, the ego can relate to it in several ways: aggressively, by trying to annihilate it; through disavowal, by denying its existence entirely (and thus protecting the ego's integrity); or by coming to terms with it in such a way that makes it amenable to the ego. Only the latter case is egosyntonic.

Yet another way of explaining this would be to say: 'egodystonic' refers to action taken *against* a thing that threatens the ego's harmony; 'egosyntonic' refers, on the other hand, to an incorporation or use of a thing, a *working with* what is the case instead of a repudiation of it. The emphasis is always on the *relation*, the '*with*' or the '*against*'. This will all become clearer in my exposition of the various vicissitudes below which I hope will also demonstrate the usefulness I've found in this terminology regarding the various vicissitudes that might be undertaken by the ego.

Two more clarifications should be made as well. First, if I speak of an 'egosyntonic constitution', I am referring to a psyche that (more or less) – *in abstracto* – is configured in such a way by the vicissitudes of drives that the relating is (more or less) egosyntonic. Conversely, if I write of an 'egodystonic constitution',

the reverse would be the case (more or less). For example, if a patient displays neurotic or psychotic symptoms, one can infer from this that, respectively, repressions or disavowals are at work, in which case the patient can be regarded as symptomatic of a (more or less) egodystonic constitution in proportion to the repressions or disavowals. Furthermore, it can be the case that vicissitudes of repression and disavowal are comorbid in one patient, some pathologically, some not. In such instances, it wouldn't be accurate to describe a patient as 'neurotically' or 'psychotically' constituted concerning the vicissitudes, but it does make sense descriptively to describe such a patient as egodystonically constituted. Obviously, such a description is an abstraction, for the psyche's use of various vicissitudes are, in practice, quite complex, and no one patient uses *only* egodystonic or egosyntonic vicissitudes; rather, there is always some admixture to varying degrees, hence why I emphasize 'more or less' in the descriptions.

Secondly, I will also write of an *orientation* as being egodystonic or egosyntonic. In such instances, I am emphasizing the *relation* such that, for example, an egosyntonic orientation towards a drive, thing, or idea would imply that the psychical constitution is such that an egosyntonic relation with the drive, thing, or idea is probable. This will all become clearer in the section on aesthetics and ethics. Because the basis of these terms concerns the vicissitudes, it is important to note that these refer to the means of resolving psychical conflict. Although 'egosyntonic' could possibly be used outside of the presence of any such conflict *in abstracto*, the terms are more useful in describing the means of resolution, a vicissitude (or



defense) that generally determines the means of relating in the face of psychical conflict. See the diagram below for an illustration.

Any discussion of the ego invites many confused and confusing notions of self-hood, and in a discussion of defense mechanisms or the vicissitudes of drives it particularly invites the infamous charges made by Sartre, known as the gate-keeper or second man problems. How can the vicissitudes or defenses – e.g., repression or disavowal – take place unconsciously when the ‘ego’, which is largely conscious or at least preconscious (having the ability to be conscious), is supposedly responsible for the repressions and disavowals? “The censor ... must know what it is repressing,”<sup>218</sup> writes Sartre. “It is a fair question to ask what part of himself can thus resist. It cannot be the ‘ego’, envisaged as a psychic totality of the facts of consciousness.”<sup>219</sup> He continues, noting, “We are compelled to admit that the censor must choose and in order to choose must be aware of doing so.”<sup>220</sup> In this sense, it must be conscious of the repression and what is being repressed. But the purpose of the repression is to not be conscious of x or y. And so, “What type of self-consciousness can the censor have? It must be the consciousness (of) being conscious of the drive to be repressed, but precisely *in order to not be conscious of it*.” And so, Sartre concludes, “the censor is in bad faith,” and psychoanalysis has only “established between the unconscious and consciousness an autonomous consciousness in bad faith.”<sup>221</sup> There is thus a “second man” of sorts in bad faith with the ego.

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<sup>218</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pg. 75

<sup>219</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pg. 75

<sup>220</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pg. 75

<sup>221</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pg. 76

In Sartre's own rationalist project, taken up by the school of existential analysis,<sup>222</sup> the unconscious is itself denied, or at the very least glossed over. However, I find this extremely problematic. But I also find equally problematic the position of ego psychology that often glosses over the problems raised by Sartre and others. My uses of the terms 'egosyntonic' and 'egodystonic' inevitably – and unfortunately – invite notions of ego psychology. For this reason, I must briefly address this issue before moving on, although I intend to keep it brief as it is not of central concern to my thesis.

I align my own views, and therefore the arguments of this thesis, with the views of Nietzsche on the matter of the 'ego' or notions of the 'self'. I don't think there is a 'self' or an 'ego' – not one to be discovered or ostensibly point to as a something with thing-hood. And I believe that Freud's psychical topography of the id-ego-superego division was only ever genuinely intended pragmatically – to speak about that which would otherwise have remained ineffable.<sup>223</sup> The self is only a

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<sup>222</sup> Also called "Daseinsanalysis"

<sup>223</sup> I further think the notion of a 'self' is even detrimental, psychically, and is indicative of an unhealthy relation (an 'egodystonic' orientation) with the world and oneself. There is no 'ego'. However, the 'ego' and the 'self' are useful terms. My position is that there is no 'ego', no 'super-ego', and no 'id' (unless we speak vaguely of the id as the totality of instincts and drives and other such motivational states). As with most things in Freud's theoretical work, he used provisional, operational descriptions in order to explain phenomena, often admitting that the descriptions themselves might need to be altered or thrown away. He said as much of the drives, and could possibly say as much about the tripartite topography as well. There *is*, however, an ego-ideal. The 'ego-ideal' is the notion that we have of ourselves. The ego-ideal is the synthetic unity or totality of which we can be conscious after the defenses have done their work. There is no other kind of 'self' of which we can, logically, be cognizant other than the 'ego-ideal'. It is an idea of consciousness and as such it is composed of the refracted bits of drives and ideas that make their way into consciousness as desires, wishes, fantasies, for example. It's something of which everyone falls short, but something towards which we are

potential coming to be. It is something that never *is* but is always *becoming*, which is what Nietzsche meant when he writes, “I am not a human being, I am dynamite.”<sup>224</sup> I believe there is only an ego ideal (the idea of oneself which is the remainder or substitution for everything the defenses already filtered out).

Sartre is mistaken on two accounts. First, he believes the ‘ego’ is that of which we are conscious, and further that the ego even exists at all (it doesn’t; only the ego-ideal exists, and it only as a fluctuating, inconsistent idea). Secondly, he does not grasp the distinction between drives and desires, but regards all motivations as products of conscious or rational intentionality. On this point, I believe Sartre gets tangled up in the language Freud uses to describe phenomena. For example, Freud might speak of content as being *allowed* into consciousness. The term “*allowed*” implies that there is an agency allowing x or y into consciousness. But this only indicates an insufficiency of language – the same insufficiency we encounter when speak of evolution, for example. When biologists speak of evolutionary change, or the acquisition of certain traits, they often use intentional language. A bird, for example, might be said to have evolved feathers and hollow bones so that it could fly. But this is the error of myopic retrospect. In the same sense, Sartre misunderstand Freud’s descriptions as expressing a kind of rational intentionality that only consciousness can have. Sartre, we can say, *mistakenly*

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always growing towards. The ego-ideal should not be conflated with the super-ego. As will become clear further on, particularly in the chapter on Moral Masochism, the super-ego is actually indicative of an egodystonic orientation with oneself and the world. The feeling of guilt, which must be distinguished from the feeling of shame,<sup>223</sup> is always indicative of an unhealthy attitude. Falling short of an our ‘ego-idea’ brings forth one or the other, shame without the super-ego; or guilt in effect of the super-ego.

<sup>224</sup> Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*,

*conflates drives with desires, and correspondingly, vicissitudes with intentionality.*

Something is 'allowed' into consciousness not by some agency, but because it was selected by unconscious processes without design or purpose but merely because it somehow fit some accidental neuronal event with motivational states so that it would only *appear as if* it were for this purpose.<sup>225</sup> It becomes clear from the get-go that he approaches the issue with a rationalist bias and discounts what is unconscious and irrational, and therefore fails to see or make proper distinctions between various phenomena.

To answer these issues, I believe Sebastian Gardner provides a more than sufficient account in his work *Irrationality and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis*. There, Gardner observes a difference between motivational states and propositional attitudes, where motivational states refer to non-conscious instinctual demands.<sup>226</sup> Gardner writes, "From motivational states proceed desire and wish."<sup>227</sup> For Freud, Gardner observes, "The representations of the infant and the dreamer are caused by *wishes*. Wishes are conative states whose causes, in these instances, are simple universal biological requirements, the most basic instinctual demands."<sup>228</sup> The wishes "... issue directly from motivational states."<sup>229</sup> Rational satisfactions, in contrast to the satisfactions of motivational states, involve "propositional content,"

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<sup>225</sup> See, for example, Freud, "Neurosis and Psychosis," pg. 50 where Freud writes that the ego "has no power" over the mechanism of repression and the content that comes to the fore as substitutes or compromises.

<sup>226</sup> My only criticism of Gardner's account is he never speaks of drives, and therefore fails to sufficiently make a connection between instincts and drives that could have possibly further enriched his own, already rewarding account.

<sup>227</sup> Gardner, *Irrationality*, pg. 172

<sup>228</sup> Gardner, *Irrationality*, pg. 120

<sup>229</sup> Gardner, *Irrationality*, pg. 120

whereas “wish-fulfillment only pre-propositional content.”<sup>230</sup> Thus Gardner envisages the difference between motivational states and propositional attitudes. Gardner observes that every “propositional desire stands in a relation of ‘derivation’ to a state of instinctual demand.”<sup>231</sup> This relation was noted above in the contrasting drives and desires where desires are described as the ‘refracted’ bits of drives that are allowed into consciousness *after* defensive operations. In general, this thesis aligns with the views put forward by Gardner (and, I believe, Nietzsche as well). Instead, there are irrational motivational states of which we are not conscious but from which our conscious desires and beliefs about the world are derived and therefore condition our thinking that we regard as rational.

“Psychoanalytic theory is not, pace Sartre and others, a theory of self-deception,”<sup>232</sup> writes Gardner. For Gardner, psychoanalytic theory hinges on wishes and fantasies.

To do away with a ‘second man’ or gate-keeper problem, all that is required is that one supposes certain vicissitudes of drives are selected, one might say, according to how unpleasurable stimuli is ‘mastered’ in the environment via various vicissitudes, as successes or failures of incorporation/integration. I align my view with Nietzsche’s, who writes, “*That one desires to combat the vehemence of a drive at all ... does not stand within our own power; nor does the choice of any particular method; nor does the success or failure of this method...*”<sup>233</sup> It is a process that is generally unconscious. To conclude this point, it should therefore be clear that my use of the terms egosyntonic and egodystonic do not refer to an ego-agency of

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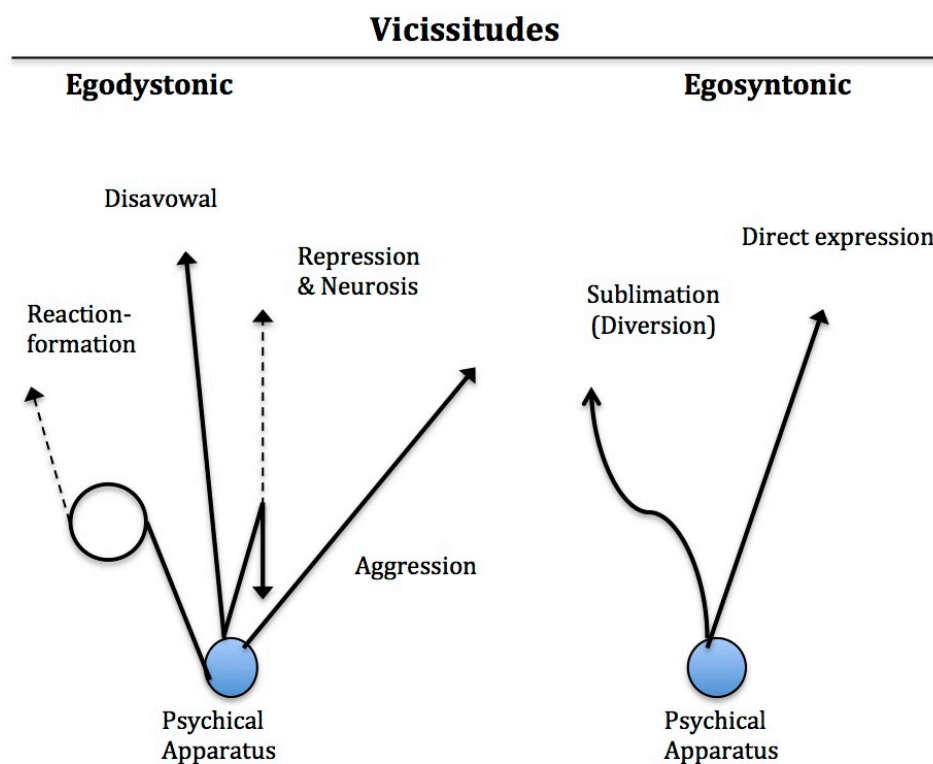
<sup>230</sup> Gardner, *Irrationality*, pg. 122

<sup>231</sup> Gardner, *Irrationality*, pg. 123

<sup>232</sup> Gardner, *Irrationality*, pg. 10

<sup>233</sup> Nietzsche *Daybreak*, §109

consciousness that does the repudiating or incorporating. Rather, my use of such terms that include the prefix 'ego' are meant pragmatically, in the same sense in which I believe Freud ultimately intended his psychical topography. By using such terms I mean only to signify a relation between one's self (which doesn't exist as anything other than a conscious interpretation of my 'self' as a totality and unity), and the world, or even in relation to one's self as such an interpretation.



*Pictured here are the various vicissitudes by which drives might be expressed. On the left are possible egodystonic vicissitudes, and on the right egosyntonic. A direct expression is included on the right because there are, one can assume, instances where direct expressions might avoid both repressions (obviously) and disavowals or acts of aggression.*

# Psychical Conflict – Neuroses & Psychoses

The foundation of drive theory concerns psychical conflict. And in his Introductory Lectures, Freud writes:

The meaning of psychical conflict can be adequately expressed ... by saying that for an *external* frustration to become pathogenic an *internal* frustration must be added to it. In that case, of course, the external frustration removes one possibility of satisfaction and the internal frustration seeks to exclude another possibility, about which the conflict then breaks out.<sup>234</sup>

In other words, something external is frustrating only because of the demands of something internal as well. But the internal stimuli – the drives – are also frustrating in light of the external. Often, the instance of psychical conflict is one that breaks out between two separate classes of drives, the demand of the ego-instincts, which are narcissistic, for example, and the sexual drives which are cathected with external objects. So, he further goes on to note, “The pathogenic conflict is thus one between the ego-instincts and the sexual instincts.”<sup>235</sup> This same conflict was observed previously after his reformulation of drive theory as a conflict between the death drive and Eros. I do not think that this kind of presentation of psychical conflict is necessary though. It appears as if Freud is trying to construct, *post hoc*, a reason for the conflict when it is sufficient to acknowledge that, as drives make demands, external reality – or the superego – is naturally restrictive or constraining, and ultimately when no other means for satisfaction (such as through

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<sup>234</sup> Freud, Introductory Lectures, pg. 350

<sup>235</sup> Freud, Introductory Lectures, pg. 350

sublimation) are available, then either internal reality (the drives) or external reality (objects, or various aspects) will be compromised to resolve the conflict, resulting in either repressions or disavowals, respectively.

## **Repression – *Verdrängung***

In *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety*, Freud distinguishes between his uses of the terms ‘repression’ on the one hand and ‘defense’ on the other. Repression is a defense, but it is only one of several possible defenses. Freud writes that the “old concept of defense” should be employed “as a general designation for all the techniques which the ego makes use of in conflicts which may lead to a neurosis, while ... ‘repression’” should refer to a “special method of defense.”<sup>236</sup> Freud is here using the term ‘defense’ to designate *all* those defenses, which make use of repression, that is, neurotic defenses. However, these are not the only ones present, as indicated above. And next, I will discuss the other dominant defense: disavowal.

Laplanche and Pontalis observe that “‘Defense’ is a *generic* concept from the start,” designating a “general tendency” of resolving psychical conflict that carries over from Freud’s original theory of the law of constancy;<sup>237</sup> that is, ‘defense’ is used to designate those psychical operations that combat stimuli of which the psychical apparatus (e.g., the ego) cannot make use and is thus felt as unpleasurable.

Repression is a defense that specifically operates against endogenous stimuli – the instincts and drives – by keeping them from consciousness. Dynamically, Laplanche

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<sup>236</sup> Freud, *Inhibitions, Symptoms*, pg. 163

<sup>237</sup> Laplanche & Pontalis, *Language of Psychoanalysis*, pg. 391



and Pontalis observe that 'repression' implies the "Maintenance of an anticathexis,<sup>238</sup> and [is] liable at any moment to be defeated by the strength of the unconscious wish which is striving to return into consciousness and motility."<sup>239</sup> And in this instance, much of the libido will be used in maintaining the anticathexes, which, in dealing with the quantitative aspect, alleviates some of the drive's 'vehemence' and pressure. But, Freud also points out, it is a pressure that never stops, and there is always a question of a psyche's strength in the maintenance of these anticathexes and the 'quota of affect' attributable to the drive.

In his essay "Repression," Freud distinguished between three separate phases of repression. The first, 'primal repression', designating perhaps the first use of repression in psychical life, is "not directed against the instinct as such but against its signs or 'representatives', which are denied entrance to the conscious and to which the instinct remains fixated."<sup>240</sup> In other words, repression is an action against the ideas with which drives, in the primary process, are cathected. An example might be the cathexis of a sex drive with the mother's breast – the breast as idea – for example. The second phase is 'repression proper' which entails a "repulsion [*Abstossung*] operating from the direction of a higher agency;"<sup>241</sup> that is, the ego or usually the preconscious aspect of the ego.

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<sup>238</sup> 'Anticathexis' is interchangeable with the term 'counter-cathexis'. No distinction can be made between the two conceptually, and I will use both terms depending on who I am referencing.

<sup>239</sup> Laplanche & Pontalis, *Language of Psychoanalysis*, pg. 393

<sup>240</sup> Laplanche & Pontalis, *Language of Psychoanalysis*, pg. 393

<sup>241</sup> Laplanche & Pontalis, *Language of Psychoanalysis*, pg. 393

The third phase is identified by Laplanche and Pontalis as the ‘return of the repressed’ as is exemplified in symptoms, dreams, etc.<sup>242</sup> In such instances, the dams that held back unconscious content are undone or removed, as in the case of dreams; or in the case of symptoms, repression’s anticathexes can be regarded as ‘failed’, for aspects of what has been repressed make their way into conscious life in the guise of a symptom formation, generally composed of ideas (often translated nonetheless by the preconscious system) or quota of affect.

One of the possible results of repression is hysteria where the *quantity* – the economic factor – is dealt with by cathartic expressions through the mediation of substitutes. Freud writes, “Insofar as repression in [conversion] hysteria is made possible only by the extensive formation of substitutes, it may be judged to be entirely unsuccessful; as regards dealing with the quota of affects, however, which is the true task of repression, it generally signifies a total success.”<sup>243</sup> The substitutes are never themselves sufficient for dealing with the repressed content, but the formation of hysterical symptoms deals with the quantity sufficiently through discharging it, although in such instances the repressions themselves are *failed* repressions.

A different picture is present in *obsessional neurosis*, Freud writes. In obsessional neurosis – of which Leonardo da Vinci and Immanuel Kant are later diagnosed – one finds “as its basis a regression owing to which a sadistic trend has been substituted for an affectionate one. It is this hostile impulsion against someone

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<sup>242</sup> Laplanche & Pontalis, *Language of Psychoanalysis*, pg. 393

<sup>243</sup> Freud, *Repression*, pg. 156

who is loved which is subjected to repression.”<sup>244</sup> Freud claims that this repudiation of ideational content is, at first, successful. And as a result of the repression, “there arises an alteration in the ego in the shape of increased conscientiousness.”

Furthermore, “in this instance, as in all others, repression has brought about a withdrawal of libido.”<sup>245</sup> In other words, the libido has *decathected* from the ideational content to which it had been cathected. But now, in obsessional neuroses, “it has made use of *reaction-formation* for this purpose, by intensifying an opposite.”<sup>246</sup> In other words, an original sadistic impulse is regarded as unacceptable, or even threatening, to the ego. Consequently, it is repressed. But what then occurs is it is turned around into its opposite, and the libido is recathected, as it were, with conscientiousness – a care for others – in its stead, and often results in what Freud later calls “moral masochism.” The vicissitude of reaction-formation is *made use of* as a means of reinforcing a repression or as compensation for it.

### **Disavowal – *Verleugnung***

In *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, Laplanche and Pontalis observe that *Verleugnung* is “... used by Freud in the specific sense of a mode of defense which consists in the subject’s refusing to recognize the reality of a traumatic perception – most especially the perception of the absence of the woman’s penis. Freud invokes

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<sup>244</sup> Freud, Repression, pg. 156

<sup>245</sup> Freud, Repression, pg. 157

<sup>246</sup> Freud, Repression, pg. 157

this mechanism particularly when accounting for fetishism and the psychoses.”<sup>247</sup>

In other words, *disavowal* is used to discuss defensive operations that oppose *external* reality, in contrast to repression, which on the other hand opposes *internal* reality. *Disavowal* is most often the operation that accounts for the development of psychotic symptoms, whereas repression is responsible for the development of neurotic symptoms. Laplanche and Pontalis observe that he never really worked out a theory of disavowal as he had for repression, but “there is nonetheless a definite consistency in the evolution of this concept in his work.”<sup>248</sup> One reason why Freud did not spend as much time on this mechanism is perhaps because he did not like working with psychotics. Freud was very empathic, and so psychotics could be very troubling. Furthermore, psychotics are unreasonably difficult to engage with in therapy, and aren’t so susceptible to transference, which is so central to the analytic procedure. Thus, Freud hadn’t the clinical exposure to psychoses as he had to repression in the neuroses, and theoretical advances concerning such constitutions are more cumbersome, wrought with more difficulty. Many psychoanalysts refuse to work with patients who are largely psychotically constituted for these reasons.<sup>249</sup>

For Otto Rank, the psychoanalyst with whom originated the idea of the Birth Trauma, disavowal is primary. He writes, “The original nature of denial is seen in the attempt to oppose to a painful reality, the power of the individual will,” but, faced with reality, the “denial mechanism is turned entirely inward where it

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<sup>247</sup> Laplanche & Pontalis, *Language of Psychoanalysis*, pg. 118

<sup>248</sup> Laplanche & Pontalis, *Language of Psychoanalysis*, pg. 118

<sup>249</sup> One exception would be Jung, who himself suffered some psychotic episodes, and was very taken with the ‘symbols’ that he observed in psychotic symptoms and ideation, compelling his development of the theory of the collective unconscious as well as is later, and controversially, his work on Alchemy.

expresses itself ... in the sphere of consciousness as repression.”<sup>250</sup> Otto Rank, thus, asserts that repression is a kind of disavowal, but one that, instead of disavowing the external world as it is perceived, disavows the demands placed on it by the id via the mechanism of repression. I tend to think that he is correct. Speculatively, it makes more sense that, as an infant increasingly faces unpleasure as it becomes disillusioned from its primary narcissism, it is likely to first disavow the differentiations and separations, the loss of narcissistic significance. Then, as the infant also encounters the demand placed upon it by its own endogenous stimuli, it would then enforce a similar operation concerning such. This also makes sense in relation to the nature of disavowals in general, which indicate a regression to a primary narcissism and feeling of omnipotence. This is not an important focus for me here, but I’d like to point out that it would seem, thus, that disavowal precedes repression chronologically, and that repression is in a sense a disavowal turned inwards. In both cases, stimuli are repudiated.

## **The Distinction**

Freud writes, “The most important genetic difference between a neurosis and a psychosis” is that the “neurosis is the result of a conflict between the ego and its id, whereas psychosis is the analogous outcome of a similar disturbance in the relations between the ego and the external world.”<sup>251</sup> A neurosis develops from the *repression* of the drives, and a psychosis develops by *disavowing* reality. A neurosis

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<sup>250</sup> Rank, *Truth and Reality*, pg. 38 ‘denial’ is here probably best translated as ‘disavowal’, although I have left it alone.

<sup>251</sup> Freud, “Neurosis and Psychosis,” pg. 149. I have removed Freud’s emphasis.

develops because “The repressed material struggles against [the repression]. It creates for itself, along other paths over which the ego has no power, a substitutive representation – the symptom,” and which is to be regarded as a “compromise.”<sup>252</sup> This ‘substitute’ or ‘compromise’ is one of several possible manifestations. The ones with which Freud has from the beginning mostly been concerned are the formation of ‘hysterical’ symptoms and other such neurotic behaviors one can observe in OCD and so on.<sup>253</sup> Another manifestation is a schizoid fantasy, to be distinguished from a delusion.

One of Freud’s first accounts of a delusional patient is given in his paper “The Neuro-Psychoses of Defense.” In this paper, he describes a woman who felt an “impulsive affection” for a man who did not return her love.<sup>254</sup> Freud describes an instance when the woman, “being met by fresh painful impressions” of the man’s unreturned love, waited for him to arrive by train on a “particular day ... of family celebration.” Freud continues:

But the day wore on and he did not appear. When all the trains by which he could have arrived had come and gone, she passed into a state of hallucinatory confusion: he had arrived, she heard his voice in the garden, she hurried down in her nightdress to receive him. From that time on she

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<sup>252</sup> Freud, “Neurosis and Psychosis,” pg. 50

<sup>253</sup> Freud, of course, did not differentiate as precisely as we do now between the various formations of symptoms. He was focused on the etiology and their possible cure by fostering an alteration at the root cause of the formation.

<sup>254</sup> Freud, “Neuro-Psychoses of Defense,” pg. 58

lived for two months in a happy dream, whose content was that he was there,  
always by her side...<sup>255</sup>

What has occurred is that instead of repressing the drives that demand their satisfaction through the man (the love object with which they're cathected), the ego has effectively cut itself off from the reality of the situation. Freud writes, "The ego has fended off the incompatible idea through a flight into psychosis."<sup>256</sup> The idea that would correspond to reality is rejected – it is disavowed – and in its place an idea is erected that is compatible with the subject's desires. Freud writes that a "delusion is found applied like a patch over the place where originally a rent had appeared in the ego's relation to the external world."<sup>257</sup>

In both neuroses and psychoses, writes Freud, there is a "rebellion on the part of the id against the external world, of its unwillingness – or, if one prefers, its incapacity – to adapt itself to the exigencies of reality, to [Necessity]."<sup>258</sup> In both, therefore, there is the incapacity to accommodate reality. Freud appears focused on the 'loosening' of the relation to reality in the second step of neuroses, versus the outright disavowal in the first step of psychoses, rather than on the differentiating factors of their first steps: repression and disavowal. He writes:

... in a neurosis the ego, in its dependence on reality, suppresses a piece of the id (of instinctual life), whereas in a psychosis, this same ego, in the service of the id, withdraws from a piece of reality. Thus for a neurosis the

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<sup>255</sup> Freud, "Neuro-Psychoses of Defense," pp. 58-59

<sup>256</sup> Freud, "Neuro-Psychoses of Defense," pg. 59

<sup>257</sup> Freud, "Neurosis and Psychosis," pg. 151

<sup>258</sup> Freud, "The loss of Reality" pg. 185

decisive factor would be the predominance of the influence of reality,  
whereas for a psychosis it would be the predominance of the id.<sup>259</sup>

Thus the neurosis, in its attunement to reality, results from the repression of one's drives that the reality-principle demands. Psychosis, on the other hand, results from disavowing reality in order to foster satisfaction, generally by way of delusional fantasies. However, Freud observes, "This does not at all agree with the observation ... that every neurosis disturbs the patient's relation to reality in some way, ... and that, in its severe forms, it actually signifies a flight from real life."<sup>260</sup> This would appear to be a contradiction, as Freud observes, but he states it is easily resolved by seeing that the vicissitude (repression) is not the neurosis, but the *beginning* of one.

The neurosis consists rather in the processes which provides a compensation for the portion of the id that has been damaged – that is to say, in the reaction against the repression and in the failure of the repression. The loosening of the relation to reality is a consequence of this second step in the formation of a neurosis, and ... the loss of reality [might be seen to] affect precisely that piece of reality as a result of whose demands the instinctual repression ensued.<sup>261</sup>

For an example that uses Freud's development theory, we can think of someone fixated<sup>262</sup> at the anal stage of development, and who, in accommodating external reality, will repress particular drives and develop a neurotic disposition towards

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<sup>259</sup> Freud, "The loss of Reality" pg. 183

<sup>260</sup> Freud, "The loss of Reality" pg. 183

<sup>261</sup> Freud, "The loss of Reality" pg. 183

<sup>262</sup> Fixation is the rigid libidinal cathexis to particular content by means of which the drives seek satisfaction.



cleanliness and regularity. The loosening of reality can be observed in the paranoia of germs or dirt. Freud thus envisions a two-step process in the development of neurotic symptoms: repression, and then compensation or symptoms.

There may be observed a two-step process in psychosis as well, Freud observes. The first entails disavowal. The second step is made in a “more autocratic manner,” writes Freud, “by the creation of a new reality which no longer raises the same objections as the old one that has been given up.”<sup>263</sup> Thus it is the first step that most differentiates the two developments – the neurotic initially repressing internal reality (the instincts or drives), the psychotic initially disavowing external reality, and the second step of each appears as a ‘reconstruction’, as either a compensation or symptom or a delusion. Yet Freud writes, “The initial difference is expressed ... in the final outcome: neurosis does not disavow reality, it only ignores it; psychosis disavows it and tries to replace it.”<sup>264</sup> What differentiates the phantasying at play in psychoses and neuroses, Freud observes, is the phantasies of psychotics actually replace external reality, whereas for the neurotic they are an addendum to it or a refuge from it.<sup>265</sup> Interestingly, Freud writes, “We call behavior ‘normal’ or ‘healthy’, if it combines certain features of both [neurotic and psychotic] reactions – if it disavows the reality as little as does a neurosis, but if it then exerts itself, as does a psychosis, to effect an alteration of that reality.”<sup>266</sup> But what he defines as ‘normal’ does not mean ‘healthy’. Rather, Freud speaks of normal as in conformity with societal norms. And it appears he defines ‘normal’ as entailing

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<sup>263</sup> Freud, “The loss of Reality” pg. 185

<sup>264</sup> Freud, “The loss of Reality” pg. 185

<sup>265</sup> Freud, “The loss of Reality” pg. 187

<sup>266</sup> Freud, “The loss of Reality” pg. 185

some admixture of neurotic and psychotic constitutions. 'Normal' appears to be minimally egodystonic.

## AGGRESSION

There are problems inherent to the discourse of aggression in relation to the death drive. Aggression is given only two forms, or directions, of expression: sadism and masochism (other- or self-directed). Aggression is always linked with the intent to cause either unpleasure (non-sexual) or pain (sexual).<sup>267</sup> Aggression carries with it the notions of unethical behavior (or, sometimes morally good, as Havi Carel writes of protectiveness);<sup>268</sup> that is to say, it is rarely morally or ethically neutral but is either in one camp or the other – good or evil.

But aside from the ethical attributions to aggression, the notion that aggression itself is innate, as an intrinsic character of the death drive, appears questionable. Laplanche observes that the death drive, regarded as an instinct of aggression, satisfies two separate issues in psychoanalysis. He writes, “two intentions coincide in the affirmation of the death drive, as it appears in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: to reaffirm the fundamental economic principle of psychoanalysis,” which, in its most radical form, is “the tendency to zero.” But also, along side this, “To give a metapsychological status ... to the increasingly numerous and impressive discoveries of psychoanalytic inquiry concerning the register of

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<sup>267</sup> Laplanche is careful to distinguish unpleasure from pain, pointing to the possibility that aggression is not always sexual in nature, but that “pain” is, contrary to mere “unpleasure”, always sexual. For example, see *Life and Death*, pp. 85 – 100 on aggression.

<sup>268</sup> See Carel, *ibid*, pg. 126

‘aggressiveness’ or ‘destructiveness’.”<sup>269</sup> In other words, Laplanche claims that, because psychoanalysis has observed aggression prevalently, and at very early ages,<sup>270</sup> it became reasonable to suppose that there is in fact an instinct for aggression. But he also claims it ‘satisfies’ the assertion of the entropic principle in psychical functions, seen as a ‘direct’ and uninhibited discharge (‘towards zero’). There are several problems with this view, however, and I will argue that aggression should not be brought into the primary process, and that this complicates rather than simplifies things.

With respect to the death drive, Laplanche observes that Freud “first had in mind an originary self-destructiveness, and only secondarily an aggressivity re-directed to the external world.”<sup>271</sup> Laplanche first recognizes that the death drive is not directly linked to aggressiveness, but that it becomes so later on. He writes:

One can note that when Freud understands his death drive retrospectively as an aggressive drive, he claims to be relating his discovery to the treatment of sadism and masochism. Yet this claim by Freud is among the most dubious: on the one hand, he had already previously highlighted and studied in detail the phenomena of sadism and masochism without the invocation of a specific drive; and on the other hand, if one looks closely at *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, one sees that observations of sadism or masochism ... are never called on as an opening move in the introduction of the death drive.<sup>272</sup>

Freud’s theory of an ‘aggressive instinct’, Laplanche observes, has its origin not in a new discovery, but in a conceptual necessity that became apparent when Freud

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<sup>269</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg 85

<sup>270</sup> As indicated in the work of Melanie Kleine, for examples

<sup>271</sup> Laplanche, *So-Called Death Drive*, pg 44

<sup>272</sup> Laplanche, *So-Called Death Drive*, pg 45

discovered primary narcissism. Laplanche observes that at this point, with the publication of *Beyond*, and in the works after 1920,

... what is considered the initial stage is the reflexive, masochistic moment: to make oneself suffer or destroy oneself. ... Before 1920, on the contrary ... it would be the activity directed towards an external object – sadism – that would be first ... whereas masochism would be the turning round of this initial attitude, a turning round that is ... easily understandable in terms of obstacles encountered in the external world and, above all, of the guilt caused by aggression.<sup>273</sup>

This would also be consistent with *primary narcissism*, which Laplanche identifies as the *new* element that gave rise to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Laplanche writes, “The essential dimension of the affirmation of a death drive lies neither in the discovery of aggressiveness, or in its theorization, nor even in the fact of hypostatizing it as a biological tendency or a metaphysical universal. It is in the idea that aggressiveness is first of all directed against the subject ... before being deflected toward the outside.”<sup>274</sup> There is a hermeneutic problem here, however, in describing the death drive as ‘self-destructive’; it imposes on the *entropic* principle the hypothesized *consequence* of that tendency to zero, where a diminution of energy towards a zero sum necessarily implies the ‘destruction’ of the entity regarded as ‘self’, although ‘self-destruction’ is not the ‘*telos*’ of that tendency.

Then, Laplanche also writes, “The death drive, a concept that seems quite undialectical, is present, in Freud’s final formulations, not as an element in conflict

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<sup>273</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg 89

<sup>274</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg 86

but as *conflict itself* substantialized, an internal principle of strife and disunion.”<sup>275</sup>

But can this be so? Freud had mentioned in *Beyond* that it is Eros, not the death drive, that is to be regarded as “disturber of the peace.” And since the death drive can never be cognized directly, according to Freud, but must always be observed through the filter of its interaction with Eros, can one rightly call the death drive a principle of strife – of conflict substantialized? Even within Freudian theory, there are problems with this view. Rather, *Eros* – providing the *detours to death* – should be regarded as what allows for disruption because of *its* demands. Aggression is the result of dissatisfaction or frustration in the demands of Eros, energy that must be discharged, and that, owing to constraints of reality and/or *creative impotence*, cannot be sublimated and is unable to be repressed. I want to recall what Nietzsche writes of Cruelty.

In *Daybreak*, echoed in the *Genealogy* later, Nietzsche writes of cruelty as “one of the oldest festive joys of mankind.” And “in the act of cruelty the community refreshes itself and for once throws off the gloom of constant fear and caution,” and in which “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.”<sup>276</sup> Interestingly, Nietzsche here also asserts that cruelty is enjoyed by those who have been “made hard by deprivation and morality,” and, although they are “full of strength,” perhaps owing merely to their stoic hardness, they are also full of

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<sup>275</sup> Laplanche, *Life and Death*, pg 122

<sup>276</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak* I §18

“revengefulness, hostility, deceit and suspicion.”<sup>277</sup> Such spirits do not fit the bill for what Nietzsche later describes as noble spirits. Instead, such spirits are weak or fettered spirits, and their ‘cruelty’ is associated with a failure of repression as is Wagnerian hysteria.<sup>278</sup> Although in the *Genealogy* Nietzsche also describes cruelty in relation to the noble spirit, here the description appears to be accompanied by a kind of spiritual weakness and deprivation, and *ressentiment*, insofar as the cruelty is performed on others, and *bad conscience*, insofar as cruelty is redirected towards one’s self, to make one’s self suffer. Referencing what later becomes regarded as ‘ascetic priests’, Nietzsche writes:

All those spiritual leaders of the peoples who were able to stir something into motion within the inert blue fertile mud of their customs have, in addition to madness, also had need of voluntary torture if they were to inspire belief – and first and foremost ... their own belief in themselves! The more their spirit ventured on to new paths and was as a consequence tormented by pangs of conscience and spasms of anxiety, the more cruelly did they rage against their own flesh, their own appetites and their own health.<sup>279</sup>

There appears then, an analogue found later in Freud’s work in the *Three Essays*, where the primary direction of one’s drives is sadistic, but might then be turned against the self – the same drives – and become masochistic. But Nietzsche’s account isn’t as simple either. Nietzsche also finds two different reasons for cruelty in the sadistic position: cruelty as the product of a mere natural disposition in the case of the noble spirit (an immediate, violent response), or cruelty as the product of

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<sup>277</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak* I §18

<sup>278</sup> See the section on Wagnerian hysteria and Dionysian intoxication

<sup>279</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, I §18

*ressentiment* in the case of the weaker or fettered spirit, projecting their unhappiness onto the external other, and finding joy in the cruel acts in *passive-aggression*. Nietzsche, later echoed by Freud, associates *bad conscience* with *masochism*. Freud later refers to this as moral masochism.<sup>280</sup>

Nietzsche and Freud<sup>281</sup> both, however, regard cruelty and aggression as part of man's nature. What becomes clear in Freud, however, is that even man's natural aggressive disposition is itself secondary and contingent on the frustration of the *binding* character of Eros – frustrations, that is, of *relating*. In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche writes, "*Cruelty* is part of the festive joy of the ancients and, indeed, is an ingredient in nearly every pleasure they have," cruelty was a "feast."<sup>282</sup> Yet cruelty was once experienced differently than it is now, and perhaps would not have been regarded as 'cruelty' as such, but merely a direct expression of one's nature only retrospectively regarded as 'cruel' in the same sense that people judge nature as 'cruel', despite the fact that there is no maliciousness in nature. For Nietzsche goes on to assert, "At the time when mankind felt no shame towards cruelty, life on earth was more cheerful than it is today, with its pessimists. The heavens darkened over man in direct proportion to the increase in his feelings of shame *at being man*."<sup>283</sup> In other words, mankind had become ashamed of its nature and sought to dissociate itself from nature. And on this path, "he finds not only that the joy and innocence of

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<sup>280</sup> See, for example, the section on Moral Masochism

<sup>281</sup> Only Freud after the turning point of 1920 explicitly asserts that aggressivity is inherent to the nature of humans. Prior to this point he made no explicit statement on the matter, and explained aggression more in terms of the vicissitudes of the sex drives (which were acquired in relation to the instincts rather than being inherited like the instincts).

<sup>282</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, II §6

<sup>283</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, II §7

animals is disgusting, but that life itself is distasteful.”<sup>284</sup> The guilt man learned to feel for his nature tainted his perspective of all of nature, so that he came to find life itself distasteful. At this point, aggression and cruelty are still practiced by mankind but have become *passive-aggression*; it is a cruelty that cathartically releases itself from preceding repressions.

What I mean to illustrate is that the slave spirit is *passive-aggressive*, either sadistically or masochistically, owing to their constitution. The noble spirit, on the other hand, is possibly aggressive (generally sadistically) for reasons of *creative impotence*, because a noble spirit, as conceived by Nietzsche,<sup>285</sup> is capable of only unmediated expressions of drives, and therefore is not capable of sublimation, let alone other egodystonic vicissitudes.<sup>286</sup> The noble spirit is regarded as *healthier* by Nietzsche because it represents raw nature, uninhibited in its expression and with a strength to express itself, but Nietzsche does not, on account of this, suggest we should be noble. Rather, noble spirits are merely *closer* to his vision of the *Übermensch*.

### **... Similar to Disavowal**

What, then, is aggression? It seems there is sufficient reason to state that it is a vicissitude the potential of which is provided biologically and, to an extent, is ‘selected for’ in the sense mentioned above... a creative impotence or an

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<sup>284</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, II §7

<sup>285</sup> see, for example, my section on Human *Geist*

<sup>286</sup> see, for example, my section on Creativity where creativity is demonstrated in research to emerge not only from sublimation but from a flexibility of a multitude of vicissitudes.



environmental or spiritual impoverishment. But what is it that makes it arise in the first? Anna Freud has suggested, among others, that the source is frustration. This, of course, is also the precipitating factor of neuroses – or for that matter – psychoses. Freud writes, “people fall ill of a neurosis as a result of *frustration*” – “ ... the frustration of the satisfaction of their libidinal wishes.”<sup>287</sup> Furthermore, a “pathogenic conflict of this kind takes place” when the libido is “deprived of the possibility of an ideal ego-syntonic satisfaction.”<sup>288</sup> In other words, a neurosis is the result of a frustration of unsatisfied drives, and the frustration itself arises from the inability to egosyntonically channel the drive towards other objects or intermediate aims. It appears reasonable to claim that aggression manifests itself in situations that frustrate libidinal satisfaction, but also situations where repression and disavowal are not possible or utilized, and there is an inability or unwillingness to find other possibilities of expression, such as sublimation. Laplanche writes, “There is no trace, in the biology which Freud wished to use as his fundamental reference, of the cruel, sadistic behavior, the destructiveness with no aim but the sheer pleasure of destroying, which characterizes the human being.”<sup>289</sup> And further, such a conclusion “invalidates the ascription of any biological or even zoological basis to the sexual death drive.”<sup>290</sup> Instead, Laplanche remarks, it is something “human, all too human,” the foundation of aggression is psychical.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Freud, *Some Character Types*, pg. 316

<sup>288</sup> Freud, *Some Character Types*, pg. 316

<sup>289</sup> Laplanche, *So-Called Death Drive*, pg 55

<sup>290</sup> Laplanche, *So-Called Death Drive*, pg 55

<sup>291</sup> Laplanche, *So-Called Death Drive*, pg 55

There is nothing to suggest that aggression, though seemingly a substantial biological disposition, is anything more primary than any other behavioral dispositions in relation to objects, which are of a secondary nature, such as neuroses and psychoses. Analogously, the possible vicissitudes of disavowal and repression are biologically provided as potentialities, but their enactment actually appears to occur only when *other* binding operations of Eros fail for whatever reason.

Therefore, we cannot ascribe to a view of a primary and unavoidable instinct or drive to aggressiveness that is not also fundamentally preceded by a frustration that arises from a substantial failure of the secondary process as is the case for other vicissitudes. Aggression is not attributable to a drive but should instead be regarded as a *vicissitude*, a means of relating, or at the least a symptom of a defense, such as “acting out” might be.

Aggression emerges from the frustration of drives as a means of procuring satisfaction. Aggression is a vicissitude that has been deflected from the original aim, such as a union *with*, or incorporation of, some object; and the vicissitude becomes aggression as a means of reconciling the frustration of the failure, and thus becomes directed *against* the object. When aggression emerges, it does so in relation to a *different* intermediate aim and/or object than that with which the drive was originally associated. When only the original intermediary aim of union *with* is replaced by destructiveness and action *against* an object is there manifested what has typically been called aggression proper: a rebellion against and desire to destroy, annihilate, or subvert the object. When the object is itself exchanged for another, because of the fear of retaliation or other such fears, then what emerges is

what has typically been labeled *passive-aggression*, a prerequisite of which is originally repression or suppression. Aggression proper entails no repression, whereas passive-aggression is contingent on repression or suppression.

Aggression is a behavior that is necessarily felt as pleasurable by the aggressing agent. It is *a means* of mastering what is regarded as a *resistance*, so that annihilation of the frustrating, threatening object *masters* it and is thus felt as pleasurable. By analogy to neuroses, neuroses develop as a means of procuring some satisfaction when the original aim is repressed, of *mastering* endogenous stimuli. But aggression should not be regarded as a neurosis. Aggression is strictly the expression of free energy directed against an object or substitute object when the energy was, for internal or external reasons, unable to establish the relation originally sought.<sup>292</sup>

In a sense, Aggression is therefore comparable to the vicissitude *disavowal*. The orientation is the same: attempting to eradicate that which is traumatic or threatening to the ego and external to it. Jonathan Lear observes that, in Ancient Greece, "The killing of Socrates *manifests a psychotic understanding of how to get rid of a disruption*: one treats a non-thing as though it were a thing and then destroys it."<sup>293</sup> And also, "The Athenians react to this trauma by trying to kill it off."<sup>294</sup> Lear thus explicitly compares aggression to disavowal, the vicissitude underpinning psychoses. A difference, however, is located in the fact that disavowal involves an individual's *psychical* action in a refusal to acknowledge an aspect of external reality.

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<sup>292</sup> Holt has provided a great description of the difference between bound and free cathexis.

<sup>293</sup> Lear, *Happiness*, pg. 102 (my emphasis)

<sup>294</sup> Lear, *Happiness*, pg. 102

Aggression, on the other hand, *does* acknowledge that reality, *but only so as to eradicate it physically*. In both, the aim is the same: to annihilate a frustrating or threatening aspect of the external the world. But disavowal, on the one hand, is a psychical operation; aggression, on the other hand, a physical one.

Lear writes, “There is an important difference between saying that aggression is fundamental to human life ... and saying that it flows from a fundamental aggressive force.”<sup>295</sup> Rather, what he proposes, and also what would seem more consistent with the Nirvana and constancy/reality principles, is: “Aggression emerges from a breakdown in the mind’s efforts to make meaning – that is, a breakdown which cannot be healed by subsequent efforts to make meaning.”<sup>296</sup> In other words, Aggression emerges from a creative impotence when faced by a frustration of the secondary process. Aggression results from a failure to make meaning, which is to say, it fails to integrate or incorporate some aspect of reality and therefore seeks its eradication or subservience.

Bataille offers an example of this. He observes that war is generally the result of not finding other means of expending excess energy in productive, or non-productive, ways.<sup>297</sup> While the Aztecs expended energy meaningfully in wars and in sacrifices,<sup>298</sup> other Native American tribes expended energy by giving gifts, called the ‘Potlatch’, where it was more honorable to give than to receive, and which signified power.<sup>299</sup> Buddhists in Tibet, for example, expended energy through living

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<sup>295</sup> Lear, *Happiness*, pg. 113

<sup>296</sup> Lear, *Happiness*, pg. 113

<sup>297</sup> Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, vol. 1 pg. 25

<sup>298</sup> Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, vol. 1 pp. 45-61

<sup>299</sup> Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, vol. 1 pp. 63-77

a purely contemplative, and thus unproductive, life.<sup>300</sup> These are some of the ways in which Bataille describes the expenditure of energy in civilization. Others have been the production of cultural artifacts – art, music, monuments to the dead as well as to the living or to ideas. “Our ignorance,” he writes, “only has this incontestable effect: It causes us to *undergo* what we could *bring about* in our own way, if we understood.”<sup>301</sup> To clarify, it ‘causes us to undergo’ what we could have brought about by entirely other means, such as the expenditure of energy and resources in the development of culture instead of wasting it annihilating each other or those aspects of the environment that are antagonistic to our drives and desires. Instead of acting aggressively out of creative impotence or *ressentiment*, there is the possibility of expending energy through sublimations of our drives when encountering frustrations by the reality principle. For these reasons, aggression can be appropriately understood as a means of relating that is egodystonic.

In instances of self-defense, however, ‘aggressive’ behavior cannot be regarded as egodystonic, nor even as aggression. In self-defense, one is not the *aggressor*. The *Aggressor* is the one who is *aggressive*; that is, on the offense. The aggressor is the one who is acting out of frustration, and, most importantly, because of an inability to otherwise cope with the frustration egosyntonically. Nietzsche also writes that, as will to power, it is natural for things to expand their powers.

“Intoxicated by moral narcotics, one speaks of the *right* of the individual to *defend* himself; in the same sense one might also speak of his *right* to attack: for both are necessities ... [But] a *right* is acquired through treaties ... self-protection and self-

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<sup>300</sup> Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, vol. 1 pp. 93-110

<sup>301</sup> Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, vol. 1 pg. 23

defense do not rest on the basis of a treaty.”<sup>302</sup> They’re natural to life, expressions of will to power. Here, I think one needs to beware that *defense* is being used not to speak of a psychical action as above, but as defending one’s self from a real, existential threat. And Nietzsche doesn’t want one to lose the capacity or strength to defend oneself, as, for example, one might say the stereotypic Buddhist might, or the Christian who ‘turns the other cheek’. For this reason, Nietzsche writes, “A society that definitely and *instinctively* gives up war and conquest is in decline.”<sup>303</sup> What he means is: a society no longer *capable* of aggression is in decline.<sup>304</sup> This does not, however, coincide with Havi Carel’s claim that violence we attribute to aggressiveness itself is ‘good’ in some contexts. Rather, it merely indicates that ‘violence’ is a vicissitude that might be *interpreted* as good in some contexts.

Laplanche writes that Eros is not quite able to account for everything, such as the “destructive and destabilizing aspects of *sexuality in itself*.”<sup>305</sup> This might be true to a point, in that the life/sex drives are in the service of another principle (the nirvana principle). But if Laplanche is correct about what Eros cannot account for, surely it is also in contradiction with what Freud writes of sexual and life drives as those destabilizing factors in *Beyond* whose analogues are the ‘exigencies of life’ and prevent the goal of ‘death’. Freud writes, “The life drives have so much more to do

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<sup>302</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §728 (my emphasis on *right* to emphasize Nietzsche’s point)

<sup>303</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §728

<sup>304</sup> Admittedly, this is a simplification. There are scenarios in life when one might be called upon to defend one’s self, or aspects of one’s life, by acting offensively against a perceived threat. I don’t wish to get into this concern here, but merely point out that aggression can, and should, be regarded as an egodystonic vicissitude in at least most instances.

<sup>305</sup> Laplanche, *So-Called Death Drive*, pg 48

with our internal perception since they act as disturbers of the peace and continually bring along tensions whose release is felt as pleasure, while the death drives seem to do their work inconspicuously.”<sup>306</sup> It can therefore be concluded that aggressiveness is never observed as occurring outside the operations of Eros or in some relation to the characteristics attributable to it. The death drive is *inferred* from aggression and *Bemächtigungstrieb*, but that drive to dominate inescapably bears the stamp of Eros and the secondary process – a means of relating. Aggression, if related to the death drive at all, is what appears in *as* an attempt at mastery that occurs through the secondary processes of Eros and is colored, or covered over, by it. There is no ‘innate aggression’, but only a primary process of discharge that, in Eros, becomes a drive for mastery, a will to power, that *can manifest* as aggression, a drive to dominate, or a will to have power *over*. And according to Nietzsche, it is important not to lose that capacity, whilst nonetheless learning to live along other modes of mastery.

## Sublimation: A Single Egosyntonic Vicissitude

Freud writes in his letters to Fleiss in the 1890s that *phantasies* are involved in sublimation.<sup>307</sup> And he further describes phantasies as “protective structures [*Schutzbauten*], sublimations of the facts, embellishments of them, and at the same time [they] serve for self-exonerations.”<sup>308</sup> Hans Loewald observes that Freud also

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<sup>306</sup> Freud, *Beyond*, pg. 99

<sup>307</sup> Freud, Draft L [1897], pg. 248 quoted by Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 1

<sup>308</sup> Freud, Letter 61 [1897], pg. 247 quoted by Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 1

“speaks of phantasies as *Schutzdichtungen*, protective fictions.”<sup>309</sup> This description of sublimation in relation to phantasying can be seen as a description of the formation of schizoid fantasies. The notion of the construction of phantasies through a vicissitude of sublimation would suggest that schizoid phantasies are also attributable to sublimation, which would make such neurotic substitute formations contingent on the capacity to sublimate into a compensatory satisfaction, a ‘refuge’. However, phantasying is also a basic act of the imagination. To this extent, it can also be regarded as involving ‘illusions’ that need not be thought of as neurotic or even psychotic (although they may very well be). However, as I hope to show below, Freud mostly abandons this view of sublimation broadly, and distinguishes it from other operations that involve repressions, such as reaction-formations.

Near the end of his life in *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, Freud returns to the ‘neglected concept of *quantity*’. Jonathan Lear observes, “repression is one of the mind’s most primitive and pervasive defenses against the unwanted and the intolerable, but, Freud now says, it is of limited value as a defense against quantity.”<sup>310</sup> This was always the case in Freud’s theory, though; contrary to Lear, this is nothing new. The existence of neuroses was always explained in terms of quantity, in that a quota of energy will always demand expression/expenditure, and the repression of a drive can only quite ephemerally avoid the expression of libido that would quickly find expression in a symptom or compromise formation. Repressions “cannot hold out against an increase in the strength of the [drives],” writes Freud, but “Analysis ... enables the ego, which has attained greater maturity

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<sup>309</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 2

<sup>310</sup> Lear, *Happiness Death*, pg. 108



and strength, to undertake a revision of these old repressions.”<sup>311</sup> The revision occurs by finding or creating *new* techniques of managing the quantitative factor, ideally *without* repressions. Freud thus writes that what needs to occur in analysis is the replacement of “repressions that are insecure by reliable ego-syntonic controls.”<sup>312</sup> Freud continues, “... *it is always a question of the quantitative factor, which is so easily overlooked.*”<sup>313</sup> And concerning the task of analysis, Freud writes, “The real achievement of analytic therapy would be the subsequent correction of the original process of repression, a correction which puts an end to the dominance of the quantitative factor.”<sup>314</sup> What kind of correction would Freud have in mind if not sublimation?

Freud claims, “Not every neurotic has a high talent for sublimation.”<sup>315</sup> Freud frequently echoes this throughout his works, including in *Leonardo*. This observation, if true, makes the analytic situation quite dangerous. In analysis, the analyst is engaged in a transference with the analysand with the aim of undoing repressions that are responsible for the manifestations of neuroses.<sup>316</sup> If some analysands don’t possess much of a capacity for sublimation, then how can undoing repressions benefit the patient? Freud further observes, “Many people fall ill precisely from an attempt to sublimate their instincts beyond the degree permitted by their organization and that in those who have a capacity for sublimation the

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<sup>311</sup> Freud, *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, pg. 227

<sup>312</sup> Freud, *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, pg. 226

<sup>313</sup> Freud, *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, pp. 229-230

<sup>314</sup> Freud, *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, pg. 227

<sup>315</sup> Freud, *Recommendations*, pg. 118

<sup>316</sup> I’d like to add, although Freud felt conflicted about treated patients with psychoses, that the analyst also facilitates the ‘undoing’ of disavowals – facilitates *disillusionment*, as it were.

process usually takes place of itself as soon as their inhibitions have been overcome by analysis.”<sup>317</sup> Loewald observes that in this situation the analyst is in a position to help the ‘weak’ analysand by indicating “new aims for the instinctual trends present in his patient.”<sup>318</sup> In other words, psychoanalysis would then be ‘educative’ or ‘informative’, in a sense ‘directive’ in *giving* direction to patients with less of a capacity for sublimation. This is what Loewald terms ‘pseudo sublimation’.<sup>319</sup>

He observes that the analyst is, in practice, something like a ‘civilizing agent’, assisting the analysand in becoming more ‘normally’ oriented in life, in civilization. As such, “in the best sense of the word *civilizing*, when *forcefully* directing the patient to higher aims he undoes his own work and contributes to further misery and ‘discontent’ instead of promoting the patient’s own development.”<sup>320</sup> For this reason, Freud claims, “As a doctor, one must be tolerant to the weakness of a patient.”<sup>321</sup> And a patient should not be *forced*, as it were, into pursuing higher aims of which (s)he is not capable. Freud later claims in *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* that sometimes the analyst needs to stop the treatment *not* at a cure, but when things are ‘good enough’.<sup>322</sup>

Traditionally, sublimation has been regarded as a defense mechanism, albeit a ‘successful defense’. However, Loewald claims, “Sublimation cannot be subsumed

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<sup>317</sup> Freud, *Analysis Terminable*, pg.

<sup>318</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 39

<sup>319</sup> It appears to me as though ‘pseudo-sublimation’ is actually something like a reaction-formation, whereby the analyst is able to give to an analysand a ‘formation’ that can be used to more successfully ‘neutralize’ the libido.

<sup>320</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 39

<sup>321</sup> Freud, *Recommendations*, pg. 119

<sup>322</sup> Freud, *Analysis Terminable*, pg.

under the general heading of defense.”<sup>323</sup> There are significant differences that Loewald observes between sublimation and other ‘defenses’. Sublimation is to be distinguished from vicissitudes that involve repression. Loewald writes:

In contrast to what is the case in repression, in sublimation instinctual impulses are said not to be averted, but to be diverted from their aim of satisfaction in immediate discharge. Their corresponding percepts, memories, and fantasies are not repressed (as occurs in countercahesis) but instead ... are made more acceptable by some disguise or embellishment.<sup>324</sup>

Generally, the term ‘defense’, concerning psychical processes, is used to denote an operation whereby a subject impairs or prevents the recognition of threatening stimuli or content. Loewald writes that, loosely, it “comprises everything that in some way does not conform to what is postulated as the inherent pressure for discharge of an instinctual current.”<sup>325</sup> In other words, ‘defense’ is generally synonymous with the secondary process whereby the direct discharge of energy – the primary process – is inhibited or prevented. “On the other hand,” Loewald continues, “the more narrow reference of the term *defense* is to only those processes ... that dam up, block, or run against the instinctual stream and that take the form of ‘countercaheses’ erected or maintained by the ego.”<sup>326</sup> Loewald, however, is overlooking the other important vicissitude of disavowal (which is a nearly unmediated expression). As mentioned already, disavowal does *not* inhibit or dam up the ‘instinctual’ flow, but instead allows it at the expense of external reality. Loewald

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<sup>323</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 36

<sup>324</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 37

<sup>325</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 4

<sup>326</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 4

only makes a distinction between “processes that dam up, counteract instinctual life and processes that channel and organize it.”<sup>327</sup>

“Sublimation,” emphasizes Loewald, “is not a form of defense – not even of ‘successful’ defense – against instinctual life, the id, desire, passion, the unconscious; instead sublimation belongs in the area of ego development and of internalization as distinguished from defense.”<sup>328</sup> One of the troubles with reading Freud is he never truly saw the possibility, although he flirted with it, of an aim being inhibited *without* the use of repression. However, Freud also makes a distinction between repression and sublimation. Freud writes:

... Owing to their repression, neurotics have sacrificed many sources of mental energy whose contribution would have been of great value in the formation of their character and in their activity in life. We know a far more expedient process of development, called ‘*sublimation*’, in which the energy of the infantile wishful impulses is not cut off but remains ready for use ... Premature repression makes the sublimation of the repressed [drive] impossible; when the repression is lifted, the path to sublimation becomes free once more.<sup>329</sup>

Freud thus articulates a general antagonism between repression and sublimation whereas the act of repression impairs or entirely prevents the possibility of sublimation. I’d like to emphasize a few other points here. The first, Freud is cautious in describing sublimation as a desexualization; he writes that ‘*perhaps*’ the aim is no longer sexual. I think this caution is warranted in two respects: it is

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<sup>327</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 5

<sup>328</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 33

<sup>329</sup> Freud, *Introductory Lectures*, pp. 53-54

contingent on what one means by 'sexual'; does it denote direct, narrow sexual interaction as in copulation? Or does it denote the *drive* itself as a drive for a sexual aim? In other words, does 'sexual' pertain to the direct aim of the drive, or does it pertain to the characterization of the drive *as* sexual? The second point I'd like to make I think provides the answer.

Freud writes of the exchange of one aim – one that is sexual – for an aim that is 'higher'.<sup>330</sup> Thus, it would appear that the 'desexualization' involved in sublimation refers to the narrow, properly sexual activity where the *aim* is, strictly speaking, copulation, or the *object* is the one through whom that aim is sought, or by whom one's drive was aroused. Therefore, there are no sufficient grounds for claiming that in sublimation the drive itself finds an expression that is nonsexual, but rather the drive itself finds an aim in which it can express itself but an aim that is not *narrowly* sexual. Freud also writes, "The most important vicissitude which a [drive] can undergo seems to be sublimation; here both object and aim are changed, so that what was originally a sexual [drive] finds satisfaction in some achievement

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<sup>330</sup> The designation of the new aim as 'higher' is problematic. It again raises the question of moral and cultural prejudice in discussions of sublimation, where what which is merely culturally 'appropriate' or 'valued' is regarded as 'higher' than that which is generally condemned, e.g., sexuality and one's basic, natural drives. Loewald also observes, "When specific higher cultural values are emphasized, sublimation begins to be seen as a talent or an 'art' possessed only by a fortunate minority" (Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 39) Part of the problem is in the prejudices, or cultural valuations, attributed to such activities, such that we judge a particular vicissitude as 'good' merely because we, *even for egodystonic reasons*, might find it valuable. This is the case when Nietzsche writes that slave spirits generally value things on the basis of 'utility'. What I aim to say is: it is a mistake to describe a vicissitude as 'sublimation' only in virtue of the valuation of the result. If civilization is largely egodystonic, for example, then the things it finds valuable are what coheres with that egodystonic constitution, and are thus likely products of egodystonic vicissitudes as well.

which is no longer sexual but has a higher social or ethical valuation.” Involved in sublimation is not only the change of *aim* but also the change of *object*. I think to understand Freud correctly here, the change of aim doesn’t have so much to do with the character of the drive, but rather the activity by which the drive might find satisfaction. For example, satisfaction of a sex drive might be attained in art rather than the literal copulative act with another being, and so the *object* necessarily changes as well, taking as the *medium* for the art materials instead of another human being. But despite the change in aim and object, the character of the drive – a sex drive – remains the same. It infuses a non-sexual activity – such as art – with sexuality.<sup>331</sup> In becoming ‘desexualized’, it infuses what is *externally* non-sexual with sexuality and eroticism.

Loewald observes, “Again unlike repression, [sublimation] is described not as anti-instinctual but as utilizing ... instinctual forces for particular acceptable or highly valued purposes through channeling and modulating them. Repression,” on the other hand, “prevents sublimation,” but “the removal of repression facilitates it.”<sup>332</sup> Said differently, Loewald writes, “Repression means exclusion of instinctual currents from the coherent ego, and thus a restriction or impoverishment of the ego; in sublimation these currents are encompassed within the ego-organization by way of channeling, organizing processes.”<sup>333</sup> Sublimation, it appears, entails the *infusion of sexuality* (*qua* sex drive) into an activity, repression the repudiation of it.

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<sup>331</sup> Key to my reading of Freud is discerning what he means as ‘sexual’ – at times it can be taken broadly; here, I interpret it narrowly as concerning literal sexual intercourse.

<sup>332</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 38

<sup>333</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 38

Loewald writes, “*Aim inhibition* is a central feature in the classical theory of sublimation.” And when Freud refers to “tender-affectionate, ‘aim-inhibited’ currents,” these are “subsumed under sublimation.”<sup>334</sup> In the postscript to *Group Psychology*, Freud writes that the “affectionate emotional ties,” despite appearing nonsexual, “are derived from impulsions which have a sexual aim.”<sup>335</sup> He continues:

We are justified in saying that they have been diverted from these sexual aims, even though there is some difficulty in giving a description of such a diversion of aim ... Moreover, those [drives] which are inhibited in their aims always preserve some few of their original sexual aims; even an affectionate devotee, even a friend or an admirer, desires the physical proximity and the sight of the person who is not loved only in the ‘Pauline’ sense.<sup>336</sup>

In other words, the original sexual aim has been given up in such relations, and yet something of it nonetheless persists and is manifest in the affection for a friend, for example. Furthermore, Freud continues, “We may recognize in this diversion of aim a beginning of the *sublimation* of the sexual instincts, or on the other hand we may fix the limits of sublimation at some more distant point.”<sup>337</sup> Freud thus recognizes in sublimation what was already described in Plato’s *Symposium*, whereby original, erotic love increasingly is transformed into ‘higher’ states, but where the original, sexual drive – the erotic – is still preserved and fills each level with passion.

However, this movement in the *Symposium* does not involve *inhibition*, but rather a

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<sup>334</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 25

<sup>335</sup> Freud, *Group Psychology*, pg. 138

<sup>336</sup> Freud, *Group Psychology*, pg. 138

<sup>337</sup> Freud, *Group Psychology*, pg. 139

kind of *seduction* into other channels, a seduction that is close to a kind of 'enlightening' realization.

Anna Freud sees sublimation as integral to the development of children. For her, sublimation is a natural process that takes place *unconsciously* in childhood. She writes, "Sublimation takes place in early childhood. It is an involuntary process that cannot be brought about intentionally, and is not accompanied by conscious awareness. The child cannot be forced to sublimate his [drives]."<sup>338</sup> Her assertion that it takes place unconsciously does not preclude sublimation from being susceptible to conscious influence or direction, especially in adulthood. But she claims sublimation is more difficult to turn to as adults if it is not developed as a vicissitude in childhood. She writes, "Where the ability to sublimate has developed in early childhood, the [drive] wishes become less inexorable in their claims, more ready to accept substitutive gratifications and therefore more adaptable to the circumstances of life."<sup>339</sup> It is also nonetheless significant that it is recognized as a vicissitude that is, or can be, unconscious, particularly in childhood, and generally natural. This is also interesting because it points out that *forcing* a displacement or substitutive satisfaction is actually *antagonistic* to sublimation. Such force might be seen as an instigating factor in the use of reaction-formation or repression instead of sublimation. I suggest such 'force' should be regarded broadly to involve manners of coercion as well as punishment, etc. However, she also observes, "While ... unduly severe and restrictive upbringing may prepare the way for all sorts of neurotic disturbances, excessive freedom ... predisposes the child to social

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<sup>338</sup> Freud, Anna, "Sublimation," pg. 28 I have substituted 'drives' for 'instincts'

<sup>339</sup> Freud, Anna, "Sublimation," pg. 29 I've substituted 'drive' for 'instinctual'



maladjustments.”<sup>340</sup> In other words, Anna Freud does see a need to nonetheless encourage adjustment to societal standards, supposing that such encouragement would then lead a child naturally towards possible sublimations of drives rather than repressions. I think the view, theoretically more so than practically, is dangerous, for a child could be encouraged in a number of directions that, ultimately, might require egodystonic vicissitudes.<sup>341</sup>

To recapitulate so far, the neurotic defenses are those that combat the drives; the psychotic defenses are those that combat the external world (or, at least, the ‘perceptions’ of it). Sublimation is a vicissitude that, unlike psychotic vicissitudes but like neurotic vicissitudes, moderates the expression of drives. But for Loewald, repression should be contrasted with sublimation because sublimation does *not* involve repression. “The fundamental aim,” he writes, “is not given up or blocked,” but instead takes detours.<sup>342</sup> Sublimation cannot entail the non-sexual expression of a sexual drive, but is instead involves the *infusion* of sexuality by sex drive in the non-sexual, merely divert from its aim.

### **... vs. Internalization**

Ken Gemes aptly observes that Loewald’s use of the term “internalization,” especially in reference to Nietzsche’s *Genealogy* “as a precursor for his own notion of

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<sup>340</sup> Freud, Anna, “Sublimation,” pg. 27

<sup>341</sup> This point will become more clear in the section on *The Link*. The vicissitudes I am thinking of are those religious delusions and schizoid fantasies that impair egosyntonic relating.

<sup>342</sup> Loewald, Sublimation, pg. 42

internalization,”<sup>343</sup> does seem to point to repression, as such was implied in the *Genealogy*. However, as I’ve demonstrated, Loewald also speaks of sublimation as distinct from, and not inclusive of, repression. For Loewald, repression is actually *antagonistic* to the vicissitude of sublimation. So how can Loewald then identify sublimation with a process of internalization? Is it clumsiness or a contradiction? Or are there instances of internalization that are repressive and instances that aren’t?

To illustrate the breadth of Loewald’s term ‘internalization’, I will merely quote him on the various psychical processes that it involves. In a paper titled “Internalization, Separation, Mourning, and the Superego,” he writes:

I use the term ‘internalization’ here as a general term for certain processes of transformation by which relationships and interactions between the individual psychic apparatus and its environment are changed into inner relationships and interactions within the psychic apparatus. Thus an inner world is constituted and it in turn entertains relationships and interactions with the outer world. The term ‘internalization’ therefore covers such ‘mechanisms’ as incorporation, introjection, and identification, or those referred to by the terms ‘internal object’ and ‘internalized object’, as well as such ‘vicissitudes of instincts’ as the ‘turning inward’ of libidinal and aggressive drives.<sup>344</sup>

I quoted this at length to address several aspects. The first I would like to briefly

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<sup>343</sup> Gemes, “Sublimation...,” pg. 53

<sup>344</sup> Loewald, “internalization,” pg. 1119

mention is the affinity that this has with Pichon-Rivière's concept of the 'link',<sup>345</sup> whereas it involves the same processes as 'the link' in interpersonal relations and the reciprocal influence of inner and outer realities.<sup>346</sup>

Furthermore, he does discuss 'internalization' as involving repression, as the 'turning inward' of libidinal and aggressive drives, in which case aggression will be acting on the ego in instances of moral masochism,<sup>347</sup> or the ego will take itself as love-object as in secondary narcissism or secondary masochism. He also mentions 'introjection' which is a term used to denote a 'psychoneurosis' of melancholia whereas the loss of a love-object is *loosely* disavowed, the object is 'introjected', set up inside the ego. So these aspects of 'internalization' are certainly egodystonic. Loewald also suggests that the superego is a product of what he calls 'Internalization'.<sup>348</sup> But the superego, as described by Freud, is the result of *reaction-formation*, whereby certain identifications with external objects, such as the father, are internalized and construct the ego ideal or superego, the 'social conscience', as it were; reaction-formation, Freud writes, is the source of the social conscience – our moral sentiment and all our feelings of disgust, shame, and various valuations. However, 'internalization' also involves terms like 'incorporation', which does not imply repression or disavowal, but instead, a *relatedness* with things, and of making a place for things in one's psychical life. By 'internalization', it appears Loewald is trying to include *too many conflicting operations*. Thus, while Loewald discusses sublimation as 'internalization', Gemes correctly identifies egodystonic

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<sup>345</sup> See below on the section concerning the Link

<sup>346</sup> See below on 'The Link' for more on this.

<sup>347</sup> See below in ethics on moral masochism and Kant's deontology

<sup>348</sup> Loewald, "internalization," pg. 1113

vicissitudes at play in ‘internalization’ that are antagonistic to Loewald’s conception of sublimation.

### **... vs. Reaction-Formation**

Reaction Formation is, in my opinion, the trickiest and most convoluted of all the vicissitudes to which Freud refers in his corpus. In the *Three Essays* it is what is responsible for all our feelings of disgust, shame, guilt, and correspondingly our aesthetic and moral valuations. Around the time of Freud’s *On Narcissism*, it is regarded as the vicissitude of a ‘reversal into the opposite’, such as in the instance of *pity*, which is also seen to “converge or coincide” with the vicissitude he terms “turning around upon the subject’s own self.”<sup>349</sup> And in *The Ego and the Id*, reaction-formation is regarded as what is responsible for the very formation of the superego, the ‘social conscience’, and in the following work is thus implied as what is behind the ‘categorical imperative’ of duty in Kant’s ethics specifically, which he claims is the result of a particularly vehement superego.

On face value, it’s easy to see how these various descriptions are connected. Throughout, everything moral, everything altruistic, and everything masochistic (and in a sense, sadistic too in the second formulation) is attributed, somehow, to reaction formation. However, looking more closely at these instances, it appears to be very confused, or at least confusing and unclear, conceptually.

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<sup>349</sup> This is the most significant complication in the matter. I will not deal with it here for the sake of space, but according to my interpretation, reaction-formation is generally attributed to these vicissitudes. I alluded to this above in the section of psychical conflict.

I will begin explaining this mechanism by reference to ‘disgust’ in the *Three Essays*. There, Freud writes, “Disgust seems to be one of the forces which have led to a restriction of the sexual instincts.”<sup>350</sup> Then, after discussing the various ‘perversions of sexual life’, Freud writes that the study shows us “The sexual instinct has to struggle against certain mental forces which act as resistances, and of which shame and disgust are the most prominent.”<sup>351</sup> Then, when writing about sexuality in childhood, Freud observes:

It is during this period of total or only partial latency that are built up the mental forces which are later to impede the course of the sexual instinct and, like dams, restrict its flow – disgust, feelings of shame and claims of aesthetic and moral ideals. One gets the impression from civilized children that the construction of these dams is a product of education, and no doubt education has much to do with it. But in reality ... it can occasionally occur without any help from education.<sup>352</sup>

This is just prior to his introduction of reaction-formation and sublimation. Freud observes that historians generally attribute cultural achievements to the “diversion of sexual instinctual forces from sexual aims and their direction to new ones – a process that deserves the name of sublimation.”<sup>353</sup> And Freud places its beginning in the period of latency.<sup>354</sup> But, during the period of latency, all sexual impulses or stimulation of the erotogenous zones can be said to “arouse unpleasurable feelings.

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<sup>350</sup> Freud, *Three Essays*, pg. 152

<sup>351</sup> Freud, *Three Essays*, pg. 162

<sup>352</sup> Freud, *Three Essays*, pg. 178

<sup>353</sup> Freud, *Three Essays*, pg. 178

<sup>354</sup> Freud, *Three Essays*, pg. 178 His daughter Anna Freud, as well as Hans Loewald, both locate the vicissitude of sublimation in the earliest stages of childhood... even at the weaning process.

They consequently evoke opposing mental forces (*reacting impulses*) which, in order to suppress this unpleasure effectively, build up the mental dams that I have already mentioned – disgust, shame, and morality.”<sup>355</sup> This is the vicissitude of reaction-formation. The ‘mental dams’ are the *formations* that facilitate the repressions – the *reactions* – against drives.

So for Freud, the forces, or mental dams, that resist the sexual impulses that are felt as unpleasure are actually reaction-formations. And he suggests that these ‘reacting impulses’ form and construct these dams – these resistances – that he refers to as *disgust*, from the beginning, but also feelings of *shame* as well as *aesthetic and moral ideals*. But how is this to be differentiated from sublimation, which, according to many people, is also responsible for the formation of ideals?<sup>356</sup> Importantly, Freud adds a footnote in 1915, around the time that he was working on his Papers on Metapsychology, which both adds clarity *and* confusion. In the footnote, he writes:

In the case I am here discussing, the sublimation of sexual instinctual forces takes place along the path of reaction-formation. But in general it is possible to distinguish the concepts of sublimation and reaction-formation from each other as two different processes. Sublimation can also take place by other and simpler mechanisms.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> Freud, Three Essays, pg. 178, pg. 178

<sup>356</sup> e.g. Hans Loewald and the Ego Ideal

<sup>357</sup> Freud, Three Essays, pg. 178, fn. 2 (he added it in 1915). See, for example, remarks on the following pages. Where reaction-formations do not merely adhere to, or introject, pre-existing social content, sublimation could be said to be involved in the formative aspect of reaction-formation, taking place by more complicated means by first requiring the repression as a precipitating factor. In such an instance, sublimation – with which repression is antagonistic – would appear to operate with

He is here alluding to what he specifically addresses in the summary of the work, where he writes of sublimation:

... according to the completeness or incompleteness of the sublimation, a characterological analysis of a highly gifted individual, and in particular one with an artistic disposition, may reveal a mixture, in every proportion, of efficacy, perversion and neurosis. *A Subspecies of sublimation* is to be found in *suppression by reaction-formation*, which, as we have seen, begins during a child's period of latency and continues ... throughout his whole life. What we describe as a person's 'character' is built up to a considerable extent from the material of sexual excitations and is composed of instincts that have been fixed since childhood, of constructions achieved by means of sublimation, and of other constructions, employed for effectively holding in check perverse impulses which have been recognized as being unutilizable. The multifariously perverse sexual disposition of childhood can accordingly be regarded as the source of a number of our virtues, insofar as through reaction-formation it stimulates their development.<sup>358</sup>

He writes that a reaction-formation is: 1. a sub-species of sublimation; and 2. largely comes to the fore in latency; and 3. responsible for the development of 'virtue'. He also, however, recognizes sublimation as responsible for character development. Is this an inconsistency with no. 3? Then there is the 'mixture' of dispositions that are 'efficacious, perverse, and neurotic' in artists, and this appears to be largely owing to 'incompleteness' in sublimation, or, as above, 'along the path

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what escapes repression. Reaction-formation is, then, something like 'complex sublimation' and not sublimation proper.

<sup>358</sup> Freud, *Three Essays*, pp. 237-238 (my emphasis)

of reaction-formation'. Freud also writes in the same summary that during the period of latency ...

... the production of sexual excitation is not by any means stopped but continues and produces a store of energy which is employed to a great extent for purposes other than sexual – namely, on the one hand in contributing the sexual components to social feelings and on the other hand (through repression and reaction-formation) in building up the subsequently developed barriers against sexuality.<sup>359</sup>

In other words, reaction-formation comes to the fore during the period of latency to construct the mental dams that influence which drives are to be repressed.

Freud writes at times of sublimation in broad ways that indicate *not* sublimation as discussed above, but instead reaction-formations:

Sexual ideas belonging to the family-complex and incestuous object choice is made use of in representing the highest ethical and religious interests of man – that is, they have illuminated an important instance of the sublimation of the erotic instinctual forces and of their transformation into trends which can no longer be called erotic.<sup>360</sup>

The last portion of the quote, articulated as a 'transformation' into what 'can no longer be called erotic' is *not* sublimation but instead reaction-formation: it is the reversal of the erotic into the non-erotic (its opposite). Were it sublimation, the ethical and religious would be *infused* with eroticism and instead merely diverted in its concrete aims, so that the general aim of erotic satisfaction is still accomplished without repression of the erotic.

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<sup>359</sup> Freud, *Three Essays*, pg. 232

<sup>360</sup> Freud, *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*, pg. 61



When addressing substitute satisfaction, Laplanche and Pontalis observe that the substitute can be viewed economically and/or symbolically; respectively, a “symptom furnishes the unconscious wish with a replacement satisfaction,” and/or “one content of the unconscious is supplanted by another.”<sup>361</sup> More to the point:

The term ‘substitute satisfaction’ should be seen in conjunction with ‘compromise-formation’ and ‘reaction-formation’. Every symptom, inasmuch as it is the product of the defensive conflict, is a compromise formation. In so far as it is principally the wish which seeks satisfaction by means of the symptom, this symptom appears above all as a substitute-formation; in reaction-formations, by contrast, the defensive process predominates.<sup>362</sup>

I’d like to suggest, however, that every reaction-formation *is* a compromise- and substitute-formation, although it might be possible to conceive of the latter as not necessarily entailing the former. When reaction-formations take place, they do so by finding in reality an idea the acceptance of which is a compromise for the repudiated drive. Reaction-formation can also form a substitute with the aid of a repression. Certain neurotic symptoms, however, such as conversion disorder, can’t be *strictly* regarded as reaction-formation, but nonetheless can be loosely referred to as ‘compromise’ formations.

Laplanche and Pontalis claim that reaction-formations acquire “a symptomatic value when they display a rigid, forced or compulsive aspect,” such as extreme cleanliness. Reaction-formations also can be seen symptomatically when

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<sup>361</sup> Laplanche & Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. pg. 434

<sup>362</sup> Laplanche & Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. pg. 434

“they lead directly to the result opposite to the one consciously intended,”<sup>363</sup> as in the case of some priests who take vows of celibacy that haphazardly lead them into committing heinous sexual crimes. This might also happen in the ‘return of the repressed’ where that from which one seeks escape perpetually presents itself. In the case of Leonardo, his intent with art was possibly to pursue ‘beauty’ and a *reaction* against what he regarded as disgusting: namely, human sexuality. Loewald also observes, “Cleanliness and orderliness, for instance, are traits that master anal impulses in the service of ego organization.” This is an example of *reaction-formation* and is to a large extent observed in the process of “character formation.”<sup>364</sup> Loewald writes that it can be very difficult to distinguish the two in a clinical setting, but that the two might be distinguished according to the flexibility or inflexibility observed. *Inflexibility*, in my interpretation, generally denotes a more or less neurotic constitution, which means, in other words, that *repression* is involved. Loewald writes, “The flexibility and adaptiveness of such traits decides to a large extent whether we consider them in terms of reaction formation (as we do if they are inflexible and all-pervasive) or of sublimation.”<sup>365</sup>

Intellectualization, claims Loewald, “furnishes a good example of the fluctuations between reaction-formation and sublimation.”<sup>366</sup> I don’t think it does. He explains his assertion on the basis of its “two faces of defense and advance and expansion in mental life.”<sup>367</sup> This, however, draws upon a misclassification of

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<sup>363</sup> Laplanche & Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. pg. 376

<sup>364</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 40

<sup>365</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 40

<sup>366</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 40

<sup>367</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 40

sublimation as being the source of the 'higher' and 'more valued' aspects of culture, which is a biased interpretation and cannot be used to distinguish sublimation from reaction formation. In fact, I think intellectualization is, as a defense, *only attributable to reaction formation*. A key aspect of the defense, as mentioned above, is a dissociation or displacement of the quota of affect from content so that content can be dealt with without emotional significance. All the 'intellectual resources', including an overdependence on rationality and logic and a repression of emotional, affective content denotes the same mastery of anal impulses observed in cleanliness. This is *not* to say, however, that intellectuality and rational pursuits are only reaction-formations; such pursuits might be, or at least entail some admixture of, sublimations. But intellectualization is *rigid, inflexible*, and is a defense enacted precisely in opposition to the accommodation of affective aspects.<sup>368</sup>

Like Freud, Nietzsche also recognizes a process of reaction-formation with respect to morality and the tendencies of the herd. He writes, "Inwardness grows as powerful drives that have been denied outward release by the establishment of peace and society seek compensation by turning inward in concert with the imagination. The thirst for enmity, cruelty, revenge, violence turns back, is repressed."<sup>369</sup> The 'moral' and 'social conscience' is explicitly regarded by Freud as a product of reaction-formation. Freud writes that anxiety is resolved often in vicissitudes that result in "conversion, reaction-formation, or the construction of

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<sup>368</sup> I will comment more on these various aspects of reaction-formation in my discussion of Kant.

<sup>369</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §376

protections (phobias)."<sup>370</sup> And more to the point, "*Conscience is itself a reaction-formation against the evil that is perceived in the id.* The more strongly the latter is suppressed, the more active is the conscience."<sup>371</sup> Reaction-formation constructs, or forms as it were, the superego from the introjected or internalized identification. The *formative* aspect is the conscience; the *reactive* aspect is the vicissitude: repression. Owing to various valuations *formed* in latency, drives are repressed (the reaction); or when drives are repressed because of angst or fear or the unattainability of satisfaction, 'ideas' are consequently formed that reinforce the repressions. Both instances are, according to my understanding, examples of reaction-formation. Reaction-formation can thus take place by two distinct means: either societal content is provided and functions as the formative aspect that promotes and maintains repression, or the inability to satisfy a drive promotes repression and the formative aspect creates the substitution that helps maintain it. The former is often indicative of morality, and the latter indicative of schizoid fantasies in particular.

In *Thoughts on War and Death*, Freud writes that reaction-formations are "*facilitated* by the circumstance that some instinctual impulses make their appearance almost from the first in pairs of opposites."<sup>372</sup> A good example of such ambivalence is the scenario, depicted by Klein, of one breast being perceived as bad and the other good. For Freud, the ambivalence is often presented as a love/hate relationship with the rival father. But ambivalence, it must be pointed out, is not a

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<sup>370</sup> Freud, *On Narcissism*, pg. 86

<sup>371</sup> Freud, *Dream-Interpretation*, pg. 134 (my emphasis)

<sup>372</sup> Freud, *Thoughts on War*, pg. 281

requirement for reaction-formation. Freud is quite explicit asserting that reaction-formations are only *facilitated* by such. And of course, arguably, such ‘opposites’ do not exist but are themselves, perhaps, created for their usefulness for reaction-formations, an assertion that Nietzsche himself makes regarding the notions of good and evil and other such ‘opposites’. In the same paragraph, Freud also notes significantly, “Reaction-formations against certain instincts take the deceptive form of a change in their content, as though egoism had changed into altruism, or cruelty into pity.”<sup>373</sup> Freud thus describes reaction-formation almost exactly as Nietzsche describes the spiritual transformation and degeneration of Christianity.

## The Case of Leonardo

An important work of Freud’s that discusses the vicissitude of sublimation is his ‘psycho-biography’ of Leonardo da Vinci, first published in 1910, about twenty years prior to *Civilization and its Discontents*. In this work, Freud attempts to explain, using Leonardo as an example, vicissitudes of the sex drive, in particular the vicissitude of sublimation, which he claims leads to socio-cultural ‘progress’; namely, through art and science. However, the application of the vicissitude of sublimation to Leonardo is problematic, as I hope to make clear.

Freud writes in the *New Introductory Lectures* that a “modification of the aim and a change of object, *in which our social valuation is taken into account*, is described by us as ‘sublimation’.”<sup>374</sup> Indeed, Freud seems to describe sublimation

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<sup>373</sup> Freud, *Thoughts on War*, pg. 281

<sup>374</sup> Freud, *New Introductory Lectures*, pg. 97, emphasis mine.

frequently in terms of a drive being redirected from a socially condemned aim to one that is socially valued or revered. Gemes correctly criticizes the distinguishing factor of social valuation. He imagines a subject who would otherwise be diagnosed with obsessive compulsive disorder, due to behaviors of stepping over cracks in the sidewalk or conceivably any other type of 'ritual', and presenting such neurotic symptoms as "performance art." If this subject received "social acclaim for his continual performances," asks Gemes, would that "move his activity from neurotic symptom to sublimation?"<sup>375</sup> Gemes observes that Laplanche and Pontalis ask a similar question, "Should the fact that activities described as sublimated in a given culture are accorded particularly high social esteem be taken as a defining characteristic of sublimation?"<sup>376</sup> The distinction would be ultimately meaningless, and determined only *after the fact*, retrospectively, so that sublimation would not be itself a vicissitude, but rather a valuation of behaviors that are within a territory of social reverence and would ultimately be socio-culturally relative.

The problem with using social valuations as a distinguishing factor is that social valuations tend to be reaction-formations themselves. The ego ideal or superego itself is the product of a reaction formation. And in the *Three Essays*, Freud writes that reaction-formations "evoke opposing mental forces (reacting impulses) which, in order to suppress this unpleasure effectively, build up mental dams," Freud writes. Examples of such "mental dams" are: "disgust, shame and morality,"<sup>377</sup> and 'conscience' as mentioned before, and thus *social valuations*.

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<sup>375</sup> Gemes, Ken. "Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation," pg. 40

<sup>376</sup> Laplanche & Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, pg. 433

<sup>377</sup> Freud, *Three Essays*, pg. 178

Rather, I think we need to recall that reaction-formation is described by Freud as a 'sub species' of sublimation.<sup>378</sup> Freud appears to use 'sublimation' as an umbrella for sublimation proper and reaction-formation. That there is a 'sublimation proper' is indicated by the fact that Freud also refers to sublimation as a 'simpler' path than reaction-formation.<sup>379</sup> The real question is: in contexts where reaction-formation is involved in creative productivity, can reaction-formation be *solely* responsible, or is sublimation *also* involved 'along the path of reaction-formation'? I can't see a way of distinguishing one from the other, although it appears implied that sublimation *can* occur with reaction-formation, as discussed previous concerning schizoid fantasies, for example, but that reaction-formation is itself capable of *formations* without sublimation (as the 'mental dams', at least), and thus possibly art and science as well. But I think it is sufficient to merely point out that the creation of things *can* be determined by reaction-formations whether or not sublimation does play a part. On this point, see the preceding chapter on reaction-formation.

Loewald, however, writes, "the productions of science, art, philosophy, religious thought and ritual [are] sublimations par excellence." His inclusion of religion *in toto*, as well as to varying degrees philosophy, science, and art, demonstrates that Loewald might be confused at times about the proper etiology of various cultural products. Certainly, the obsessiveness of Leonardo with art and then science, his perfectionism, his rigid external orientation, all demonstrate that even these were largely neurotic activities. But as mentioned previously, "The

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<sup>378</sup> This was specifically addressed in the section on reaction-formation, referencing a quotation by Freud in the *Three Essays*.

<sup>379</sup> For more on this, see the preceding section on reaction-formation.

inhibited [drives] are capable of any degree of admixture with the uninhibited; they can be transformed back into them, just as they arose out of them.”<sup>380</sup> Thus, in this sense, one should not conceive of any vicissitudes as having a monopoly on drive expression; rather, one can simultaneously express drives through sublimation, whilst nonetheless also employing neurotic or psychotic defenses. Religions might make use of the vicissitude of sublimation, for example, whilst it ultimately depends for its existence – its birth and perpetuation – on egodystonic vicissitudes, both neurotic and psychotic, schizoid fantasies and delusions. Correspondingly, one can say that metaphysics is egodystonically oriented towards the ascetic ideal of truth. Art and science, indicated by Leonardo da Vinci, might also make use of reaction-formations or other egodystonic vicissitudes, admittedly perhaps mixed with sublimations.

Leonardo da Vinci has generally been regarded as Freud’s exemplar of sublimation. However, Ken Gemes notices that Freud’s work on Leonardo illustrates a confusion between sublimations and that of neurotic symptoms. He writes, “After holding up Leonardo as a model of sublimation throughout the essay, ... Freud ... concludes that we must place Leonardo close to the obsessional neurotic.”<sup>381</sup> Gemes then observes that, in the case of Leonardo presented by Freud, “The distance between sublimation and neurotic symptoms seems vanishingly small ... both of which count as substitute formations.”<sup>382</sup> In the case of Leonardo, Freud seems to attribute to sublimation the same etiology of his neuroses: repression of

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<sup>380</sup> Freud, *Group Psychology*, pg. 139

<sup>381</sup> Gemes, “Sublimation,” pg. 40

<sup>382</sup> Gemes, “Sublimation,” pg. 40



sexual aims. In addition, the creative and scientific endeavors are presented as a 'return of the repressed', also discussed in Freud's work *The Uncanny* addressed below.<sup>383</sup> Gemes points out that this is used to describe neurotic substitute formations in Freud's essay 'Repression'.<sup>384</sup> There, Freud writes, for example, "The mechanism of repression becomes accessible to us only by our deducing," – I'd like to add *retroductively*, for precision – "that mechanism from the *outcome* of the repression."<sup>385</sup> In other words, it is retroductively inferred from the symptom, compromise, or substitute. The repressed ideational content "creates a *substitute formation*," and repression also "leaves *symptoms* behind it."<sup>386</sup> Both the substitutes and the symptoms are "indications of a *return of the repressed*, and owe their existence to quite other processes."<sup>387</sup> These other processes might be 'conversion', 'reaction-formation', or 'hysteria', for example. The return of the repressed, *das Unheimlich*, makes its presence felt to Leonardo as he attempts to return to art after his sojourns into science and engineering.

In an early childhood memory, Leonardo recounts a story of a kite – a medium sized bird – (which was mistranslated into a vulture, a mistranslation Freud clumsily glossed over despite being fluent in Italian). The kite landed beside him and swished its tail back and forth inside little Leonardo's mouth. Leonardo recounts that this memory was why he had always taken a great interest in birds

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<sup>383</sup> See the section on *the unheimlich* aesthetic of psychoanalysis

<sup>384</sup> Freud, *Repression*, pg. 154. Referenced by Ken Gemes, "Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation," pg. 39

<sup>385</sup> Freud, *Repression*, pg. 154.

<sup>386</sup> Freud, *Repression*, pg. 154

<sup>387</sup> Freud, *Repression*, pg. 154

and in flight. Freud identifies the kite as a substitution for the mother,<sup>388</sup> reminiscent of suckling, the first sources of sensual pleasure in life.<sup>389</sup> And yet this is also a homosexual phantasy that was being transposed onto a memory – more of a constructed fantasy than a memory – from his childhood. The ‘memory’ is thus a perfect example of *Nachträglichkeit* – afterwardsness – an important concept in Freudian theory that Freud peculiarly does not mention in his psychobiography of Leonardo whilst nonetheless describing the operation as a part of Leonardo’s psychical development.

When Leonardo’s mother died, he unemotionally jotted down in his diary an account of the funeral expenses. Freud observes that these are neurotic symptoms, the lack of emotion for his mother, for whom he loved dearly and with whom he closely identified, and the sole mention he provides of her is with “trifling notes”<sup>390</sup> of the expenses for the funeral. She is merely implied. Freud claims that Leonardo’s passionate and erotic feelings for his mother had “become unconscious,” and were subsequently “displaced.” The “unintelligible” entry in his diary had “emerged as a *compromise* from this neurotic conflict.”<sup>391</sup> Freud thus explains some of the symptoms of Leonardo as compromise-formations. It appears that something like *intellectualization* has here occurred, which, as addressed above, is peculiar to reaction-formation, the displacement or dissociation of affect from content.

A further neurotic symptom that Freud discusses regarding Leonardo is how much time he took to complete anything. “The slowness with which Leonardo

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<sup>388</sup> Freud, *Leonardo*, pg. 88

<sup>389</sup> Freud, *Leonardo*, pg. 87

<sup>390</sup> Freud, *Leonardo*, pg. 104

<sup>391</sup> Freud, *Leonardo*, pg. 105, emphasis mine.

worked was proverbial,"<sup>392</sup> writes Freud. And in fact, Leonardo often left things unfinished. He exemplified a kind of frustrating perfectionism in relation to his work. Many art critics see completion in Leonardo's works, but "it is not so much a question of their being unfinished as of his declaring them to be so."<sup>393</sup> In Leonardo, Freud thus recognizes the symptoms of perfectionism and meticulousness involved in his otherwise general diagnosis of Leonardo as having an obsessional neurosis. The origin Leonardo's neurosis, Freud proposes, was likely his repressed sexuality. It would indicate, in Freud's developmental terminology, an anal fixation and a corresponding reaction-formation that represses the sexual fixation in correlation with the formation of perfectionism. Freud asserts that in all likelihood Leonardo was homosexually oriented, but that his "affectionate relations with the young men [with whom he] shared his existence did not extend to sexual activity."<sup>394</sup> But this was at a time when the socio-cultural norms were weighed extensively against homosexual orientations especially (and sex in general to varying degrees).

Freud depicts Leonardo's world as being a time when there was a 'struggle' between two extremes: living "sensuously without restraint" and "gloomy asceticism," but that Leonardo represented a "cool repudiation of sexuality."<sup>395</sup> In other words, Leonardo was not 'free' sensuously, and yet was not caged to a gloomy repressive life either. He states that Leonardo was likely a celibate homosexual, and therefore needed to repress his sex drives and find socially appropriate outlets for

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<sup>392</sup> Freud, *Leonardo*, pg. 67

<sup>393</sup> Freud, *Leonardo*, pg. 66

<sup>394</sup> Freud, *Leonardo*, pg. 73

<sup>395</sup> Freud, *Leonardo*, pg. 69

them. Leonardo repudiated sexuality, writing, "The act of procreation and everything connected with it is so disgusting that mankind would soon die out if it were not an old-established custom and if there were not pretty faces and sensuous natures."<sup>396</sup> As noticed above, Freud claims that feelings of disgust serve as the mental dams of reaction-formations. Leonardo wanted, as if by an escape from sexuality into a schizoid fantasy, to present a completely desexualized beauty in his work, to liberate beauty from sexual desire and all he found disgusting. He could not allow himself the free expression of his sexuality, but rather than be resigned to unhappiness in effect of the repression of his sexual desires, Leonardo channeled the libidinal energy into art and science. He, according to Freud, 'sublimated' his drives that would ordinarily seek sexual aims and objects.

Leonardo's scientific orientation first began in the service of his art,<sup>397</sup> Freud observes, in order to be able to better understand the subjects of his art. In this way, Leonardo was passing from a surface understanding to something behind the mere appearance. For Freud, writes Loewald, science is also a sublimatory activity, and was regarded as "the most mature way of eliminating illusions and embellishments, to look at whatever reality may be with clear, unflinching eyes and to master reality in some measure. Science for him was an attempt at sober disillusionment, at that disenchantment he thought was necessary to attain true maturity."<sup>398</sup> However, Freud points out that Leonardo's endeavors were always externally directed,<sup>399</sup> indicating that Leonardo was refusing to acknowledge his internal nature. Later,

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<sup>396</sup> Freud, *Leonardo*, pg. 69

<sup>397</sup> Freud, *Leonardo*, pg. 76

<sup>398</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 43

<sup>399</sup> Freud, *Leonardo*, pg. 76

when Leonardo attempts to return to art, his new 'scientific' orientation made art disturbing to him, and he was unable to find satisfaction in art. Freud writes, "The artist had once taken the investigator into his service to assist him; now the servant had become the stronger and suppressed his master."<sup>400</sup> The reason for this inability to return to art is two fold: first, it returns to something of a more sensuous nature, and this was something that Leonardo was avoiding, *reacting against*. Secondly, Freud observes that homosexual phantasies, whilst repressed by Leonardo, still seeped into the works of art and disturbed him. In other words, the result was a 'return of the repressed'. The refusal of Leonardo to incorporate his sensuality and eroticism into his activities, and his consequent neurotic emphasis on externality at the expense of internality, was reinforced more in objective science than in art.

Freud claims that the "enjoyment and passions that inspire and provide the richest experiences were absent for Leonardo," yet contradictorily also asserts that Leonardo celebrated a kind of "sublime religious feeling" – ecstasy – pertaining to his scientific discoveries.<sup>401</sup> It appears that everything that one would feel for sex Leonardo substituted with science. In other words, scientific discoveries become substitute formations for sexuality. Leonardo believed that one should postpone loving anything until sufficient knowledge was acquired about them, and only then could one be justified in hating or loving. This postponement, really an avoidance, and a *rationalization*, meant that the pursuit of knowledge ended up substituting

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<sup>400</sup> Freud, *Leonardo*, pg. 77

<sup>401</sup> Freud, *Leonardo*, pg. 75

knowledge for love, denied sexual love even a place in art and science, and deferring embodied love indefinitely.

Although Freud attempts to present Leonardo as an archetype of sublimation, such an attempt can only end in failure. This follows the discussion as well as the preceding sections on reaction-formation and sublimation, where the repression essential in reaction-formation is generally antagonistic to sublimation proper. Sublimation has been described as a vicissitude that precludes repression and disavowal, proceeds by 'simpler means' as Freud notes. Leonardo, therefore, should not be considered an exemplar of sublimation, but instead of reaction-formation, that 'sub-species' of sublimation. He was an obsessional neurotic unable to accommodate or incorporate his sexuality in his endeavors, and practiced a rigid, inflexible and obsessive avoidance of it. Everything Leonardo did appears to have been *in opposition to* his sex drives, so that his 'passion' in science and art were neurotic satisfactions, generated by – if not solely, then at least largely – reaction-formations.

## **Creativity and Defense Mechanisms**

Following from the discussion of Leonardo da Vinci above, it's important to underline that, while he was an archetype of genius for Freud, even of sublimation, he was not free of psychological conflict; he was instead quite laden with it. But it was not the conflict alone that was remarkable, but his means of resolving it. In this respect, Freud appears to align his views with that of Schopenhauer who saw (implicitly) that genius seemed to be entrenched in a kind of neurotic suffering

necessary for such. This is demonstrated exactly in the research done by Carlson discussed in what follows. The point I wish to make here is that creativity does not require sublimation – the only non-direct, egosyntonic vicissitude – but what we at times mistakenly regard as “creative” can occur through egodystonic means or relating, either mixed with it or along vicissitudes entirely apart from it. Creativity might happen along paths of repression or disavowal, even aggression or acting out. So, we can interpret Leonardo as being highly creative, indeed perhaps as a genius, and yet also admit that his “creativity” did not necessarily come from a place of health but instead, at least to large extent, from egodystonic vicissitudes.

Some recent research into the relationship between creativity and defense mechanisms has shown that people often regarded as the most creative in fact display a larger array of operative defense mechanisms, as well as a greater flexibility among them. In a recent study by George Domino, et al. the creativity of participants were assessed with tests for creativity. Ten psychiatric residents rated the participants according to presented defense mechanisms (as articulated by Vaillant), “using a 9-point scale that reflected the frequency with which a participant exhibited a particular defense style.”<sup>402</sup> There are some potential setbacks with the study, such that the experiment presupposed a correlation between creativity and defensive style, but this is mitigated by the possibility of a psychiatric resident not observing a defensive style whilst nonetheless possibly being presented with examples of high creativity.<sup>403 404</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Domino, George, et al. “Creativity and Ego Defense Mechanisms” pg. 20

<sup>403</sup> Domino, George, et al. “Creativity and Ego Defense Mechanisms” pg. 20 . In the study, “Three defense styles (delusional projection, denial, and distortion), which

Domino writes, "The portrait that emerges of the high-creative in contrast to the low-creative person is that of an individual who shows a much richer psychodynamic life (more ego defenses evident), who uses not only more mature defenses but more immature and neurotic defenses as well."<sup>405</sup> "These results," writes Domino, "seem to coincide with the richer fantasy life typically associated with creativity."<sup>406</sup> The researchers further observed:

Of the 15 ego defense styles considered in this study, significant differences between creative groups were obtained on 13 of them, with 4 defense styles (projection, passive-aggressive behavior, repression, and altruism) judged to be used more often by the low-creative group, and 9 (schizoid fantasy, acting out, dissociation, displacement, reaction-formation, intellectualization, humor, suppression, and sublimation) judged to be used more often by the high-creative type.<sup>407</sup>

Despite the fact that high-creative types were seen to display a wealth of defense styles, even of the immature sort described by Vaillant, Domino writes that the results suggest "a greater degree of psychological maturity present in the high-creative group."<sup>408</sup> This assertion seems highly questionable regarding the findings,

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Vaillant labeled 'psychotic' defenses, proved to be too infrequent for statistical purposes and thus were dropped from further consideration."

<sup>404</sup> Domino, George, et al. "'Creativity and Ego Defense Mechanisms" pg. 21 The researchers also noted that the "reliability data suggest that the two most complex elements, the ratings of the haiku poetry and the ratings of the ego defense styles, were also the least reliable and hence the least valid," and this is likely due to the fact that in each case an observer was *qualitatively* judging to the best of their ability, rather than being a standardized test in which differences might be *quantitatively* measured.

<sup>405</sup> Domino, George, et al. "'Creativity and Ego Defense Mechanisms" pg. 22

<sup>406</sup> Domino, George, et al. "'Creativity and Ego Defense Mechanisms" pg. 24

<sup>407</sup> Domino, George, et al. "'Creativity and Ego Defense Mechanisms" pg. 20

<sup>408</sup> Domino, George, et al. "'Creativity and Ego Defense Mechanisms" pg. 24



and would at best depend upon how Domino *means* “psychological maturity,” whereas the assertion would be consistent with the results if the meaning is not in relation to Vaillant’s categorization of defense styles (mature, immature, etc.), but more in relation to social valuation of adaptivity, flexibility, etc.

Ingegerd Carlsson, et al., sought to examine the flexibility of defensive styles and feelings of anxiety in relation to high or low creative types. She writes that a rigid system of defenses might prevent the accommodation of new thoughts and ideas, particularly of thinking ‘outside the box’, as it were. In her study, published in the article “Anxiety and Flexibility of Defense Related to High or Low Creativity,” she observes, “repression is ... positively related to creativity.”<sup>409</sup> This assertion is markedly inconsistent with the findings of Domino, et al., where it is asserted, “High-creative participants ... show substantially less repression than low-creative individuals.”<sup>410</sup> This inconsistency might, however, be due to the weaknesses I’ve observed in the study by Domino et al., as well as to some conceptual confusion. For Domino also observes that, regarding the defense of *Reaction-Formation*, “the mean of the highly creative sample was significantly higher than that of the low-creative sample.”<sup>411</sup> And the same was true for other vicissitudes such as intellectualization and schizoid fantasy, all of which *require* repression. A further weakness in the study of Domino, et al., might then be said to be drawing an excessively strict

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<sup>409</sup> Carlsson, Ingegerd. “Anxiety and Flexibility of Defense,” pg. 314

<sup>410</sup> Domino, George, et al. ““Creativity and Ego Defense Mechanisms” pg. 23

<sup>411</sup> Domino, George, et al. ““Creativity and Ego Defense Mechanisms” pg. 23

boundary among various defenses; for, although repression can operate without reaction-formation, the reverse is impossible.<sup>412</sup>

Interestingly, In Carlsson's study, "Projection and regression were more common in the high-creative group."<sup>413</sup> Furthermore, these defenses themselves "imply a certain degree of immaturity... However, because these signs appeared together with more mature defenses as well, they could in that context indicate a certain openness to childlike function or adaptive regression." Carlsson aptly observes that creativity, whilst perhaps produced correlatively with specific defenses, would seem to indicate a kind of *flexibility* among defensive styles, rather than a rigid defensive structure. "Creative men and women," she writes, "move relatively freely along the primary-secondary process continuum."<sup>414</sup> The higher levels of anxiety among creative types, Carlsson observes, is illustrated by "higher basal arousal" and "higher overall blood flow."<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> The weaknesses in Carlsson's study involves the poor number of defenses for which the participants were assessed. She includes, for example, only defenses such as Repression, Projection/Sensitivity, and Regression. This was also examined alongside mood disorders (anxiety and depression), as well as tendencies towards isolation. Remarkably, Carlsson neither mentions nor examines sublimation or reaction-formation – two defenses most frequently associated with creativity! So, while the study by Domino et al. showed some conceptual confusion, the study of Carlsson might not be sufficient for an analysis of defenses specifically, although indicative of substantial findings such as the relation between mood disorders and creativity. See Carlsson, Ingegerd. "Anxiety and Flexibility of Defense," pg. 345. "The high-creative group showed more signs of anxiety ... than the low-creative group," and further, "There was no score for depression in the high-creative group and 4 scores in the low-creative group."

<sup>413</sup> Carlsson, Ingegerd. "Anxiety and Flexibility of Defense," pg. 347

<sup>414</sup> Carlsson, Ingegerd. "Anxiety and Flexibility of Defense," pg. 347

<sup>415</sup> Carlsson, Ingegerd. "Anxiety and Flexibility of Defense," pg. 346. It's not much of a stretch to align this description with Nietzsche's characterization of the Dionysian.

These studies, despite their many flaws concerning conceptualization, theorization and analysis, nonetheless indicate that there *is* a connection between creativity and defense mechanisms, that individuals regarded as highly creative display a *flexibility* of defensive styles, and that creativity *in general* – as socio-culturally valued productions – cannot be attributed to one defense mechanism alone.

For this reason, we see in Freud's psychobiography of Leonardo Da Vinci an individual to whom one could refer to as being 'resourcefully defensive', in that Leonardo was able to exercise a plethora of defense mechanisms, each of which displayed symptoms in his art and his scientific researches, as well as a relative flexibility among them so that, were one to fail, another would come in to the rescue. This was indicated above in the discussion of Leonardo turning to focus on scientific researches when art 'no longer did it for him.' In the Introductory Lectures, Freud acknowledges the multiplicity of drives, such that one need not be regarded as following the same vicissitudes of others. He writes:

... We have to take into consideration the fact that the [drives], the pulsating sexual excitements, are extraordinarily plastic. They may appear in each others' places. One of them may accumulate the intensity of others. When the satisfaction of one is denied by reality, the satisfaction of another may offer total compensation. They behave in relation to each other like a network, like communicating channels that are filled with water.<sup>416</sup>

In this way, not only is the psyche itself an admixture of various vicissitudes in operation simultaneously, but drives are also each part of a complicated network

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<sup>416</sup> Freud, *Introductory Lectures*, pg. 345, also quoted by Lacan, *Ethics*, pg. 112

feeding on, supplanting, and influencing each other or giving each other content and incentives corresponding to each vicissitude in operation. In Leonardo, one finds above all defense mechanisms *other than* sublimation, although perhaps in operation *with* sublimation.<sup>417</sup>

What I hope to have illustrated in the discussion thus far is that creativity is essentially a psychical employment of operations regarded as defense mechanisms, meant loosely to include sublimation as well. More specifically, what we regard as 'creative' can be either egodystonic or egosyntonic in its activity. Merely regarding Leonardo as a creative genius does nothing to justify regarding him as an archetype of sublimation. Rather, one can be creative along mostly egodystonic vicissitudes, or for reasons of such, as it appears Leonardo might have been. Thirdly, I mean to foreshadow a distinction I will later make between the valuations and interpretations made by free or *Übermenschlich* spirits and those more egodystonic types such as the fettered or ascetic spirits (or even noble spirits who must merely expend their energy directly and cannot divert it, do not have mastery of it). I also aim to highlight my claim that all relating is aesthetic, that every relationship is the product of either egosyntonic engagement or egodystonic engagement (often resulting from a creative impotence), or usually an admixture thereof. Each engagement with the world is nothing less than an aesthetic engagement, much as an artist relates with his or her medium.

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<sup>417</sup> See again the section on Leonardo for a discussion of this, regarding the simultaneous 'admixture' of defenses as well as the 'formative' aspect of reaction-formation.

## Play, Creativity, and the Tertiary Process

**"I do not know any other way of handling great tasks than as *play*: as a sign of greatness, this is an essential presupposition."<sup>418</sup>**

Nietzsche writes that a 'creator' is simultaneously a destroyer of worlds. And perhaps others will not recognize the creator as such, but refer to him only as an annihilator, as if looking at an artist who chisels away at stone were merely regarded as destroying the stone. But these creators are also harvesters, as a sculptor can be said to harvest an image from the marble with his chisel; these creators are celebrators who above all enjoy and affirm life. "The good" – says Zarathustra, speaking of those who adhere to the morals of reaction-formation – "they cannot create. They are always the beginning of the end."<sup>419</sup> The reason they cannot create is because they cannot destroy. They are degenerating spirits. Furthermore, they are too rigid, too closed, too inflexible to be able to *play*.

After referencing how analysands are often trying to *find* themselves, Donald Winnicott observes in a noticeably Schopenhauerian view:

In a search for the self the person concerned may have produced something valuable in terms of art, but a successful artist may be universally acclaimed and yet have failed to find the self that he or she is looking for. The self is not really to be found in what is made out of products of the body or mind, however valuable these constructs may be in terms of beauty, skill, and impact. If the artist (in whatever medium) is searching for the self, then it can be said that in all probability there is already some failure for that artist

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<sup>418</sup> Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, "Clever," §10

<sup>419</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, "On Old and New Tablets," §26

in the field of general creative living. The finished creation never heals the underlying lack of sense of self.<sup>420</sup>

The connection with Schopenhauer here is in the neurotic constitution of the artist that is portrayed here. In the case of Schopenhauer, however, the artist is generally presented as one attempting to get at 'things-in-themselves', or the Platonic ideas – of trying to acquire knowledge of something like a lost unity – for it is in the beautiful in which the subject and object unite, and the difference is nullified, so that the subject is supposed to find it's 'soul' – the *Will* (or the objectification of it as an idea) – in the contemplation of the object. Like Schopenhauer, Winnicott observes this results in an ultimate failure. For Nietzsche, it is precisely the 'lack of self' – not merely the sense of it – that leads to the ridiculous postulations of a unitary substratum called 'self' or 'subject' for which one searches. Nietzsche criticizes the need to postulate an existent self. There is no 'doer' no 'subject' or 'self' to be discovered. "There is no such substratum: there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything."<sup>421</sup> Regarding the notion of the self, Winnicott writes, "It is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self."<sup>422</sup> If one 'discovers' the self only through being creative, then the self that is discovered is a self that is created. Therefore, it is inconsistent to suppose there is an extant self outside of its creation.

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<sup>420</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, pg. 73

<sup>421</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, I §13

<sup>422</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, pg. 73

Recall the game of Freud's grandson who sought to master the experience of his mothers' departures through reenacting them by throwing away his toys.

Winnicott observes:

On the basis of playing is built the whole of man's experiential existence. No longer are we either introvert or extrovert. We experience life in the area of transitional phenomena, in the exciting interweave of subjectivity and objective observation, and in an area that is intermediate between the inner reality of the individual and the shared reality of the world that is external to individuals.<sup>423</sup>

Winnicott suggests that the location of play is an intermediary realm that is generally reciprocally affected by inner and outer reality. I suggest that this should be regarded as the *relationship* itself – as that which, in Nietzschean terms, is inevitably the product of perspective and interpretation, but also what structures interpretations.<sup>424</sup> Importantly, as Winnicott asserts, it is the location of *play*. He also writes, "It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative..."<sup>425</sup> This location of play from which interpretation and perspective emerge is unavoidably the center of creativity. Through creativity and play,<sup>426</sup> perspectives and interpretations are made possible.

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<sup>423</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, pg. 86

<sup>424</sup> As previously noted, Nietzsche writes, "There is no 'essence-in-itself'; (the *relations* ... constitute the essence)..." (*The Will to Power*, §625).

<sup>425</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, pp. 72-73

<sup>426</sup> By 'play', I believe it is not imprudent to draw a connection to *experimentation* as it functions in Nietzsche's works, particularly in the period from *Human, All too Human* through *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, although it never loses its importance in Nietzsche's works, and is often implicit when he writes, in the later works, of means of creating illusions and of falsifying.

According to Winnicott, the therapeutic process in psychoanalysis also involves play. He writes:

Psychotherapy takes place in the overlap of two areas of playing, that of the patient and that of the therapist. Psychotherapy has to do with two people playing together. The corollary of this is that where playing is not possible then the work done by the therapist is directed towards bringing the patient from a state of not being able to play into a state of being able to play.<sup>427</sup>

Where the aim of therapy is supposed to undue repressions and resolve disavowals, play is essential to this task. In other words, *it is only through play that we learn to incorporate, rather than repudiate, aspects of the world and ourselves.*<sup>428</sup>

One of Loewald's key assertions in the role of sublimation in creativity is that sublimation restores a kind of psychical unity, or evokes it, "in the form of a symbolic linkage."<sup>429</sup> Symbols are thus a means by which the vicissitude of sublimation forms unities or connections. But is this peculiar to sublimation? I think to answer this question it would be useful to look at work done on creativity

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<sup>427</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, pg. 50

<sup>428</sup> Interestingly, Winnicott acknowledges that others, such as Melanie Klein, have looked at children's play in therapy. But the problem with Klein's approach is she looked at it objectively, analyzing the children based on symbols or manifest content in their play. In response to her, and other psychoanalysts in her vein, Winnicott writes that such psychoanalysts have been "too busy using play content to look at the playing child, and to write about playing as a thing in itself," and instead, play is "just as evident in the analyses of adults" (*Playing and Reality*, pg. 54). In other words, play is, or should be, involved at all levels of therapy, and one should not treat it as merely the display of diagnosable content. His disagreement involves the same critique that Nietzsche leveled against Kant and Schopenhauer, where they regarded art and discussed it only as spectators rather than as artists. So too Klein looked at the content of play more than the playing child.

<sup>429</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 45



by Silvano Arieti.<sup>430</sup> Arieti writes, “To a considerable extent [creativity] consists of ancient, obsolete, and primitive mental mechanisms generally relegated to those recesses of the psyche that are under the domain of what Freud called the primary process.”<sup>431</sup> Per the previous discussion on the ‘affective’ nature of drives, we can relegate this to what Nietzsche calls the ‘Dionysian’.<sup>432</sup> And regarding the vicissitudes above, this also indicates the same *infusion* of the primary process, rather than a defense against it, into the secondary process.

There are three processes of mental functioning that Arieti observes rather than the two generally mentioned in psychoanalysis: The primary process, also referred to as the paleological;<sup>433</sup> as well as the secondary and tertiary processes.<sup>434</sup> For Freud, Arieti observes, “The *primary process* ... is a way in which the psyche functions, especially the unconscious part of the psyche. It prevails in dreams and some mental illnesses, especially psychoses.”<sup>435</sup> The “secondary process,” on the other hand, “is the way of functioning of the mind when it is awake and uses common logic.”<sup>436</sup> It is, so to speak, the process by which an infant is able to differentiate itself from the world or the world from it. *Disillusionment* is peculiar to

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<sup>430</sup> Silvano Arieti is an often neglected theoretician on the subject of creativity in psycholanalysis. One of the downfalls of his work on creativity is that he generally applies more of a formal, rather than dynamic, criteria to his discussion. In fact, there are moments in reading his work where one might think that they are reading Kant if Kant had become a psychiatrist or psychoanalyst. However, there are benefits to this as well that I think compliment the whole project.

<sup>431</sup> Arieti, Silvano, *Creativity*, pg. 12

<sup>432</sup> See ‘Dionysian as Affective aspect of will to power’

<sup>433</sup> Loewald refers to this at times as the ‘prelogical’. See, e.g., Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 49 in a discussion about symbolism

<sup>434</sup> Wright and Panksepp also observe a tertiary process. They write:

<sup>435</sup> Arieti, Silvano, *Creativity*, pg. 12

<sup>436</sup> Arieti, Silvano, *Creativity*, pg. 12

the secondary process, while 'magical thinking' is indicative of the primary process and for this reason is also referred to as 'paleological'.<sup>437</sup> The tertiary process comes into play by bringing together the primary process with what has become separate in the secondary process. Arieti writes, "Primary process mechanisms reappear in the creative process ... in strange, intricate combinations with secondary process mechanisms and in syntheses. ... It is from appropriate matching with secondary process mechanisms that these primitive forms ... become innovating powers."<sup>438</sup> Freud, however, never spoke of a tertiary process. But it appears to me that the tertiary process serves the same function as sublimation. "Sublimation," writes Loewald, "brings together what had become separate."<sup>439</sup> So it would appear that the act of creativity, for Arieti, involves sublimation, a synthesis of primary and secondary processes. Egodystonic vicissitudes, on the other hand, would repudiate the primary (as in the case of repression) or repudiate difference in the secondary process (as in disavowal).

Arieti does not make this comparison. Notably, he appears more concerned with a *formal* analysis of mental processes in creativity rather than a *psychodynamic* analysis.<sup>440</sup> "The concept of the tertiary process does not exist in Freudian theory," Arieti claims, because "Freud ... stressed the importance of the psychic reality as something to be distinguished from the reality of the external world. But he insisted that the two realities must remain distinguished, lest psychic reality be used as an

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<sup>437</sup> It can involve what Arieti has observed in some schizophrenics; namely, the conflation the symbol and the symbolized so that the symbol (or sign) is actually identified with the thing it's meant to represent.

<sup>438</sup> Arieti, Silvano, *Creativity*, pg. 12

<sup>439</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 22

<sup>440</sup> The way he writes of mental processes appear quite Kantian at times.

*escape* from external reality.”<sup>441</sup> One can already surmise some of the dangers in the recuperation of the primary process involved in creativity, or the prevalence of mental illness among those who are regarded as highly creative.<sup>442</sup>

Arieti observes that psychiatry has generally followed Freud’s example, and maintained a distinction between primary and secondary process thinking, the latter allowing for a more amenable relation to external reality. “In psychiatric conditions the non-use of abstract thinking is an indication of illness,”<sup>443</sup> writes Arieti, attributing abstract thinking to the logical secondary process. “However,” he observes, “when we deal with the problem of creativity, a different prospect is desirable. The tertiary process ... blends the two worlds of mind and matter, and, in many cases, the rational with the irrational. Instead of rejecting the primitive ... the creative mind integrates it with normal logical processes in what seems a ‘magic’ synthesis from which the new, the unexpected, and the desirable emerge.”<sup>444</sup>

Needless to say, the ability to recuperate the primary process in creativity is “shorn of newness and sublimity.”<sup>445</sup> The primary process is “inexhaustible ... as a source of content,” writes Arieti. It is intoxicating. He further observes, again illustrating a very Nietzschean notion of creativity as a *positive* liberation:

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<sup>441</sup> Arieti, Silvano, *Creativity* pp. 12-13 I must state, however, that I’m not so certain that Freud’s use of the vague and cumbersome term *hypercathexis* does not to an extent correspond with the *tertiary* process.

<sup>442</sup> Originating, perhaps, with Schopenhauer’s remarks on the neurotic character of genius, but also demonstrated in the above research on defense mechanisms and creativity. One cannot argue that to be “creative” is distinct from operations of a mental illness. In fact, along with the influence of the primary process in those with mental illnesses, we can say that creativity is often fed by such disturbances

<sup>443</sup> Arieti, Silvano, *Creativity*, pg. 83

<sup>444</sup> Arieti, Silvano, *Creativity*, pg. 13

<sup>445</sup> Arieti, Silvano, *Creativity*, pg. 12

The creative process allows man to liberate himself from the fetters of these secondary process responses. But creativity is not simply originality and freedom. It is more than that: it also imposes restrictions. First of all, although it uses methods other than the secondary process, it must not be in disagreement with the secondary process. ... Secondly, it must attain an additional aim: a desirable enlargement of human experience ... Thirdly, the creative process tends to fulfill a longing or a search for a new object or for a state of experience or of existence which is not easily found or easily attainable. Especially in aesthetic creativity, the work often represents not only the new object but this longing, this indefinite search, this sustained and yet never completed effort, with either a conscious or unconscious motivation.<sup>446</sup>

For Arieti, one can be 'fettered' to this secondary process of cognizing only difference whereby one cannot bring difference into similitude. This is a task for the tertiary process that *acknowledges* difference, but simultaneously adjoins it with identifications made in the primary process. Simultaneously, whilst acknowledging difference, the similitude that is also discovered or created is infused with the longing of the primary process as new meanings and connections are formed.

Returning to the vicissitude of sublimation, "Sublimation," writes Loewald, "brings together what had become separate."<sup>447</sup> What had become separate in the development of a child is what was primarily undifferentiated – self and world. In the course of its development, it becomes 'disillusioned', as it were, and discovers a plethora of differentiations between itself and the world and entities in it. It

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<sup>446</sup> Ariteti, Silvano, "The rise of Creativity," pg. 52 I should note that Arieti is here using a very narrow definition of aesthetics – far narrower than my own.

<sup>447</sup> Loewald, Sublimation, pg. 22

engages, to varying degrees of success, in secondary process thinking. Loewald's point is that sublimation, on the other hand, brings these differentiations back together. Sublimation is a peculiar action in which a *new* illusion or interpretation is constructed in order to come to terms with the preceding disillusionment. It fosters a whole in which the disillusionment – the separateness and all its conflicting elements – is incorporated, so that, simultaneously, external reality is mastered and psychical reality is mastered by allowing its expression in it. "In its most developed form in creative work it culminates in celebration,"<sup>448</sup> writes Loewald. What is being celebrated? Mastery. The pleasurable feelings in sublimation correspond with this mastering of reality. It would appear, therefore, that sublimation is actually what is involved in the *tertiary process* as described by Arieti. The *mastery* entails the incorporation of the primary process and the secondary process into a whole that is amenable to each. And the "celebration" to which Loewald refers is the infusion of that primary process into the new interpretation. "The creative process is shorn of newness and sublimity," Arieti observes. And indeed, as Nietzsche points out in *Daybreak*, there are boundless horizons of sublimity to be discovered in our creative and generative efforts.<sup>449</sup> For Nietzsche, this represents precisely this creative, Heraclitian child at play, innocent in becoming and without defenses and therefore capable of incorporation.

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<sup>448</sup> Loewald, *Sublimation*, pg. 22

<sup>449</sup> This is addressed further in the section on the Sublime

## Will to Power as Artistry

Freud writes that the task of the nervous system is, “speaking in general terms ... mastering stimuli.”<sup>450</sup> This describes the activity of the constancy principle, the trend towards homeostasis, and roles of defense mechanisms and vicissitudes of drives that determine, and are reciprocally determined by, our relations. The mastery of stimuli is the domain of Eros, of the structuring, ordering capacities attributed to it. This ‘task of the nervous system’ is also involved in Nietzsche’s theory of artistry. But this ‘mastery’ can occur along several different vicissitudes. Nietzsche asserts a need to *affirm* life and expand the will to live. Denying life certainly does not display a mastery of it. Rather, a mastery of life and its manifold of stimuli require an engagement with it by incorporating as much of it as possible into one’s own existence.

I share a similar perspective as Nehamas on Nietzsche; like him, I think Nietzsche’s philosophy can be described as ‘aestheticism’.<sup>451</sup> Nehamas appears to focus more on Nietzsche’s philosophical method, however. He writes that it “provides at least part of the motivation for perspectivism,” and also “motivates [Nietzsche] to create what we may call a literary product,”<sup>452</sup> that is, an artwork. On the other hand, I think focusing on the philosophy as uncovering the aesthetic ground of sentient existence, as substantially aesthetic rather than methodically aesthetic, is itself informative. It illustrates the nucleus of all means of valuations, interpretations, and perspectives. For Nietzsche, I argue, there is no task, no deed,

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<sup>450</sup> Freud, *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, pg. 118

<sup>451</sup> Nehamas, *Nietzsche*, pg. 3

<sup>452</sup> Nehamas, *Nietzsche*, pp. 3-4

no relation that is not essentially aesthetic. Every valuation, interpretation, and relationship is, first and foremost, aesthetically or artistically based. My claim is thus, in a sense, stronger than that made by Nehamas.<sup>453</sup>

Music and dance, especially considering Wagner and Schopenhauer's influence and the possibility that dance would represent a response to music, i.e. to Schopenhauer and Wagner, might in some contexts appear even more appropriate as artistic mediums for the task of understanding and interpreting Nietzsche. I do not think that Nehamas' interpretation is wrong; rather, I think it is too narrow. Nehamas writes, "Nietzsche ... looks at the world in general as if it were a sort of artwork; in particular, he looks at it as if it were a literary text," appealing to "... the creation and interpretation of literary texts and characters."<sup>454</sup> I think Nehamas is correct: Nietzsche looks at the world as if it were art and we are all artists. But Nietzsche should not be regarded as contained within a peculiarly literary context alone. Nehamas argues that such an interpretation of Nietzsche makes "many of [Nietzsche's] strange ideas appear more plausible in this light."<sup>455</sup> That is perhaps

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<sup>453</sup> One of my minor disagreements with Nehamas concerns his focus on literature and text as the artifice by which Nietzsche both interprets the world and should be interpreted. I think there are instances, such as in *Beyond Good and Evil*, that back up his claim, where Nietzsche speaks of the possibility of a difference of interpretation among different people who "read from the same nature," explicitly referring to the interpretative act as an act of reading and interpreting a literary text (*Beyond Good and Evil*, §22, my emphasis on *read*). And Nietzsche also alludes frequently to poets and dramatists and prose writers, such as Goethe, Heine, Shakespeare, etc. However, Nietzsche also frequently refers to composers as well, for example, such as Beethoven, Mozart, Brahms, and especially Wagner; and refers frequently as well to plastic artists such as Michelangelo or Raphael. What I disagree with is the exclusive focus on the paradigm of literary texts, for while it alone is not an incorrect interpretation, all kinds of various art forms also appear.

<sup>454</sup> Nehamas, *Nietzsche*, pg. 3

<sup>455</sup> Nehamas, *Nietzsche*, pg. 3

true, but I think that is not peculiar to literature but true for the various arts in general to which Nietzsche alludes. Literature is only one such art. My disagreement, then, is not so much the use that Nehamas makes of literature, but the exclusive focus on it.

I Believe Heidegger is correct when he writes, the "*Nucleus of will to power must begin precisely here, with art.*"<sup>456</sup> Kaufmann also correctly observes that Nietzsche agreed with the notion in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* that "Art itself is Nature."<sup>457</sup> Why is this important? Because the will to power is, essentially, a creative force. Will to power is behind every doing and every valuation. It is, so to speak, the natural 'hammer' by which stone is destroyed and meaning, for sentient beings, relieved from it. Following the previous identification of the Dionysian as *affective*, In Nietzsche's depiction of Dionysos, Nussbaum observes, there is a "power that transforms and transfigures, producing a new artistry of rhythm and movement, a new resourcefulness of language, a new theatre in which the self, fluid and unafraid, both creates and affirms itself."<sup>458</sup> And furthermore, "The artistry of human desire," Nussbaum writes, "makes the human being into a work of art. Love's magic is illusion."<sup>459</sup> Interestingly, illusion is here paired with the Dionysian and thus is no longer Apollonian. This points out the possibility of proceeding in relations without the defensive positions that the Apollonian represents.

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<sup>456</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, pg. 67

<sup>457</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, pg. 260

<sup>458</sup> Nussbaum, "Transfiguration and Intoxication," pg. 65

<sup>459</sup> Nussbaum, "Transfiguration and Intoxication," pp. 64-64



Furthermore, "This intoxication of the erotic is a great motive to the affirmation of life in general."<sup>460</sup>

The *will to power* is a *will to mastery* (a disposition towards homeostasis) that is frequently mistranslated in consciousness as a will to *have power over* everything that one encounters. This was sufficiently articulated in the first section of this thesis. This is generally presented as the case for the noble spirit, as well as for the fettered spirit with regard to passive-aggression and self- or other-mastery. But these are only egodystonic expressions of the *will to power*. I suggest, instead, that it should be conceptualized as a will to 'power' or 'mastery' *of* one's self or environmental factors, not *over* one's self or environmental factors. In this sense, the will to power would egosyntonically be seen in *artistic mastery*, for example, requiring discipline and the creativity necessary to bring conflicting elements into a kind of harmony or unity, establishing a kind of order. Heidegger observes:

In the final year of his creative life Nietzsche was wont to designate his manner of thinking as 'philosophizing with the hammer'. ... It means to hammer out a content and an essence, to sculpt a figure out of the stone. Above all it means to tap all things with the hammer to hear whether or not they yield that familiar hollow sound, to ask whether there is still solidity and weight in things or whether every possible center of gravity has vanished from them.<sup>461</sup>

I think Heidegger is accurate with his assessment of what it means to 'philosophize with a hammer', and it is true that it is quite fitting of Nietzsche's 'viewpoint' – regarding both the content *and* his method. Heidegger points out, accurately, that

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<sup>460</sup> Nussbaum, "Transfiguration and Intoxication," pg. 65

<sup>461</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, pg. 66

‘Nietzsche wants to give things weight and importance again.’<sup>462</sup> And Nietzsche does this, through his philosophy, as a sculptor works at a marble slab, destroying the stone whilst relieving something beautiful imprisoned in it. Heidegger’s description is also fitting because Nietzsche regards philosophy’s usefulness is as *an aesthetic practice*,<sup>463</sup> only one that I believe is consistent with traditionally non-artistic practices of science, for example, in order to make life meaningful or give weight to existence.

This interpretation echoes a passage of Zarathustra as well. There, Zarathustra speaks, “I am always driven anew to human beings by my ardent will to create; thus the hammer is driven toward the stone. / Oh you human beings, in the stone sleeps an image, the image of my images! A shame it must sleep in the hardest, ugliest stone! ... I want to perfect it, for a shadow came to me ... / the overman’s beauty came to me as a shadow.”<sup>464</sup> Here, Zarathustra refers to his will to create, and compares it to a sculptor working on stone. The term ‘relief’, used specifically to denote stonework on the facade of buildings becomes pertinent here; the artist seeks to *relieve* what is *dormant* in the material. The term is derived from the Latin *relevo*, which means ‘to raise’, whereas what is ‘relieved’ from the material gives the impression of having emerged naturally from it, of being uncovered. This is also significantly related to the recurring theme of pregnancy in Nietzsche’s work, where there is also some potential lying dormant and which one merely needs to

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<sup>462</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, pg. 66

<sup>463</sup> Aesthetics, for Heidegger, is an ontic discipline, and my use of the term is not limited to that.

<sup>464</sup> Nietzsche, Zarathustra, II, “On the Blessed Isles” pg. 67

bring forth into the world, to open one's self to Dionysian intoxications, to awaken it, and then put it into use towards a 'beautiful' purpose one gives to it.

The will to power, here, is also *not* expressed as a working *against*, which dominates the fettered and noble ways of relating, whereby the fettered spirit is oriented against nature (repressing internal nature whilst devaluing external nature), and the noble oriented against adversarial nature. Instead, *there is allowed an expression of nature ... in both senses. Zarathustra is working with his will to create and destroy by chiseling at the stone with his hammer, and, conversely, is working with external nature by relieving what is already present in the stone, rather than trying to force the appearance of what is lacking in it.* An important point about mastery emerges here: the kind of *áskēsis* or mastery that Nietzsche envisions allows for the emergence of the *Übermensch* as an aesthetic endeavor; it is *not* a mastery *over* but a mastery *of*, in the same sense that a pianist is not a master *over* the piano, or that a sculptor is not a master *over* the stone, but is in each case instead a master *of* the art. Furthermore, we cannot say that the sculptor is a master of stone, which would treat 'stone' analytically as a mere object of a relation, but is instead a master of *working with* stone; that is to say, the mastery has turned from emphasizing the object to emphasizing the *relation* and the *activity*. Mastery entails the way in which the artist *relates* with the material. Following from the above chapters on the vicissitudes, this relating can be either egosyntonic or egodystonic.

Previously, it was observed in *Beyond Good and Evil* that Nietzsche describes the world as "will to power, and nothing besides." In his notebooks around 1885-1886, roughly the same time, Nietzsche describes "The world as a work of art that

gives birth to itself.”<sup>465</sup> The world is thus “will to power and nothing besides” as well as “artist” and “art.” Heidegger observes, “The concept of art and of the work of art is obviously extended to every ability to bring forth and to everything that is essentially bringing forth.”<sup>466</sup> Heidegger makes these observations:

1. Art is the most perspicuous and familiar configuration of will to power;
2. Art must be grasped in terms of the artist;<sup>467</sup>
3. ... Art is the basic occurrence of all beings; to the extent that they are, beings are self-creating, created.<sup>468</sup>
4. Art is the distinctive countermovement to nihilism.<sup>469</sup>
5. Art is worth more than ‘the truth’.<sup>470</sup>

However, I think one should understand Nietzsche as stating that what we take to be the truth is artifice: Truth is a work of art. What I mean is this: truth is nothing other than an interpretation, and an interpretation is nothing other than the product of artistry. That artistry itself is determined by one’s psychical constitution in relation to the will to power. The truth that emerges from the creativity of the will to power is *deeply* and *unavoidably sensuous*, born of the ‘realm of appearances’, and *interested*. But, in both cases, whether the truth of the sensuous or the truth of the supersensuous, the general notion is the same: Truth is a work of art. There is no other possibility following the four previous points. This will be addressed in the following chapter on interpretation.

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<sup>465</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §796

<sup>466</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, pg. 71

<sup>467</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, pg. 71 #’s 1&2 appear here.

<sup>468</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, pg. 72

<sup>469</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, pg. 73

<sup>470</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, pg. 75

Nussbaum writes that, according to Nietzsche, “Art teaches us perhaps above all a love for order and discipline.”<sup>471</sup> An exemplary instance where this is the case is when Nietzsche speaks of the ‘sublime ones’ in *Zarathustra*, or when he refers to the ‘grand style’. But he would not deny that Wagner is an artist whilst nonetheless criticizing Wagner for having poor taste and a lack of discipline, etc. Wagner is generally always regarded as an artist with a strong personality (at least until *Parsifal*), whilst nonetheless exemplifying art that is decadent and lacking discipline. Art often ‘teaches’ the herd and weak, degenerate spirits to undo their repressions in orgies of hysteria, completely lacking order, and it leaves one with nothing but former repressions to which one returns after the intoxication subsides. Art, in this sense, is a lightning rod for energy or a quota of affect that would, without it, otherwise be repressed.<sup>472</sup> However, I think Nussbaum is correct in the instance of ‘great art’, with ‘good taste’, particularly in the ‘grand style’, all of which characterize, for Nietzsche, art that is produced egosyntonicly, presenting order, but ordering not by means of repressions or disavowals as in other artworks.

There is a bifurcation of artistry, of creativity, according to egodystonic or egosyntonic vicissitudes. Thus, Nietzsche writes, “If we convalescents still need art, it is *another kind* of art.” It would be “above all: an art for artists, only for artists!”<sup>473</sup> In other words, for Nietzsche the only *need* for art that is permissible for a convalescent spirit is found neither in the consolation of art for a spectator, nor in the instance of a sick artist, but in the activity of creation, of being an artist. And this

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<sup>471</sup> Nussbaum, “Transfiguration and Intoxication,” pg. 60

<sup>472</sup> This is also the case for great personalities, indicated by Freud in *Group Psychology* and by Adorno in his essay on “propaganda” in *Culture Theory*.

<sup>473</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, preface to second edition, § 4

art is an art of self-creation, more than anything – an art of one’s becomings, and therefore involving, inextricably, egosyntonic means of relating not only with oneself but also with the world.

The most significant difference between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer concerning *lebensphilosophie* – that is, aside from Nietzsche’s rejection of his metaphysics – is the path one takes when, with an honest gaze, one sees the meaninglessness of existence. “Nietzsche’s view,” observes, Nussbaum, “is not a simple inversion of Schopenhauer’s. For he agrees with Schopenhauer that what an honest gaze discovers in the world is arbitrariness and the absence of any intrinsic meaning. But he disagrees about the consequences of this discovery for humanity’s view of itself.”<sup>474</sup> For Schopenhauer, the honest gaze further validates resignation and life-denial. And this, one might say, is the road most often taken.<sup>475</sup> Nietzsche, on the other hand, takes the road least taken – the road that *affirms* life and creates meaning where meaning is lacking (which is everywhere). This is the difference between Dionysian and romantic pessimism, an active and reactive nihilism respectively. Nietzsche is saying, “whether you like it or not, *you are an artist*,” and, throughout his work, there is the persistent question: “Now that I have shown you that you are the artist of your world, *what will you do?*”<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> Nussbaum, “Transfiguration and Intoxication,” pg. 58

<sup>475</sup> It is the road most taken by passive nihilists who are not subservient to their delusions or schizoid fantasies of God or redemption in afterlives. The road least taken is the path of active nihilism, involving the same honesty, but with a Dionysian pessimism rather than the Romantic pessimism and resignation.

<sup>476</sup> I am putting words into Nietzsche’s mouth here, articulating what I see as implicit in his work.

## Interpretation as Art

Every aspect of existence entails interpretation and perspective, each of which are indicative of relations and the ways in which each relation is constituted with respect to one's own nature – one's drives or instincts and their vicissitudes. *All relating is itself artistry.* Every relationship, therefore, is art, and every interpretation a critique of that art whilst simultaneously art as well. Thus, Nietzsche writes, "It is our needs *that interpret the world*: our drives and their for and against."<sup>477</sup> What this means is, our drives interpret the world according to how the world satisfies our drives. We incorporate what satisfies us and repudiate what is unsatisfying. The result is the interpretation. The means of relating procure the "relationship."

Relating with any aspect of the world involves the bestowal of values. It bestows the valuations of beauty, sublimity, ugliness, and horror, for example. This is, perhaps, true as well in Kant, where Kant observes that Judgment is the propaedeutic to both theoretical and practical reason.<sup>478</sup> As we've already seen, perspective and interpretation – our means of relating – are largely determined by the will to power and the various vicissitudes by which it may express itself. So when Nietzsche writes of art, it is not a sphere of study separate from other aspects of life and existence. It *is* life and existence. Matthew Rampley observes, "Far from occupying a completely autonomous sphere, art, in Nietzsche's thought, constitutes

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<sup>477</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §481

<sup>478</sup> See Kant, Critique of Judgment. A key difference is that, for Kant, judgment appears at least mostly rational. For Nietzsche, the emphasis is placed on the irrational aspects of judgment.

the material expression of a certain relation towards the world. ... Art is a particular way of engaging with the world. ... It does not *symbolize* a particular conceptual engagement with the world, it *is* that engagement."<sup>479</sup> Any critique of human engagement with any aspect of the world is therefore brought under a critique of art and aesthetics.<sup>480</sup>

Nietzsche, foreshadowing works in contemporary feminism concerning 'strong objectivity,'<sup>481</sup> writes, "There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival 'knowing'; the *more* affects we are able to put into words about a thing, the *more* eyes, various eyes we are able to use for the same thing, the more complete will be our 'concept' of the thing, our 'objectivity'."<sup>482</sup> Rather than maintaining a realist stance here, I think this should instead be read along side *Daybreak* §449 where Nietzsche writes that an openness to a variety of perspectives, even conflicting ones, expands one's own perspectives and possibilities of becoming. Nietzsche writes, "How reluctant I am to *force* my own ideas upon another! How I rejoice in any mood and secret transformation within myself which means that the ideas of *another* have prevailed over my own!"<sup>483</sup> He further describes himself as something like a "doctor of the spirit" for those in need. And for Nietzsche, this is a *self-interested* orientation as well.

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<sup>479</sup> Rampley, Nietzsche, Aesthetics, and Modernity pg. 181

<sup>480</sup> Nehamas also makes this point, which I will address subsequently.

<sup>481</sup> Unlike Nietzsche's position, strong objectivity generally embraces something like a *realist* notion. However, I don't think it needs too. It can, as Nietzsche's passage in D §449 refers to, present *paths to the sublime* in virtue of the access to various perspectives of others, and creates a stronger 'world-view' *not* by corresponding to something in reality but in virtue of the mere fact that it *incorporates more*.

<sup>482</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §12

<sup>483</sup> Nietzsche, D §449



To be like a little inn which rejects no one who is in need but which is afterwards forgotten or ridiculed! To be able to be humble, so as to be accessible to many and humiliating to none! ... Forever in a kind of love and for ever in a kind of selfishness and self-enjoyment! To be in possession of a dominion and at the same time concealed and renouncing! To lie continually in the sunshine and gentleness of grace, and yet to know that the paths that rise up to the sublime are close by! – That would be a life! That would be a reason for a long life!<sup>484</sup>

What are these paths of the sublime? According to my reading, it is the openness to the world, even the perspectives of others. This is what presents possibilities of the sublime. As mentioned above, we incorporate what satisfies us and repudiate what is unsatisfying. The picture Nietzsche paints here is of a possibility of incorporating as much as possible, finding satisfaction in as much as possible, and thereby expanding one's horizons of potential becomings. Nietzsche envisions one who is completely open to the world, every aspect and experience in it. Contrast this with one who has a rigid notion of beauty and is thus closed to other interpretations and perspectives. Nietzsche writes that the ascetic ideal "... permits of no other interpretation, no other goal, and rejects, denies, affirms, conforms only with reference to *its* interpretation."<sup>485</sup> There is an attempt to make permanent, static, or eternal one's interpretation. This egodystonic orientation closes oneself off from

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<sup>484</sup> Nietzsche, D §449

<sup>485</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §23

the world, severely limiting possibilities of feeling and becoming as if one were to never leave their Königsberg.<sup>486</sup>

Matthew Rampley makes important observations that he personally conceives as dialectical but need not be regarded as such.<sup>487</sup> One important observation is that there are two responses to nihilism: a passive (or reactive) nihilism and an active nihilism. He describes Passive nihilism thus:

Passive nihilism represents a pure negativity, in terms of a feeling of complete meaninglessness accompanied by a state of inertia, of inactivity. Although passive nihilism represents a particularly modern crisis, Nietzsche regards Buddhism as its first historical expression, and its themes of asceticism, contemplative withdrawal from life, are repeated in Christianity and metaphysics, most notably, of course, in Schopenhauer's ideal of the ascetic life.<sup>488</sup>

Active Nihilism, on the other hand, "must also consist in the positing of *new* values, not only the negation of the existing ones, and it is the notion of interpretation that functions as the medium for the accomplishment of the 're-valuation of values'."<sup>489</sup>

In both passive and active nihilism there is at least an implicit recognition of an inherent purposelessness or meaninglessness in life and existence. Rampley, however, identifies the passive nihilist with reactivity. Modifying Rampley's description of passive and active, we should understand the valuations of Christians

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<sup>486</sup> Kant never left Königsberg, and I present his aesthetic and ethical valuations in this thesis as being largely egodystonically constituted.

<sup>487</sup> Several Nietzsche scholars attribute a kind of dialectic to Nietzsche's philosophy, Rampley most explicitly, but Kaufmann also in passing. I disagree with this view but haven't the space to go into it here. It erroneously attributes to Nietzsche a rationalism that is inconsistent with the core of Nietzsche's philosophy.

<sup>488</sup> Rampley, *Nietzsche Aesthetics and Modernity*, pg. 34

<sup>489</sup> Rampley, *Nietzsche Aesthetics and Modernity*, pg. 34

(or Buddhists) to be the reactive element of passive nihilism, whereby these systems construct a system of life-denial or valuations of the 'hinter-worldly' in response to, or in reaction *against*, purposelessness or meaninglessness.<sup>490</sup> This is observable in the ascetic ideal. The active nihilist, on the other hand, affirms the purposelessness and meaninglessness as a door opening to possibilities of becoming, and relishes the horizons of values that are possible for one's own creations and bestowals. The active nihilist does not *react against*, in opposition to, the inherent purposelessness. Nietzsche writes, "What is 'passive'? – To be hindered from moving forward: thus an act of resistance and reaction. What is 'active'? – Reaching out for power."<sup>491</sup> To be *reactive*, it appears, would *also* reach out for power, but it does so out of weakness, rather than strength, and reacts *against* the meaninglessness of existence instead of incorporating it as a divine, creative opportunity as in the case of the active nihilist.

My point is that, in both activity and reactivity, one bestows values.

Nietzsche writes:

All 'purposes', 'aim', 'meaning' are only modes of expression and metamorphoses of one will that is inherent in all events: the will to power. ...

*All valuations are only consequences and narrow perspectives in the service of this one will: valuation itself is only this will to power.*<sup>492</sup>

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<sup>490</sup> I do not want to risk conflating reactive nihilism directly with the notion of reaction-formation; however, I think the two are indirectly related. Some kinds of reactive nihilism, rather than following vicissitudes of reaction-formation, might obtain in disavowals, for example, or other vicissitudes such as repression or passive-aggression.

<sup>491</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §657

<sup>492</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §675 (my emphasis)

But the reasons for the bestowals couldn't be more different. The difference concerns the psychological constitution of the person bestowing values. "Value is the highest quantum of power that a man is able to incorporate – a man: not mankind!"<sup>493</sup> Nietzsche expressly states that values are particular to, and contingent upon, one's constitution, on how much one can incorporate into a coherent unity. A value is perspectival, whereas one's constitution determines how one sees the world, accommodates it, and thus values what is encountered. Nietzsche writes, "Value words are banners raised where a *new bliss* has been found – a new *feeling*."<sup>494</sup> That bliss can only be hinter-worldly or ascetic for a reactive nihilist, but is opened to *new sublimities*, as mentioned by Ansell-Pearson,<sup>495</sup> for a stronger, *übermenschlich* spirit. Nietzsche writes, "The will to power *interprets* ... In fact, interpretation is itself a means of becoming master of something."<sup>496</sup> The will to power is, in every value bestowed upon the world, engaged in it aesthetically such that even a particular perspective or interpretation is art.

Here, an issue arises concerning relativity. Are things so entirely relative that no interpretation is better than any other? Or are there clear criteria for determining which perspective or interpretation is better? Alexander Nehamas observes, "If perspectivism is correct, and ... every interpretation creates its own facts, then it may seem impossible to decide whether any interpretation is or is not correct. And if there is nothing of which all these are the interpretations, then the very idea of interpretation, which seems to require at least that there be something

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<sup>493</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §713

<sup>494</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §714

<sup>495</sup> See below on the Sublime

<sup>496</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §643

there to be interpreted, begins to appear itself suspect.”<sup>497</sup> This, perhaps, is the reason why Leiter and Clark adhere to a realist interpretation, so that there *is* some neutral standard – some reality – around which interpretations revolve and to which they refer. But opposed to Leiter and Clark, Nehamas (along with Christoph Cox and myself), “accepts Nietzsche’s view that there are no facts that are independent of interpretation and that are therefore capable of providing the common object of which all interpretations are interpretations.”<sup>498</sup> Likewise, there is “no neutral standard which determines in every case which of our interpretations is right and which wrong.”<sup>499</sup> Are things completely relative then, without some interpretations being better or worse than others? No. With Nehamas, I also agree, “some interpretations are better than others.”<sup>500</sup> For Nietzsche, it is obvious that he *does* regard some interpretations as better than others, or else much of what he writes would be meaningless. But if what makes some interpretations better cannot appeal to an objective reality or metaphysical thing-in-itself, then there arises the problem of explaining how some interpretations can be better than others.

One of the of the implicit foci of this thesis is to provide a unique perspective on the ground by which some interpretations might be regarded as better or worse in Nietzsche’s philosophy as well as in general. Although Nietzsche does not refer to defense mechanisms specifically – such was Freud’s discovery – his work is littered with descriptions of them. What he criticizes above all in the weak, fettered spirits and the herd – the decadent spirits – are the defense mechanisms that they employ.

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<sup>497</sup> Nehamas, Nietzsche, pg. 2

<sup>498</sup> Nehamas, Nietzsche, pg. 3

<sup>499</sup> Nehamas, Nietzsche, pg. 3

<sup>500</sup> Nehamas, Nietzsche, pg. 3

For example, the ascetics are criticized for repressing their nature, the religious and the metaphysical thinkers for being delusional and disavowing reality, and so on. Even the scientists are not themselves immune from such defenses, entertaining the ascetic ideal of Truth. The defensiveness is also criticized in those who aren't open to change or variation, thus indicating a fixation that psychoanalysis would later regard as characteristic of a neurotic personality. Nietzsche also writes, "That the only rightful interpretation of the world should be one to which *you* have a right; one by which one can do research and go on scientifically in *your* sense of the term ... that is a crudity and naiveté, assuming it is not a mental illness, an idiocy."<sup>501</sup>

What Nietzsche means, consistent with his characterizations of mental illness in people like Wagner (here he is alluding to Herbert Spencer), is that one displays a kind of psychical weakness in closing the door to other possible interpretations and flaunting only one's own as if it were *the Truth*. This rigidity is indicative of an egodystonic constitution.

Just prior to the above reference, Nietzsche writes of truth, "One shouldn't want to strip it of its ambiguous character: that, gentleman, is what *good* taste demands – above all, the taste of reverence for everything that lies beyond your horizon!"<sup>502</sup> This openness is egosyntonic. Nietzsche emphasizes that part of life's charm and seduction is in recognizing that the horizon is open, rather than arrogantly, *defensively*, closing it off. Why defensively? Because closing the horizon of possibilities makes one feel secure in one's knowledge, maintaining a delusion or fantasy that *his/her* interpretation is the truth, repudiating the possibility that there

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<sup>501</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §373

<sup>502</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §373

are other interpretations, or even an expansion of one's own from any moment. To close one's self off from change exemplifies the fixation and rigidity of a neurotic.

The will to power, in effect, shapes the ways in which sense impressions are received and hence interpreted. Nietzsche writes:

*Belief in the senses.* Is a fundamental fact of our intellect, which receives from the sense raw material that it *interprets*. This way of treating the raw material offered by the senses is, considered *morally*, *not* guided by an intention to truth but as if by a will to overpower, assimilate, consume. Our constant functions are absolutely egoistic, Machiavellian, unscrupulous, subtle. Commanding and obeying pushed to the extreme, and so that it can obey perfectly, the individual organ has much freedom.<sup>503</sup>

This demonstrates how the will to power gives shape and style to the world based on what it is able to incorporate into the intellectual faculties. Judgments or interpretations are generally expressions of the will to power that resolve themselves into harmonies and bring stability or order to the preceding conflict and tension. In summary, what makes an interpretation better or worse is if it results from an egosyntonic or egodystonic constitution. That is, an interpretation is better if it is more egosyntonic, worse if it is more egodystonic. The reason why is that an egodystonic constitution entails defensive positions that hinder incorporation, whereas an egosyntonic constitution requires incorporation of even initially conflicting elements into a harmonious whole.

This is by no means meant to endorse a realist position as what is antagonistic to egodystonic constitutions that often result in delusions or fantasies

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<sup>503</sup> Nietzsche, Writings from the Late Notebooks, 34[55]

that cover over or exist beside reality, often supplanting it. Nietzsche, I argue, can be regarded as an ontological relativist, as described by Christoph Cox as well as, I believe, implied by Nehamas. Furthermore, and in relation to this, I believe that Nietzsche entertains both a coherence and pragmatic theory of truth, except the coherence aspect is the basis of veridical claims. I maintain that truth, as such, is *an aesthetic phenomenon*, grounded in perspectives (aesthetics of sense) and interpretations (aesthetics of reflection), and by which existence is justified. While not denying the existence of the 'real', it makes little or no sense in Nietzsche to speak of any reality outside of perspectives and interpretations. For Nietzsche, interpretation *is* the truth, and our interpretations and perspectives are guided by the will to power according to what interpretation or perspective is useful, and *also* according to how each interpretation and perspective coheres, more holistically, with the constellation of all our other interpretations and perspectives since *they too* were formed by the same will to power.

Cox observes, "Nietzsche constantly returns to [the topic of truth]," throughout his work, and thus "clearly considers the issue of truth to be of central philosophical and cultural importance."<sup>504</sup> And yet in the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche claims, "the value of truth ... [must] for once be called into question."<sup>505</sup> What is important about Cox's view, with which I am in agreement, is that Nietzsche's consideration of truth largely pertains to the *value* accorded to it, and "how truth is to be *revalued* in light of his genealogy of European thought."<sup>506</sup> In *The Will to*

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<sup>504</sup> Cox, *Naturalism and Interpretation*, pp. 27-28

<sup>505</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §24

<sup>506</sup> Cox, *Naturalism and Interpretation*, pg. 29



*Power*, Nietzsche writes, “How is truth proved? By the feeling of enhanced power – by utility – by indispensability – in short, by advantages (namely, presuppositions concerning what truth *ought* to be like for us to recognize it). But that is a prejudice: a sign that truth is not involved at all.”<sup>507</sup> What he means by this is: ‘truth’, in the sense of *The Truth*, outside of any interpretation, is not involved at all. Furthermore, he also points out that we conceive truth – an interpretation – according to the ‘feeling of power’ it provides, i.e., coherence; and according to its ‘utility’ and ‘indispensability’, i.e., pragmatism.

The least troublesome position to take on Nietzsche concerning the nature of truth or, more precisely, *what we take to be the truth*, is something of a ‘hybrid’ interpretation of truth that Cox observes in a lengthy footnote.<sup>508</sup> It is true, as Nehamas and Gemes both assert, that Nietzsche isn’t particularly interested in providing a wholly rational theory of truth.<sup>509</sup> Yet, the ways in which Nietzsche *uses* ‘truth’ largely oscillates between a pragmatic and coherent theory of truth, whereby truth is, respectively, what is useful or harmonious with a background of other suppositions or perspectives. This is an *affirmative* view of truth. There might be ways in which truth is used according to a *correspondence* theory of truth, but where it is thus used, it involves correspondence to another interpretation, not some regulative standard like ‘reality’, and thus *actually* involves coherence. Nietzsche asserts that even the ‘truths’ of science are also interpretations and thus matters of perspective. Against a traditional correspondence view of truth, Nietzsche writes,

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<sup>507</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §455

<sup>508</sup> Cox, *Naturalism and Interpretation*, pp. 28-29, fn. 17

<sup>509</sup> see Gemes, “Nietzsche’s Critique of Truth,” pg. 48

“physics too is only an interpretation and arrangement of the world (according to ourselves! If I may say so) and *not* an explanation of the world.”<sup>510</sup> This clearly illustrates a relativity to interpretations and truth, and one that is generally antagonistic to a theory of correspondence.

How can one conceptualize truth as an interpretation in Nietzsche’s works, where both a pragmatic and coherent theory of truth exist side by side? Following that all is will to power, and will to power is essentially creative, one can appropriately use the work of art as indicative of the emergence of what we take to be the truth. Indicative of the ontological relativism, truth – or what we take to be the truth – is an interpretation. Every interpretation is a creative phenomena that results from our means of relating aesthetically with the world, and therefore nothing short of a work of art.

Regarding truth, we are each of us its artists. We might claim that something is true when it is useful, like a specific color or a particular medium (paint, stone, mathematic formula). But it is not useful outside of any context; that is, it is useful precisely because of its coherence with the rest of the project. So, in this sense, coherence is the basis of truth while pragmatism or utility might also allow for the veridical confirmation or indicate the coherence. As an example, I could claim it is true that human beings are perverse, evil creatures in need of salvation if such a claim is useful to me. And I will believe it insofar as it is useful to my life satisfaction and/or the totality of my beliefs. Importantly, what makes it useful to me is the background upon which its use is contingent; namely, it’s coherence with the

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<sup>510</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §14

illusions, wishful thinking, and/or fantasies I might attribute to life and existence, desperate to find meaning in suffering, as in the case of Nietzsche's 'ascetic' in the *Genealogy*.<sup>511</sup>

Nietzsche further claims that truth represents "Inertia; that hypothesis which gives rise to contentment; smallest expenditure of spiritual force, etc."<sup>512</sup> Thus 'truth' for Nietzsche is generated, created, imposed or bestowed on the world according to an entropic principle whereby 'truth' indicates the attainment of a homeostatic aim, a harmony. This 'aim' is the aesthetic project. As human beings, what creates that harmony are generally the means by which we relate to ourselves and the world, repudiating or incorporating, as no-sayers or yes-sayers. We relate according to the vicissitudes of our instincts and drives, and therefore egodystonically or egosyntonically. Every interpretation and every valuation – everything we take to be the truth – is the product of a creative endeavor towards the resolution of conflict or the bestowal of order and harmony. How we see the world, through the structuring capacities of our vicissitudes, is a work of art. The ascetic's 'truths' are egodystonic in that they are contingent on the vicissitude of repression that is necessitated by its relation to life – or the hinter-worldly – and the meaning attributed to it. The vicissitudes of the *Übermensch*, on the other hand, necessarily facilitate incorporation and repudiate nothing; the *Übermensch* does not repress or disavow any aspect of his nature or experience and there for is an archetype of egosyntonic relating – of sublimation.

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<sup>511</sup> See, for example, Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §20

<sup>512</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §537

# **III. AESTHETICS AND ETHICS:**

## **The Symptoms of Vicissitudes**

### **The Three ‘Senses’ of Aesthetics**

In any discussion of Aesthetics, the grounds are not always clear. The term ‘Aesthetics’ is used to describe three different topics, and the three often get confused and conflated or comingled with each other. Kant successfully makes a distinction between these three.<sup>513</sup> Nietzsche never explicitly addresses the distinction, but he nonetheless sufficiently addresses all three within his corpus, each of which carries considerable weight in his project for re-valuations and self-cultivation. These three distinct topics are: first, aesthetics of sense, or the raw sense impressions at the level of appearances; second, aesthetics as reflective judgments, and thus pertaining to feelings of the beautiful and the sublime (and respectively to the ugly and the horrific); and third, aesthetics as it pertains to art and artistic endeavors – creativity. And perhaps contributing to the conflation, each of these three topics are interrelated in such a way that ‘reflection’ refers to ‘sense’; ‘art and artistry’ to both reflection and sense, and each in either the paradigm of the artist or of the spectator, and so on.

Nietzsche, unlike Kant and Schopenhauer, makes a further distinction in the third category of aesthetics. He distinguishes between passive art, or art for the

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<sup>513</sup> In Kant’s work, the distinction is found regarding the agreeable, the beautiful, and creativity or genius.

perceiver, and art for the artist. Following from what was addressed above concerning artistry, one can also make a further distinction concerning art for the artist in Nietzsche's works, whereas a *reactive* artist creates in order to console and/or conceal, but an *active* artist exemplifies something like Nietzsche's philosopher or artist of the future, incorporating the uncomfortable and 'ugly' truths of nihilism – life's purposelessness and meaninglessness – by making it beautiful, creating meaning out of it. This will ultimately become Nietzsche's ethical imperative: to make beautiful and give style to one's self and the world via sublimation.

## **Aesthetics of Sense and Reflection**

Kant's project in the *Critique of Judgment*, diverges somewhat from the concerns here, but Kant's descriptions of what is Beautiful or Sublime, and the requirements for judging things as such, provides a ground to which any aesthetic theory should refer and to which any aesthetic theory after him is indebted. Of particular interest is the germination of Kant's theory in the works of Schopenhauer and the works Nietzsche after him.

In his three critiques, Kant addresses the powers of the capacities of mind: the cognitive powers responsible for theoretical knowledge as delineated in the *Critique of Pure Reason*; the power of desire, as delineated in the *Critique of Practical Reason*; and the power of judgment, in the *Critique of Judgment*. What chiefly concerns us here is the reflective judgment termed by Kant as *aesthetic* judgment, pertaining to the agreeable, the beautiful, and the sublime. I'd like to add that this

also concerns judgments of what are, respectively, disgusting, ugly, and horrifying, although what Kant says about these are mostly implied if present at all. Aesthetic judgment pertains to the judgment of a thing in reference to a pleasure or displeasure. For his project, Kant wants to show that the subjective feeling of pleasure (or displeasure) can, in relation to a particular object, demonstrate the possibility for a universal liking (or disliking). He, however, focuses almost exclusively on positive aesthetic judgments for largely unconscious reasons unbeknownst to him but about which Freud has plenty to say (which will be addressed in the section on *das Unheimlich*).

Kant's 3<sup>rd</sup> *Critique* is intended to investigate what is necessary for a pure and universally valid *judgment* about what is otherwise quite subjective and therefore admitting of peculiarities. He writes, "If we wish to decide whether something is beautiful or not, we ... refer the presentation [of the object] to the subject and his feeling of pleasure or displeasure." It is therefore a "judgment whose determining basis *cannot be other than subjective*."<sup>514</sup> The mere pleasure (or displeasure) in the sensation or feeling is itself the basis for *aesthetic* judging. But judging a thing to be beautiful or otherwise requires, on the part of the subject, *reflective judgment* where a universal is found (or created) for it.

Pleasure generally emerges from the attainment of an aim. Regarding the sensation or feeling of pleasure, "The attainment of an aim [Absicht] is always connected with the feeling of pleasure,"<sup>515</sup> writes Kant. He continues writing that

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<sup>514</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pg. 44 [204]

<sup>515</sup> Kant, 2<sup>nd</sup> Introduction, *Critique of Judgment*, VI, pg. 27 [187] I'd like to point out the distinction between 'aim' as it appears here in Kant, and 'aim' as it appears in

we refer to “whatever is liked, precisely inasmuch as it is liked,” as being agreeable, and “pleasure would be the *agreeableness* [found] in the *sensation* of one’s state.”<sup>516</sup> But the agreeable is not to be equated with the beautiful. The agreeable involves only the presentation of things to the senses and the corresponding pleasure in that engagement. Significantly, it always appears to be *interested*, according to Kant. The liking of the beautiful, on the other hand, involves the faculties of the imagination and the understanding in reflection upon what is experienced as pleasurable, and is felt as such with *disinterest*. Another distinguishing point is that pleasure in the agreeable is described by Kant as a pleasurable *sensation*, indicating the embodiment. Pleasure in the beautiful, on the other hand, is a pleasurable *feeling*, and pertains solely to the cognitive faculties.

I’d like to digress briefly here to relate this to previous discussions because it will highlight the significance of Nietzsche’s argument against disinterest that I’ll make later. Tying this into the neuroscience referenced earlier, I think it isn’t imprudent to, on the one hand, relate this to the dopaminergic system, popularly regarded as the brain reward system. And so, this rehashes the argument mentioned previously concerning pleasure and unpleasure in Freud and Nietzsche, as well as observations made by Panksepp, that the ‘reward’ aspect of the system is actually secondary. First and foremost it is a SEEKING system, indicating

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Freud. For Freud, *aim* is the English translation of *Ziel*, which might be translated also as ‘target’, ‘goal’, ‘objective’ or a kind of destination, such that a sex drive *aims* at a sexual object. *Absicht*, on the other hand, can be translated also as ‘intention’, ‘purpose’, or ‘design’, generally denoting a kind of functionality. Loosely, I think the two can be used interchangeably, but strictly, it’s a difference worth considering as *Absicht* bears a relation to the *form of purposiveness* in Kant concerning the Beautiful.

<sup>516</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pg. 47 [206] (my emphases)

exploratory behavior. The pleasure (or displeasure) that one feels should be regarded as 1. only an epiphenomenal aspect of which we are able to be conscious, and 2. As a terminus for the dispositions that would nonetheless exist with or without the reward. Following Skinner's behavioral psychology concerning the "Brain Reward System," however, the epiphenomena of the feeling of pleasure would serve drive cathexes; viz., pleasure would increase the chances of an action's repetition (and therefore conditioning), and such is the claim made by Freud on the derivation of drives in the anaclitic relation with the instincts. Through the instinct of feeding, the infant feels pleasure, although it was not the pleasure that motivated the act of feeding but only emerged from it. Pleasure was not the purpose of feeding. However, pleasure in the sensuous relation with the breast creates the sex drives (Eros), and the drives are thus formed anaclitically to the instinct. Here, pleasure both arises from action not compelled towards pleasure – as functional pleasure of the instinct – and sensual, organ pleasure also conditions future similar actions of the same sort in the anaclitic formation of a drive. In this sense, the motivational state for acting might be originally something other than pleasure, and yet pleasure, which is epiphenomenal to it, also conditions it or promotes the chances of its repetition. This was all sufficiently addressed in the preceding section on *Bemächtigungstrieb*.

Nietzsche also writes, correspondingly, "Pleasure and displeasure can only be *means* in the course of events."<sup>517</sup> Nietzsche's point is that the will to power, which corresponds to *Bemächtigungstrieb* in Freud's corpus, is the dispositional

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<sup>517</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §36



factor involved in all actions or reactions – the motivational state; pleasure and displeasure are consequences of such but can be means for future developments. They are that of which – along with desire – we are able to be conscious. Again, a difference might be drawn between motivational states and propositional attitudes whereas a motivational state (an instinct or drive) is not driven according to pleasure or unpleasure, but the ensuing propositional attitude might very well be in the form of desire. It might be that our propositional attitudes are in fact compounds of our motivational states conditioned by encounters with pleasures and unpleasures and the ideas formed from them.<sup>518</sup>

Returning to Kant's analysis, beauty produces a feeling of pleasure in the subject, and thus also would appear to be produced from the attainment of some aim. This refers to the *quality* of the Beautiful – the first moment in the critique. He further elaborates that this “designates nothing whatsoever in the object,” but rather how the subject “is affected by the presentation. ... namely, to his feeling of life, under the name feeling of pleasure or displeasure,” which goes on to form “the basis of a very special power of discriminating and judging.”<sup>519</sup> What brings about this pleasure is the harmony between the faculties of imagination and understanding of the subject in the presentation of the object, thus a pleasure experienced via an object and yet independent of it.

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<sup>518</sup> See, for example, Harris, Sam et al. “Functional Neuroimaging of Belief, Disbelief, and Uncertainty” and Turnball, Oliver, “The Pleasantness of False Beliefs”

<sup>519</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pg. 44 [204]

Kant describes the liking of the Beautiful as displaying “purposiveness without a purpose.”<sup>520</sup> The harmony of the understanding and the imagination produces the feeling of the Beautiful where one can “observe a purposiveness as to form and take note of it in objects – even if only by reflection – without basing it on a purpose.”<sup>521</sup> In other words, the subject finds, in the object that produces the *feeling* of beauty, an object that would seem to have brought about the attainment of an aim, indicating the *form* of purposiveness, without actually knowing what that aim is. He writes, “The very consciousness of a merely formal purposiveness in the play of the subject’s cognitive powers ... is that pleasure” that is “merely contemplative” and disinterested.<sup>522</sup> “Objective purposiveness,” however, contrasted to the subjective purposiveness in the feeling of beauty, is determined according to a concept.<sup>523</sup> In other words, a judgment of the beautiful is disinterested because it is purely contemplative and involves a necessary *free play* of the understanding and the imagination.<sup>524</sup> Kant writes, “A judgment of taste is an aesthetic judgment, i.e., a judgment that rests on subjective bases, and whose determining basis cannot be a concept and hence also cannot be the concept of a determinate purpose.”<sup>525</sup> Any judgment of the beautiful, then, entails the feeling of pleasure in the subject derived from the *form* of purposiveness that the free play of the understanding and the imagination can cognize in the presentation of an object.

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<sup>520</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pg. 65 [220]

<sup>521</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pg. 65 [220]

<sup>522</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pg. 68 [222]

<sup>523</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pg. 73 [226]

<sup>524</sup> This is the important aspect that I will later address discussing Nietzsche’s critique of Kant and Schopenhauer

<sup>525</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pg. 74 [228]

## On Aesthetic Interest

Kant is careful to distinguish the merely agreeable from the Beautiful, and likewise the Beautiful from the good. The agreeable and the good, for Kant, are both interested in an object's existence. Concerning the agreeable, such a judgment "arouses a desire for objects of that kind," so that "the agreeable produces an inclination."<sup>526</sup> The judgment of the agreeable (or disagreeable) is contingent on the sensory receptivity of an object. So, Kant also distinguishes between the *sense* of pleasure in the case of the agreeable, and the *feeling* of pleasure in the case of the beautiful, which precludes sensation and is purely cognitive; that is, refers *only* to the cognitive powers of the imagination and the understanding, or reason in the case of the sublime.

The good is also connected with interest, whether it is good because it is useful toward some end or because it is "*intrinsically* good," as when it is liked for its own sake. "All interest either presupposes a need," as in the case for the good, "or gives rise to one," as in the case for the merely agreeable.<sup>527</sup> The good "contains a concept of a purpose," writes Kant, "consequently a relation of reason to a volition..., and hence a liking for the existence of an object or action."<sup>528</sup> The agreeable and the good, while both interested, are distinguishable by the fact that the agreeable is not based on a concept but on sensation, whereas the good is based on "principles of reason, using the concept of a purpose."<sup>529</sup> Kant later addresses judgments of the

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<sup>526</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pg. 48 [207]

<sup>527</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pg. 52 [210]

<sup>528</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pg. 49 [207]

<sup>529</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pg. 49 [208]

good in his critique as a teleological judgment. Aesthetic judgment of the beautiful, on the other hand, is “merely contemplative,” because it is “indifferent to the existence of an object.”<sup>530</sup> But how, exactly, can a judgment of taste, which produces in the subject a feeling of pleasure, be referred to as disinterested? This is a point that Nietzsche specifically attacks, and to which I’ll address further on.

Schopenhauer can be largely seen as appropriating and psychologizing Kant, injecting Kant’s general framework with a psychology and subjectivity that Kant intentionally omitted in order to keep his project as ‘rational’ and non-convoluted as possible. Schopenhauer identifies in aesthetic experience, as well as in ethical experience, a determinative interest. Dale Jacquette observes, “Schopenhauer’s claims about the ability of aesthetic experience to quiet desire and wanting... suggest that art is no more than a nonpharmaceutical pain-killer.”<sup>531</sup> This kind of ‘relief from suffering’ that is offered in aesthetic experience is also what Freud takes up and further elaborates on, asserting that it is one of many various palliative measures for an existence that is otherwise characterized as suffering.<sup>532</sup> Schopenhauer, with sentiments later echoed to varying degrees by Nietzsche and even more closely by Freud, writes that all of life is conflict and, in line with what Freud claims,<sup>533</sup> Schopenhauer writes, “... The pain essential to life cannot be thrown off.”<sup>534</sup> Instead, “The ceaseless efforts to banish suffering achieve nothing more than a change in its form. ... If ... we have succeeded in removing pain in this

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<sup>530</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pg. 51

<sup>531</sup> Jacquette, *Metaphysics*, pg. 27

<sup>532</sup> see, for example, Freud, *Civ. & Dis*, pp. 82-83

<sup>533</sup> especially in *Civilization and its Discontents*

<sup>534</sup> Schopenhauer, *WWR I* pg. 314

form, it at once appears on the scene in a thousand others.”<sup>535</sup> Thus in Schopenhauer we find precursors to what Freud observes in the formation of symptoms through utilizing defense mechanisms, ‘palliative measures’, whether the attempt to remove the pain, and the consequent ‘symptom’, is neurotic or psychotic.

For Schopenhauer, pleasurable aesthetic experiences have the affect of existential consolations or ephemeral atonements. Daniel Came writes, and I agree with him:

Schopenhauer’s claims regarding aesthetic experience seem phenomenologically true, or nearly true. That is, at the level of phenomenology he seems right to regard as the hallmark of aesthetic experience a diminished sense of self and world along with the reciprocal relations of space, time, and causality that obtain between objects in ordinary experiences. ... One might object that ... we never lose all awareness of ourselves ... But something approaching this kind of experience does seem to occur in aesthetic experience.<sup>536</sup>

It does appear that, in aesthetic contemplation, oneself and everything else other than the object of contemplation, seems to melt away, as if hypnotized or ‘in love’,<sup>537</sup> and all the rest of the world disappears.

Came also observes, “In Schopenhauer’s hands, this axiology of selflessness is appropriated in the service of his wider soteriological end, namely, identifying the conditions of the complete and permanent abolition of self and the ‘blessed peace of

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<sup>535</sup> Schopenhauer, WWR I pg. 315. See also Schopenhauer, WWR I, pg. 147 on Nature as conflict substantialized.

<sup>536</sup> Came, Daniel, “Schopenhauer ... Art and Morality,” pg. 242

<sup>537</sup> Love is another ‘palliative measure’ mentioned by Freud, approximating the closest to ‘happiness’. See Civ. & Dis. pg. 82

nothingness’.”<sup>538</sup> What Schopenhauer finds valuable in aesthetic contemplation or the experience of the beautiful and the sublime is that it dissolves, albeit quite ephemerally, one’s selfhood into the a hypercathexis of the contemplated object(s), losing, temporarily, even the will-to-live. One dissolves into nothing, but as no thing becomes with everything ... that is, loses individuation and becomes everything in the aesthetic experience.

For Schopenhauer, “One’s engagement with an object in aesthetic experience is disinterested and painless.”<sup>539</sup> And Nietzsche observes, “Ultimately ... the value of art for Schopenhauer derives from its status as a kind of signpost to the higher condition of asceticism.”<sup>540</sup> Observing the defense mechanism of repression or reaction-formation in Schopenhauer’s philosophy, Nietzsche writes, “There are few things about which Schopenhauer speaks with such certainty as the effect of aesthetic contemplation: according to him, it counteracts *sexual* ‘interestedness’, ... and he never tires of singing the praises of *this* escape from the ‘will’ as the great advantage and use of the aesthetic condition.”<sup>541</sup> In other words, the ‘Will’, which Schopenhauer loosely identifies with willing in general, is affiliated with sexual interestedness. Aesthetic contemplation, the recognition of ‘ideas’ and the beautiful, are an escape from that interestedness because they entail disinterestedness – a dissolution of the self, and the recognition of the impersonal will, mediated by the plastic arts or nearly unmediated by music.

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<sup>538</sup> Came, Daniel, “Schopenhauer ... Art and Morality,” pg. 243

<sup>539</sup> Came, Daniel, “Schopenhauer ... Art and Morality,” pg. 241

<sup>540</sup> Came, Daniel, “Schopenhauer ... Art and Morality,” pg. 243

<sup>541</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §6

Nietzsche also observes, as Freud later does of philosophers in general, that the roots of Schopenhauer's philosophy might actually be grounded in Schopenhauer's sexuality and the age at which he conceived the core of his thought, whereas, "it reflects not just the specific characteristics of Schopenhauer himself but also the specifics of that season of life."<sup>542</sup> Nietzsche claims, "as long as there are philosophers on earth and whenever there have been philosophers ... there exists a genuine philosophers' irritation and rancor against sensuality – Schopenhauer is just the most eloquent and ... the most fascinating and delightful eruption among them."<sup>543</sup> However, Nietzsche asserts, "Sensuality is not suspended as soon as we enter the aesthetic condition, as Schopenhauer believed, but is only transfigured and no longer enters the consciousness as a sexual stimulus."<sup>544</sup> Thus, some vicissitude or defense mechanism like repression or reaction-formation is clearly identified.

Furthermore, if we examine closely what is at stake here, Schopenhauer sees differentiation as a source of suffering. The will in representations, in the *principium individuationis*, displays illusions of difference, and that differentiation is responsible for the feeling of *lack* that arouses desire. Only as an individual, among separate things to be desired, does one suffer through desire. Looking again at primary narcissism, one of the very first psychical conflicts that arises in a human being is the *disillusionment* of the self/world tautology. Here, Schopenhauer flips

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<sup>542</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §6

<sup>543</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §7

<sup>544</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §8

this on its head whereby *difference* is regarded as illusion rather than separation,<sup>545</sup> and so it indicates the kind of *disavowal* undergone in what Freud termed the psychoneuroses, e.g., melancholia (the introjection of the 'lost object').

In his book on Schopenhauer, Raj Singh writes, "It has been claimed that no other human field of inquiry and creativity is as closely allied with death as philosophy. Indeed, philosophy was conceived as wedded to death," and in Western philosophy it would appear this is so, ever since "Socrates proclaimed the bond between death and philosophy," and "the theme of death has stayed with western philosophy as an essential part of its mandate."<sup>546</sup> He observes also that Socrates defined philosophy as a rehearsal for death. Schopenhauer also makes this reference at the beginning of his essay on Death. We also find at this point in time a simultaneous rejection of corporeality. Singh observes, "All hindrance to the will's striving, or obstacles placed between the will and its temporary goal, is called 'suffering' by Schopenhauer."<sup>547</sup> This echoes also the "frustration" observed in existence, exemplifying the influence of Schopenhauer's philosophy on Otto Rank's 'Birth Trauma'.<sup>548</sup>

Jonathan Lear claims "Plato invents philosophy as an act of mourning. Indeed, the very name 'philosophy' characterizes the activity as a distinctive kind of longing for the lost object."<sup>549</sup> And after giving an account of the irrational forces of the human psyche in *the Republic*, the rest of the book presents "Plato's *dream* of a

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<sup>545</sup> Or perhaps Freud flips Schopenhauer's assertion on its head

<sup>546</sup> Singh, R. Raj. *Death, Contemplation*, pg. ix

<sup>547</sup> Singh, R. Raj. *Death, Contemplation*, pg. 33

<sup>548</sup> I alluded to Rank previously in discussing the vicissitude of disavowal.

<sup>549</sup> Lear, *Happiness*, pg. 102



society in which Socrates could come back and rule. The 'beautiful city' (the *kallipolis*) is Plato's field of dreams: a place where philosophy (= Socrates) will rule and make a permanent place for itself."<sup>550</sup> But this depicts not *mourning* as much as it depicts a kind of *melancholy* – the attempt to make permanent a lost love object. Schopenhauer writes that, because "there is no ultimate aim of striving means that there is no measure or end of suffering."<sup>551</sup> Schopenhauer, like Plato in his death contemplation, exemplifies melancholia and affirms the adage of Silenus: "It is better not to have been born, but having been born, it is best to die as soon as possible." Nietzsche's criticism of Schopenhauer is that what *he* values in aesthetics, and the ethics that he preaches, amounts to a philosophy of death. "Schopenhauer talks about *beauty* with a melancholy passion ... because he sees it as a *bridge* you can cross to something further. ... He sees it as a momentary redemption from the 'will' – it is an enticement to permanent redemption ... he thinks that the drive to procreate is *negated* by beauty."<sup>552</sup> And furthermore, Schopenhauer "takes art as a bridge to the negation of life."<sup>553</sup> But even Plato, Nietzsche asserts, recognizes that "All beauty is a temptation to procreate."<sup>554</sup> Schopenhauer's idea of beauty ends up amounting to the repudiation of life, or what is fundamental to living, which is to say, it is analogous to death – the state at which one is devoid of all interest. Taking this point and then reapplying it to Kant's formulation as a comparison, in the case

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<sup>550</sup> Lear, Happiness, pg. 103

<sup>551</sup> Schopenhauer, WWR I, pg. 309

<sup>552</sup> Nietzsche, Twilight, Skirmishes, §22

<sup>553</sup> Nietzsche, KSA 13, 14[119] "Die unkünstlerischen Zustände: die der Objektivität, der Spiegelung, des ausgehängten Willens... das skandalöse Mißverständnis Schopenhauers, der die Kunst als Brücke zur Verneinung des Lebens nimmt..." (my translation from German is quoted above)

<sup>554</sup> Nietzsche, Twilight, Skirmishes, §22

of Kant a condition analogous to death is the prerequisite for a pure judgment of beauty; For Schopenhauer, a condition analogous to death – the liberation from existential suffering and willing – is the *consequence* of cognizing beauty.

This is, of course, the point at which Nietzsche is most in contention with Schopenhauer. Aside from Schopenhauer's metaphysics (with which Nietzsche is also very critical), the issue that perhaps separates the two the most is Schopenhauer's appeal to the negation of the will, and – for Nietzsche at least – ultimately of life. For Nietzsche, this represents the attitude of a decadent artist, or the decadent spectator of artists and culture. Nietzsche, in opposition to Schopenhauer, looks to affirm life. And he sees a positive, healthy role for art in precisely that task: to bring order to, and bestow meaning upon, the life that Schopenhauer would rather repudiate.

## **Nietzsche's Aesthetic Judgment**

Nietzsche's critique of the disinterestedness of aesthetic judgment essentially kills two birds with one stone. He argues, with Schopenhauer, that the determining ground of an aesthetic judgment cannot be disinterested and regards aesthetic valuations as psychologically grounded. But he argues *against* Schopenhauer's valuation of beauty that is symptomatic of a melancholic, reactive nihilism that results in a withdrawal from life.

Nietzsche consistently describes disinterested contemplation as a “non-concept and an absurdity.”<sup>555</sup> This is because all contemplation necessarily entails interest; that is, all objects of contemplation are objects of interest, are interpreted according to interest, and the mere act of contemplation itself is a motivated activity so that without interest there would be no contemplation. “To eliminate the will completely and turn off all the emotions without exception, assuming we could ... would that not mean to *castrate* the intellect?”<sup>556</sup>

Nietzsche writes that one of Kant’s errors lies in the definition he gives of the beautiful. “Kant said: ‘Something beautiful is beautiful if it gives pleasure *without interest*’. Without interest! Compare this definition with another made by a genuine ‘spectator’ and artist – Stendhal, who once called the beautiful *une promesse de bonheur*.”<sup>557</sup> Nietzsche thus pits Stendhal against Kant. Schopenhauer on the other hand, Nietzsche claims, “stood much closer to the arts than Kant and still could not break free of the spell of Kant’s definition ... he interpreted the phrase ‘without interest’ in the most personal way possible.”<sup>558</sup> Nietzsche observes, then, that Schopenhauer does not *mean* the same by ‘disinterested’ as Kant – that Schopenhauer makes what Kant intends to be impersonal and purely rational (thus lacking all sentiment, such as in intellectualization) as personal and injected with psychological interest.

For Kant, the agreeable concerns only judgments of sense, in the mere pleasure or liking in the object, which is interested in the object’s existence, such

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<sup>555</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §12

<sup>556</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §12

<sup>557</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §6

<sup>558</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §6

that a man in the desert will find water to be agreeable, and insofar as he is interested in the object's existence, then his judgment of taste pertaining to quality of the water cannot be taken seriously. A man who is not dying of thirst in the desert, however, and therefore not interested in the existence of the water, can judge it without interest. However, Kant also writes, "It does not follow ... that ... an interest cannot be connected with [the beautiful]," but only that the "beautiful must not have an interest *as its determinative basis*."<sup>559</sup> In other words, we can judge an object in which we are interested as beautiful, but such a judgment is only a pure aesthetic judgment if it is disconnected from that interest as a determining factor. In the aesthetic judgment of the beautiful, it requires the feeling of pleasure that is produced *only* by the harmonious *free play* of the understanding and the imagination in reflection upon the object, absent of all desire and volition on the part of the perceiver which would otherwise make the 'play' determined and thus unfree. To support this, Kant intriguingly claims that the pleasure in a pure judgment of taste must *follow from* rather than *precede* the judgment, so as to ensure its disinterestedness. For Kant, the power of judging and the activity of the cognitive faculties responsible for judgment are disinterested only insofar as they are entirely separated off from the influence of the inclinations. Nietzsche's point is that it is impossible for anything to be judged and interpreted, or even perceived at all, without the influence of motivational states – our instincts or drives (referred to as 'inclinations' by Kant) – i.e., will to power.<sup>560</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> Kant, Critique of Judgment, pg. 163, [296]

<sup>560</sup> What Schopenhauer provides with the Will is a possibility for a universal substratum that determines the liking and therefore also, to varying degrees,

While in Kant there are reflective judgments (aesthetic and teleological), Nietzsche refers to instinctive judgments. When Nietzsche introduces the notion of *instinctive judgments*, he implicitly criticizes Kant's *a priori* 'reflective judgment', and is explicitly criticizing the role of the understanding (and the imagination and reason as well) in a 'disinterested and pure aesthetic judgment'. In §804 in *The Will to Power*, titled, "*Origin of the beautiful and the ugly*," Nietzsche writes that aesthetics involves a *biological* valuation. "That which is instinctively *repugnant* to us, aesthetically, is proved by mankind's longest experience to be harmful, dangerous, worthy of suspicion: the suddenly vocal aesthetic instinct (e.g., in disgust) contains a *judgment*. To this extent the beautiful stands within the general category of biological values of what is useful, beneficent, life-enhancing," even by a distant association, whether they are "the sensations that accompany such things, or symbols of them."<sup>561</sup> Of course, there is already some science to back up his claims. Biologically, all organic life has been evolutionarily programed to respond to various stimuli in particular ways and according to any of the various senses found throughout nature. Color psychology is one example, where certain colors naturally (for biological reasons) have stimulating or relaxing affects on the psyche (whether

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provides a basis for universal assent by virtue of the substratum's universality. The same can be said, also, of Freud's drive theory, although he never explicitly asserts as much; and the same can be said of the will to power in the works of Nietzsche. What Schopenhauer has done, and what Nietzsche and Freud both do in following him, is provide a *psychological* and *irrational* substratum to account for valuations, regardless of if it pertains to what Kant relegates to the agreeable, the beautiful, or the sublime.

<sup>561</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §804, pg. 423

human or animal; just think of all the sublime, stimulating plumage on male birds, or the coloration of other species, and the affect of the color red, for example).<sup>562</sup>

The understanding, for Nietzsche, “retards” and “considers,” putting a brake on “immediate reactions.” “All instinctive judgments are shortsighted,” he continues, and “judgments concerning beauty and ugliness are shortsighted ... but persuasive in the highest degree; they appeal to our instincts where they decide most quickly and pronounce their Yes and No before the understanding can speak.”<sup>563</sup> He is clearly making a distinction between motivational states (which pronounce their judgment) and propositional attitudes. Because reflective judgment, in Kant, depends upon the understanding in its relation with the imagination (in the case of the beautiful, reason in the case of the sublime), then instinctive judgments are kinds of judgments that precede and influence reflective judgments. If true, this would make Kant’s aesthetic judgment concerning the Beautiful impure and interested – even in the sense in which Kant speaks of interest,<sup>564</sup> because they *would be interested* in some particular aim concerning an object, directly or indirectly, and thus would resemble more closely teleological, and

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<sup>562</sup> Schopenhauer refers to this as well, I think implicitly acknowledging Goethe’s work on color psychology that still has some influence today. He writes, “Colors directly excite a keen delight,” and the “absence of light immediately makes us sad” (WWR I pg. 199). While not entirely accurate scientifically, research has shown that specific hues do elicit specific responses. See below fn. I mean to show that disinterest is impossible.

<sup>563</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §804

<sup>564</sup> Heidegger claims that Schopenhauer misunderstands Kant’s ‘disinterestedness’. I hope I have shown it is possible this is *not* the case, for by psychologizing Kant, Schopenhauer makes Kant’s disinterestedness impossible, thus it is a reinterpretation more than a *misinterpretation*. Heidegger claims that Nietzsche also misunderstands Kant because he understands Kant through Schopenhauer. I hope to show that this is even further from the truth and that Nietzsche actually provides a substantial criticism of Kant’s perspective.

empirical (*agreeable*), rather than reflective judgments according to Kant's topology of judgment.

For Kant, the faculties are not passive; they are actively engaged in a *free play* in the contemplation of the beautiful. But the play of the understanding and imagination do entail, in Kant, a kind of autonomy where each faculty plays according to its function, and *only according to its function*, by virtue of which they cannot be regarded as influenced by other factors such as drives or instincts (or inclinations). This is what Nietzsche criticizes. Instead, Nietzsche claims, the Kantian faculties are at a play that is *not free* from instinctual influence.

For Kant, the understanding (let it be  $x$ ) is defined by its function – the faculty that unifies intuitions according to concepts.  $x = f(x)$ . The same is true of the other faculties: the imagination (let it be  $y$ ) insofar as it combines intuitions. In a pure judgment of the beautiful, the understanding and the imagination are at harmony in their 'free play'. Let  $t$  stand for drives or instincts (our motivational states).

- 'Free Play' in the contemplation of the beautiful entails  $x$  and  $y$  fulfilling their function autonomously, whereby  $x$  plays according to *only* the function of  $x$ , and  $y$  according to *only* the function of  $y$ .
- If  $x$  or  $y$  are said to be influenced by any other factor alien to their respective functions, such as  $t$ , then their activity involves also at least some portion of the function of  $t$  and are at least loosely determined by it.
- Insofar as  $x$  or  $y$  entail at least some function of  $t$  or anything else, the play between them cannot be regarded as *free*, for...
  - $x = x$  IFF  $x = f(x)$ ,  $y = y$  IFF  $y = f(y)$ , and so on. Each is purely itself only insofar as its activity entails only the function according to which each is defined to be what it is.

- Insofar as *x* or *y* are not purely themselves – *playing* according to the influence of anything else, such as *t*, and thereby importing at least some of the function of that alien faculty/force, then their play cannot be regarded as *free*, but instead *determined* in proportion to the amount of the alien function imported into its activity.
- A *pure* judgment of beauty, for Kant, requires disinterested contemplation.
- And such disinterest requires a harmony in a *free play* of the understanding and the imagination, meaning that the activity of each must be purely its own with respect to its function only.
- Therefore, if *t* bears any influence on *x* or *y*, then neither is purely itself, and any resulting harmony cannot be attributed to a *free* play.
- Furthermore, if the harmony is not attributable to a *free* play, then the contemplation cannot be said to be disinterested, for the play is not free but to some degree determined.

Nietzsche thus raises a compelling argument against the ‘disinterestedness’ of beauty as it appears in Kant’s critique. I have only unpacked in considerably more detail what his objection entails. It depends, however, on the assumption that biological and psychical factors outside the domain of the function of the understanding or the imagination do influence them. Without evidence, proposing the influence begs the question.

Fortunately for Nietzsche, there is considerable evidence in the psychological sciences.<sup>565</sup> The problem for Kant’s approach was that it attempted a strictly rationalist analysis of aesthetic judgment, intentionally absent of psychology.<sup>566</sup> Schopenhauer had appropriated Kant’s analysis, but intentionally injected it with

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<sup>565</sup> See below on Disgust or above on color psychology

<sup>566</sup> ... contrary to Paul Guyer’s reading of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Critique



psychology.<sup>567</sup> For this reason, in Schopenhauer, Beauty maintains the character of disinterestedness, but disinterestedness becomes the '*telos*' of aesthetic judgments, whereas the perceiving subject is now *interested in becoming disinterested* – the subject is interested in losing its interest in the contemplation of an object it finds beautiful. Schopenhauer's move, in this regard, is quite respectable. What it indicates, actually, is later echoed by Freud's conception of the death drive, whereas the death drive is precisely the *interest in becoming disinterested* because interest presupposes tension and disinterest is the absence of all tension.<sup>568</sup>

The interest that Nietzsche attempts to demonstrate in reflective judgment, quite distinct from Kant's postulation, is indicative of what Schopenhauer also saw in his reference to the Will – it is the substratum common to all humans in Kant's antinomy of taste that allows for agreement in aesthetic judgments between perceivers. Only here, Nietzsche would amend this to the will to power – that towards which all drives are aimed. Nietzsche actually explicitly argues that *purposiveness* (the *form* of which, without conceptual understanding, is the determining factor in judging the beautiful according to Kant) is attributable to the will to power. He writes, for example, "What appears to be '*purposiveness*' ('*the purposiveness infinitely superior to all human art*') is merely the consequence of the *will to power* played out in everything that happens," so that "*becoming stronger* brings with it orderings which resemble outlines of purposiveness. ...

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<sup>567</sup> Schopenhauer did not misunderstand Kant concerning disinterestedness, as Heidegger and others adamantly claim, but rather injected Kant's analysis with something foreign, something that was lacking.; Schopenhauer *reinterpreted* Kant's work by importing psychological concerns.

<sup>568</sup> This is significant, as the title of my thesis is: Living as Sublimated Dying

[purposiveness is] only an *expression* of an ordering of spheres of power and their interplay.”<sup>569</sup> In other words, Nietzsche claims ‘purposiveness’ is an illusion that emerges from the appearance – or rather imposition or projection – of order that allows for a feeling of mastery. It is an illusion from myopic retrospection.<sup>570</sup> However, one is entitled, perhaps, to speak of a purposiveness as exemplifying this pseudo-*telos* of will to power (namely, the homeostatic ‘trend’ towards ‘power’ or ‘mastery’).

## A Bifurcation of Interest

One key difference between Kant and Schopenhauer’s discussions of Beauty concerns disinterestedness. This is also a point at which Nietzsche diverges from Schopenhauer as well as from Kant. Julian Young makes the important observation that disinterestedness functions differently for Kant and Schopenhauer in aesthetic judgment. For Kant, disinterestedness is a required condition for the judgment of the beautiful; but for Schopenhauer, disinterestedness is the *consequence* of cognizing the beautiful. Young writes, for Schopenhauer, “the *object* of pleasure is one’s own state of disinterestedness.”<sup>571</sup> Schopenhauer regards the *willing* subject

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<sup>569</sup> Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, 9[91] autumn 1887

<sup>570</sup> I have explained this fallacy in the introduction.

<sup>571</sup> Young, *Nietzsche Art*, pp. 118-119 And contrary to Heidegger, it can be asserted that Schopenhauer does not misunderstand Kant, but rather adds his own twist to Kant’s critique of aesthetic judgment, where disinterestedness is still a condition of the cognition of the beautiful, but where one is *interested* in cognizing beauty – one is interested in becoming disinterested – thus not misunderstanding Kant but instead psychologizing him and disagreeing with the point that one can cognize beauty, or entertain the pleasure of the feeling of the beautiful, from a disinterested ground.

as interested, and yet speaks of the disinterestedness in the contemplation of, or reflection upon, beauty as the subject's becoming a "*pure, will-less subject of knowledge*."<sup>572</sup> In other words, Schopenhauer's subject is *interested in being disinterested*.<sup>573</sup>

A significant difference between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, one that essentially motivates their distinct pessimisms, concerns desire. Nietzsche regards desire *qua* deprivation as indicative of a slave spirit, one who *desires* because one *lacks*. Desire in this sense is relentless, as Schopenhauer points out, and fosters an endless cycle of trying to attain the unattainable: complete satisfaction.

Schopenhauer writes:

All willing springs from lack, from deficiency, and thus from suffering. Fulfillment brings this to an end; yet for one wish that is fulfilled there remain at least ten that are denied. ... Therefore, ... so long as we are given up to the throng of desires with its constant hopes and fears, so long as we are the subject of willing, we never obtain lasting happiness or peace.<sup>574</sup>

For Schopenhauer, it appears that what one should want more than anything, the impetus of all desire is a cessation of all desire, such that one can only "rest in peace."<sup>575</sup>

Nietzsche, however, regards strong spirits as those who do not *lack* anything, but instead are overflowing with energy. In fact, in line with entropy in an open

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<sup>572</sup> Schopenhauer, WWR I pg. 195

<sup>573</sup> Some have asserted that this is a contradiction. Rather, I think it isn't, but is instead an assertion much like that of the 'death drive' as it is at times (erroneously) regarded as a desire to die.

<sup>574</sup> Schopenhauer, WWR I, pg. 196

<sup>575</sup> I'm purposefully alluding to death

system, Nietzsche regards nature in general as exemplifying a surplus of energy. I think a good way to describe this is by referencing drive theory, where drives are said to press towards discharge. In consciousness, this might express itself as a desire *for* that with which the drive has cathected, and implies the deprivation *of* that. But in actuality, underneath this conscious experience, one is driven to *discharge* an *excess*, and one does so *through* objects in the world. The slave spirit mistakenly endeavors to appropriate things of the world to quiet the unrelenting pressure, or ascetically renounces desire altogether, while Nietzsche observes another possibility for those of an opposite orientation: to incorporate objects of experience as vehicles through which one can discharge that energy, an operation that is more aligned with nature because it isn't warped by conscious reflection on deprivations.<sup>576</sup> Cox observes "On the face of it, will to power would seem to be the drive to *acquire* power; yet ... it essentially concerns the *expenditure* ('discharge', 'sacrifice', 'overflow and squandering') of power, 'even to the point of absurdity'."<sup>577</sup> And if the will to power were actually a desire *for* power, Cox observes that Nietzsche would be merely substituting "one superfluous teleological principle" for another. And another interesting point made by Cox that cannot be emphasized enough is: a "desire (*for* power) would seem to signify a fundamental lack (*of* power)," felt as distress or impotence, "which, however, ... Nietzsche repeatedly denies is the basic condition of nature."<sup>578</sup> And in this sense, Nietzsche's notion of

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<sup>576</sup> I owe Miguel de Beistegui for highlighting this nuance of desire when taking one of his courses on Bioethics

<sup>577</sup> Cox, *Nietzsche Naturalism and Interpretation*, pg. 230

<sup>578</sup> Cox, *Nietzsche Naturalism and Interpretation*, pg. 230

‘will to power’ is more fundamental than Freud’s notion of *Bemächtigungstrieb* which *does* imply a will to dominate and a lack of power.

Schopenhauer, Nietzsche observes, equates the disinterestedness of aesthetic contemplation with the Epicurean notion of *ataraxia* (the Hellenistic equivalent of *Nirvana*). ““This is the painless condition which Epicurus praises as the greatest good and as the condition of the gods; we are, for that moment, relieved of the base craving of the will, we celebrate the Sabbath from the penal servitude of volition, the wheel of Ixion stands still’.”<sup>579</sup> Nietzsche continues, “Schopenhauer described one effect of beauty, that of calming the will.”<sup>580</sup> And then juxtaposing Schopenhauer and Stendhal, as well as Schopenhauer and Kant (implicitly), Nietzsche asserts: “Stendhal, no less a sensualist than Schopenhauer, ... emphasizes another effect of beauty: ‘beauty *promises* happiness’,” so that it is:

... precisely the *excitement of the will* (‘of interest’) through beauty. And could we not, finally, accuse Schopenhauer himself of thinking quite erroneously, that in this he was following Kant, and object that he did not understand the Kantian definition of beauty in a Kantian way at all – that beauty pleased him, too, out of ‘interest’, in fact, out of the strongest, most personal interest possible: that of the tortured person who frees himself from his torture?<sup>581</sup>

What Nietzsche observes are *two different beauties*: one that ‘quiets the will’ (as in the case of Schopenhauer); and one that stimulates it (as in the case of Stendhal). I believe this should also be studied along with where Nietzsche contrasts two kinds

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<sup>579</sup> Schopenhauer, WWR I pg. 231, qtd. by Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §6

<sup>580</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §6

<sup>581</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §6

of pleasures and two kinds of displeasures. He writes, “There exists (a) displeasure as a means of stimulating the increase of power, and (b) displeasure following an over-expenditure of power,” the latter leaving one exhausted and in need of sleep.<sup>582</sup> And where pleasure is a conscious feeling of an increase of power, Nietzsche has thus articulated a bifurcation in the capacity to feel pleasure or displeasure according to one’s psychical constitution, health, or strength. He writes further:

The great confusion on the part of psychologists consisted in not distinguishing between these two kinds of pleasure – that of falling asleep and that of victory. The exhausted want rest, relaxation, peace, calm – the happiness of the nihilistic religions and philosophies; and living want victory, opponents overcome, the overflow of the feeling of power across wider domains than hitherto. All healthy functions of the organism have this need – and the whole organism is such a complex of systems struggling for an increase of the feeling of power.<sup>583</sup>

Indeed, Freud mostly regarded pleasure in a Schopenhauerian sense, an analgesic for existence associated with a *quantitative* diminution of energy (although, especially in the *Economic Problem of Masochism*, and thus after the introduction of the death drive, he came to recognize an important *qualitative* aspect to pleasure that is sometimes in contradistinction to the *quantitative* aspect). Looking back at Kant’s definition of pleasure then, as the attainment of an aim [*Absicht*], beauty is presented to a weak spirit as the attainment of quietness – restfulness; to a strong

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<sup>582</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §703

<sup>583</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §703

spirit as the increase of power.<sup>584</sup> Schopenhauer sees the cognition of the beautiful as finding satisfaction in disinterestedness – as being *interested* in disinterestedness; “He wants *to free himself from torture*,”<sup>585</sup> Nietzsche writes. It is a mere negative liberation.

Furthermore, Nietzsche writes in *The Genealogy*, “One is tempted to ask if [Schopenhauer’s] fundamental conception of Will and Idea, the thought that there can only exist freedom from the ‘will’ by means of ‘idea,’ did not originate in a generalization from his sexual experience.”<sup>586</sup> In fact, and also quite in line with Freud’s own account of reaction-formation and the potency of sexual desire, Nietzsche writes that Schopenhauer’s aesthetic contemplation “simply counteracts sexual interest... he never gets tired of glorifying this escape from the ‘Life-Will’ as the great advantage and utility of the aesthetic state.”<sup>587</sup> Schopenhauer, it appears, sought to ‘escape’ his sexuality. He did so by repudiating it – by repressing it through reaction-formations – *reacting* against it with the help of the *formations* of ontotheological ideas. This is how one should regard aesthetic interest and disinterest in Schopenhauer. He advocates the secondary interest of disinterestedness after first repudiating the primary interest of his sexuality.

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<sup>584</sup> These are not entirely exclusive, however, for the weak spirits ‘quietness’ is also a feeling of ‘mastery’ – an ascetic mastery of the will; and the strong spirit’s stimulation is, in the *grand style* (as will be observed below) indicative of ‘calm’. The importance, I believe, is in the constitution and orientation that determines the valuations.

<sup>585</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §6

<sup>586</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, pg.132

<sup>587</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, pg. 132

## The *Unheimlich* Aesthetics of Psychoanalysis

In what follows, I want to discuss Freud's most profound contribution to aesthetics, which concerns 'The Uncanny'. My aim here is to show in what way Freud regarded aesthetic valuations as deeply interested, but also as results of defensive operations that I have been demonstrating were at play in Kant and Schopenhauer's philosophy. But a few words must first be said on what is ugly and horrific.

What is judged as Beautiful, for Kant, entails the *form of purposiveness* in the free play of the understanding and the imagination. Nietzsche has sufficiently criticized the 'free play' and disinterestedness involved in the judgment, but has shown that the 'form of purposiveness' can be thought of as an illusion generated by the will to power, in the same sense that biologists might refer to a characteristic of a species as being *for* something and thus selected in evolution. But it isn't *for* anything, not originally; however, the description of that kind of purposiveness is at times unavoidable when retroductively explaining the acquisition of traits. In that same sense, one can speak of the 'purposiveness' of the will to power and therefore of the valuation of the beautiful in relation to the will to power. The ugly should be regarded as what is presented as *counter-purposive*, and yet unarousing. When Nietzsche writes, "The only thing ugly is a degenerating person," so that, "physiologically, everything weakens and depresses people,"<sup>588</sup> he is speaking from the perspective of a stronger spirit, one to whom the psychical constitution of the herd appears ugly because it is *counter-purposive* to a healthy spirit.

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<sup>588</sup> Nietzsche, TI "Skirmishes" §20



Kant writes, "Not every object that arouses fear is found sublime when we judge it aesthetically."<sup>589</sup> Objects that arouse fear but are unable to be incorporated harmoniously by reason and the imagination into the subject's experience are to be regarded as horrific only; that is, we are *afraid* of it, or reason does not provide an idea that can render what is unpleasant pleasurable. Psychologically, *horrific is that which threatens the ego and has not been repressed or disavowed and also has not been rendered amenable to the ego* (ideal). Where the subject is unable to harmoniously incorporate a *threatening* aesthetic experience, the subject feels horror and terror. The horrific arouses a 'fight or flight' response. It terrifies us. The horrifying is that in relation to which one is impotent to defend one's self or to otherwise make it amenable (thus rendering it pleasurable) whilst feeling threatened by it.

By contrast, the ugly is what one cannot make amenable to the ego but lacks that threatening character. To make the ugly or the horrific amenable, one must relate with it, must obtain a perspective, that finds in the ugly or the horrific the possibility of some satisfaction of the will to power or at the least what is not antagonistic to that satisfaction. A means of incorporating such might be giving it a place, seeing in it something "purposive," in one's existence. How one relates to what is initially perceived as ugly and horrific is, ultimately, the deciding factor for Nietzsche, and far more indicative of one's strength or weakness and degeneracy than feelings of aesthetic pleasure. But there are several means of doing so, most of which are egodystonic. For Nietzsche, the imperative is to be strong enough to

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<sup>589</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pg. 119

incorporate and render aesthetically pleasing all that is ugly or horrific by means that are egosyntonic.

Freud opens his 1919 essay “The ‘Uncanny’” – translated from the German *unheimlich* – literally ‘unhomely’ – writing, “Only rarely [does] a psychoanalyst feel impelled to investigate the subject of aesthetics, even when aesthetics is understood to mean not merely the theory of beauty, but the theory of the qualities of feeling.”<sup>590</sup> He further observes that the majority of ‘treatises on aesthetics’ of his time do not deal with the subject of the uncanny, and instead “concern themselves with what is beautiful, attractive and sublime – that is, with feelings of a positive nature.”<sup>591</sup> But these concerns do not, at least not directly, interest the psychoanalyst. The psychoanalyst, he writes, “works in other strata of mental life and has little to do with *subdued emotional impulses, which, inhibited in their aims ...* usually furnish the material for the study of aesthetics.”<sup>592</sup> In other words, the psychoanalyst concerns himself with the chthonic psychical impulses, vicissitudes, and content that give rise, indirectly, to the positive aesthetic feelings. Psychoanalysis aims at uncovering what a subject experiences as horrific or disgusting. According to Freud, what is felt to be beautiful is very much in a causal relation to a mechanism of defense such as reaction-formation.<sup>593</sup>

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<sup>590</sup> Freud, Uncanny, pg. 219

<sup>591</sup> Freud, Uncanny, pg. 219

<sup>592</sup> Freud, Uncanny, pg. 219 (italics mine). I mean to emphasize that Freud is implying that what is studied in aesthetics are ‘subdued’ drives and desires – impulses that have undergone transformation and been weakened, simplified, or subtracted from in order to produce what is studied in aesthetics. The same will be said by Nietzsche, later in this paper, regarding the ‘covering over’ by the Apollonian over the Dionysian in the *Birth of Tragedy*.

<sup>593</sup> See, for example, the discussion above of “cleanliness” and reaction-formation.

In the opening pages of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche is quick to describe the Apolline and the Dionysiac – “those *artistic drives of nature*”<sup>594</sup> – as a “duality” that, just as “reproduction depends on there being two sexes, ... exist side by side, mostly in open conflict, stimulating and provoking one another to give birth to ever-new, more vigorous offspring in whom they perpetuate the conflict inherent in the opposition between them.”<sup>595</sup> Nietzsche here claims that there is an inherent conflict between two separate drives. The characteristics between the Dionysiac and Apolline drives with Freud’s primary and secondary process, the death drive and Eros, respectively, are comparable. As previously mentioned, Freud himself states in *Beyond* that the views of psychoanalytic theory “Have from the very first been dualistic, and today they are even more definitely dualistic than before – now that we describe the opposition as being not between ego instincts and sex instincts but between life instincts and death instincts.”<sup>596</sup> Freud has intended, from the very beginning of psychoanalytic theory, to recognize an inherent, psychical conflict that is generated by a duality of drives, one in opposition to the other. Even when his duality appears to collapse, he stubbornly maintains a duality of drives underneath all psychical conflict, an opposition that is responsible for the productions of not only neuroses and psychoses but also the products of culture and civilization. A significant difference between the death drive and the Dionysiac, however, is that Nietzsche describes the Dionysiac as entailing a “lust for life,”<sup>597</sup> which would stand

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<sup>594</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, § 2, pg. 19

<sup>595</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, § 1, pg. 14

<sup>596</sup> Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, ed. Strachey, pg. 53 I am *not* here claiming that the primary and secondary process is a duality.

<sup>597</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, § 1. Pg. 17

directly opposed to how Freud presents the death drive. Instead, the Dionysiac would appear to take on the qualities of the sex drives – *to be distinguished from the ego instincts* – which would risk the individual for the acquisition of their aim but are nonetheless characterized by a lust for living. The Dionysian, rather, is already those bits of the death drive worked over by Eros appearing in Freud as *Bemächtigungstrieb*. Apollo, for Freud, would instead be a reaction-formation against the Dionysian; it isn't really a *drive* but a *vicissitude*.

The characteristics of Nietzsche's two drives presents the Apolline as: "an image-maker or sculptor",<sup>598</sup> an "image of the *principium individuationis*"<sup>599</sup> – a description that Nietzsche acquires from Schopenhauer – and also as possessing the "Beauty of 'semblance'".<sup>600</sup> In other words, the Apolline is presented as a drive to establish order and difference or individuality and is accredited with images and the semblance of beauty. This is quite characteristic of Freud's homeostatic drive Eros that similarly creates order and is associated with the differentiating- and symbolizing- secondary (or tertiary) processes. The Dionysiac drive, on the other hand, is characterized by Nietzsche as entailing an "enormous *horror* which seizes people" when they lose faith in the phenomenal world of appearances – appearances being the constructions of Apollo (Nietzsche) and Eros (Freud). In addition to this, Nietzsche writes, "These Dionysiac stirrings, ... as they grow in intensity, cause subjectivity to vanish to the point of complete self-forgetting."<sup>601</sup>

Nietzsche writes further that the "breakdown of the *principium individuationis*"

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<sup>598</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, § 1, pg. 14

<sup>599</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, § 1, pg. 17

<sup>600</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, § 1, pg. 17

<sup>601</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, § 1. Pg. 17

characteristic of the Apolline adds “to this horror the blissful ecstasy which arises from the innermost ground of man, indeed nature itself.”<sup>602</sup> Freud does speak of the psychical conflict as begetting neuroses or “madness”, and that psychical breakdown can entail feelings of “intoxication, self-absorption and ecstasy.”<sup>603</sup> In fact, this is related to the hysterical symptoms that present themselves when repressions fail, such as how Nietzsche characterizes the religious sublime and Wagnerian (or nationalist) art. A proper synthesis of the theory would render the Dionysian the expression of the primary process and the Apollonian the expression of the *vicissitudes*, rather than the *drives*, that occur under the ‘object’ relations of Eros. And where Apollo opposes the Dionysian, and is associated with beauty, it is clearly a reaction-formation against the Dionysian.

What is the relation between beauty and drives or desires? In a sense, the beautiful functions much like the censorship of the preconscious such that the real *aim* of a wish will be symbolized by some refraction of itself in association – like a cigar for a penis – in which case, the beautiful manifests itself as something that both reveals and conceals a drive or desire. Freud describes the enjoyment of art as “compensation for human wishes,”<sup>604</sup> or again as “an activity intended to allay ungratified wishes – in the first place in the creative artist himself and subsequently in his audience or spectators. The motive forces of artists are the same conflicts which drive other people into neurosis and have encouraged society to construct its

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<sup>602</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, § 1. Pg. 17

<sup>603</sup> Freud, *Humour*, pg. 163

<sup>604</sup> Freud, “The Claims of Psychoanalysis to Scientific Interest,” pg. 188

institutions.”<sup>605</sup> He thus situates what is aesthetically pleasing on the plane of egodystonic vicissitudes, which repudiate stimuli and obtain a compromise satisfaction through disavowals or repressions.

Recalling the previous discussions of Leonardo and the vicissitudes, it appears that Freud has in mind reaction-formations, or at the least ‘sublimations through reaction-formations’. “Art constitutes a region half-way between a reality which frustrates wishes and the wish-fulfilling world of the imagination – a region in which, as it were, primitive man’s strivings for omnipotence are still in full force.”<sup>606</sup> Art thus seems to be involved in reestablishing a ‘lost unity’ of sorts relinquished as the ego<sup>607</sup> formed through the disillusionments from primary narcissism. The artist “represents his most personal wishful fantasies as fulfilled,” but what is most characteristic of a work of art is that it has “undergone a transformation which softens what is offensive in them.”<sup>608</sup> Art, for Freud, satisfies the artists’ fantasies, apparently towards the reacquisition of that lost feeling of omnipotence and a kind of regression to primary narcissism, and it achieves this aim through *disavowals* or *reaction-formations* against those aspects that are ‘offensive’ or threatening to the subject.

Many of the romantics were discussing the uncanny, and often likened it to the Sublime as depicted by Burke and Kant, or even saw the Uncanny as being an integral ingredient to the Sublime. Despite claiming that it is a topic little

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<sup>605</sup> Freud, “The Claims of Psychoanalysis to Scientific Interest,” pg. 187

<sup>606</sup> Freud, “The Claims of Psychoanalysis to Scientific Interest,” pg. 188

<sup>607</sup> Although I use the term “ego,” I’d like to remind the reader that there is no ego, but only an ego ideal, as I briefly articulated at the end of the chapter on the terminology “egodystonic” and “egosyntonic.”

<sup>608</sup> Freud, “The Claims of Psychoanalysis to Scientific Interest,” pg. 187

addressed,<sup>609</sup> Freud's main argument hinges upon a definition of the Uncanny given by Schelling. He writes, "We notice that Schelling says something which throws quite a new light on the concept of the *Unheimlich*. ... According to him, everything is *unheimlich* that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light."<sup>610</sup> What strikes Freud about this definition is the "*uncanny*" resemblance this definition has to Freud's own recognition of the mechanism of repression.

Freud goes on to explicitly state the 'rule' of what is felt to be uncanny. He writes, "The uncanny is something which is secretly familiar, which has undergone repression and then returned from it, and ... everything that is uncanny fulfills this condition."<sup>611</sup> On the other hand, Freud observes, "Not everything that recalls repressed desires and surmounted modes of thinking ... is on that account uncanny."<sup>612</sup> In other words, everything uncanny involves the return of the repressed, but not every return of the repressed is experienced as uncanny. Freud further on notes, "What is '*heimlich*' ... comes to be '*unheimlich*'."<sup>613</sup> In other words, what was once familiar has become unfamiliar and is thereafter, in its presentation, felt to be 'uncanny'.

Freud writes, "The feeling of something uncanny is directly attached to the figure of the Sand-Man,"<sup>614</sup> with which Freud relates to a destructive drive. Freud also finds the uncanny in Shakespearean tragedy, such as *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, among others, where there is at times almost an explicitly mentioned desire to die, a

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<sup>609</sup> Freud, *The Uncanny*, pg. 219

<sup>610</sup> Freud, *The Uncanny*, pg. 225

<sup>611</sup> Freud, *The Uncanny*, pg. 245

<sup>612</sup> Freud, *The Uncanny*, pg. 245

<sup>613</sup> Freud, *The Uncanny*, pg. 224

<sup>614</sup> Freud, *The Uncanny*, pg. 230

desire that is at least implicit in the question of why one should go on living. The uncanny immediately becomes associated with a desire to die. This is remarkable because the publication of this work preceded the publication of *Beyond* where he explicitly introduces the death drive. Freud also begins to introduce the repetition compulsion in *The Uncanny* as well, although he does not deal with the subject directly here. Freud writes, "This phenomenon [of repetition] does undoubtedly ... arouse an uncanny feeling, which, furthermore, recalls the sense of helplessness experienced in some dream-states."<sup>615</sup> And again, Freud observes:

It is possible to recognize the dominance in the unconscious mind of a 'compulsion to repeat' proceeding from the instinctual impulses and probably inherent in the very nature of the instincts – a compulsion powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle, lending to certain aspects of the mind their daemonic character ... which is responsible for a part of the course taken by the analyses of neurotic patients. ... Whatever reminds us of this inner 'compulsion to repeat' is perceived as uncanny.<sup>616</sup>

Of significance to the previous discussion of the repetition compulsion as it appears in *Beyond*, Freud remarks here that the uncanny is experienced as a return of repressed content, and it involves a repetition that is perceived as uncanny. He writes, "If psychoanalytic theory is correct in maintaining that every affect belonging to an emotional impulse ... is transformed, if it is repressed, ... then among instances of frightening things there must be one class in which the frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which *recurs*."<sup>617</sup> Recognizing that

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<sup>615</sup> Freud, *The Uncanny*, pg. 237

<sup>616</sup> Freud, *The Uncanny*, pg. 238

<sup>617</sup> Freud, *The Uncanny*, pg. 241



there is something familiar with much that is experienced as unfamiliar – something *heimlich* in much that is experienced as *unheimlich* – Freud continues:

this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression. This ... enables us, furthermore, to understand Schelling's definition of the uncanny as something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light.<sup>618</sup>

It is, one might say in Nietzschean terms, the Dionysian motivational states breaking through the reaction-formations of Apollo, or neurotic symptoms permeating the Apollonian defenses.

Freud also recognizes the uncanny in what he refers to as the “omnipotence of thought” and “magical thinking,” which can be regarded in relation to the original narcissistic position. He writes of the “Over-accentuation of psychical reality in comparison with material reality – a feature closely allied to the belief in the omnipotence of thoughts.”<sup>619</sup> In other words, it is very much in line with magical thinking, also referred to by analysts and theoreticians<sup>620</sup> as primary process thinking – or paleological thinking. Freud elaborates on this point, “An uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes, and so on.”<sup>621</sup> The conflation of the symbol with the symbolized,

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<sup>618</sup> Freud, *The Uncanny*, pg. 241

<sup>619</sup> Freud, *Uncanny*, pg. 244

<sup>620</sup> See, for example, Arieti and Loewald.

<sup>621</sup> Freud, *Uncanny*, pg. 244

magical thinking and omnipotence of thought, and a psychotic position of living in psychical reality over and beyond a material reality, all are manifestations of what is uncanny. Freud writes, “We – or our primitive forefathers – once believed that these possibilities were realities, and were convinced that they actually happened. Nowadays we no longer believe in them, we have *surmounted* these modes of thought; but ... the old ones still exist within us ready to seize upon any confirmation.”<sup>622</sup> In the same sense, the Apollonian has *surmounted* the Dionysian in civilization and cultural products.

The “Oceanic feeling” analyzed by Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents* years later is an uncanny return – a glimmering possibility of confirmation – of that original narcissistic position. The “omnipotence of thought” is directly related to the drive for mastery, *Bemächtigungstrieb*, whereas magical thinking entertains the illusion that one indeed has complete mastery *over* the world. “What is involved,” Freud writes, “is an actual repression of some content of thought and a return of this repressed content, not a cessation of *belief in the reality* of such content.”<sup>623</sup> In other words, the feeling of the Uncanny emerges from the encounter with content that had at one time been repressed in the effort to maintain a particular (or generalized) illusion of mastery. It should be noted, however, that this distinction might not describe what is necessary for the feeling of the uncanny for the presentation in reality<sup>624</sup> of what one had since rejected entering into the secondary process could

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<sup>622</sup> Freud, Uncanny, pg. 247

<sup>623</sup> Freud, Uncanny, pg. 249

<sup>624</sup> To an extent, what is regarded as physical reality is, in a Kantian sense, always actually psychical reality, where the mind creates – or allows for – a presentation of the manifold.

still be felt as uncanny. But where the Uncanny does present itself, there is yet a place that was kept for its inclusion, a potential re-emergence, and therefore Freud remarks that it was more repressed than it was removed from the mind as a possibility.

The Uncanny, to distinguish it from the horrific and the ugly, should be regarded as what is simultaneously *purposive and counter-purposive*. This is perhaps why it has been associated with the sublime. It might entail either the ugly or the horrific, or entail neither but instead a kind of 'je ne sais quoi'. Central to the 'uncanny' is the *return of the repressed*, so that it is *purposive* in that it is very much *at home* as a part of one's nature, but is *counter-purposive*, however, because it has been repudiated via 'Apollonian' constructs, counter-cathexes of reaction-formations, or so on.

To understand beauty from this discussion, and in accordance with the thinking of Kant, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Freud, we can characterize aesthetic feelings thus: *Beauty* is that which is felt to be *heimlich*, and all that is not heimlich is felt to be *unheimlich* in some fashion, but unlike the uncanny lacks the history of *heimlichkeit*. The horrific is felt as something that *threatens heimlichkeit*, the ugly as something disagreeable but mostly unarousing by contrast to the horrific. It is merely incompatible with what is *heimlich*, but doesn't threaten it. I think the sublime can be best characterized as homesickness. Where beauty involves a feeling of being at home, the sublime involves an implicit recognition that one is *heimatlos*<sup>625</sup> while yearning for a home, and importantly correlated with a hope,

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<sup>625</sup> homeless

fantasy, or promise of a home. Indeed, it is for those who call themselves “homeless” that Nietzsche “commend[s his] secret wisdom and *gaya scienza*.”<sup>626</sup> Looking at the above discussion of purposiveness and counter-purposiveness, a simultaneous feeling common to both the uncanny and to sublimity, the one seems to be opposite the other. For the Uncanny, what was purposive has become counter-purposive. For the sublime, one tries to make what is counter-purposive purposive. But this does leave the possibility as well of rendering the uncanny sublime if there is inspiration to make what is counter-purposive in the uncanny purposive once more.

## Sublimity & Hysteria

The feeling of the sublime is most closely associated with Panksepp’s observations concerning the SEEKING system described previously. But as also observed previously, people will ‘seek’ along various vicissitudes, such that there is a bifurcation of paths by which one might discover – or even more appropriately, create – home. The bifurcation occurs through either egodystonic or egosyntonic paths, so that what is envisioned as home, and the path one takes there, is different according to one’s psychical constitution.

In what follows, I discuss how sublimity features in Nietzsche’s work, as it is an integral aspect of the Dionysian and thus of his entire philosophy. Specifically, I examine the bifurcation of aesthetic values between strong and weak spirits. In my opinion, Keith Ansell-Pearson demonstrates considerable insight in focusing on the

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<sup>626</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, V §377

sublime in the middle period, for this was in fact the period in which Nietzsche's views towards the sublime – reasons for its condemnation in some contexts, and valorizations in others – are generally formed.<sup>627</sup> Ansell-Pearson observes, “[*Daybreak*] is an unduly neglected text in Nietzsche's corpus,”<sup>628</sup> and he endeavors to show that “Nietzsche here commits himself to fashioning new sublimities of philosophy, including our appreciation of the beautiful.”<sup>629</sup> *Daybreak* is a book largely focused on the overcoming of, or elimination of, religious and metaphysical beliefs in addition to moralities and customs that influenced such beliefs or resulted from them. It is a book opposed to the ‘prejudices’ of civilization. Ansell-Pearson writes, “Here, Nietzsche's concern is with a transitional humanity that is moving from a heritage of religions and moralities to something new, in fact, to uncharted conditions of existence.”<sup>630</sup> Ansell-Pearson illustrates convincingly that, around the time of *Daybreak*, “Nietzsche is in search of new possibilities for the sublime as a concept and an experience.”<sup>631</sup> This is congruent with what will consequently be

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<sup>627</sup> Any reader who looks to understand the sublime as it functions in the works of Nietzsche cannot overlook Keith Ansell-Pearson's paper “Nietzsche, the Sublime, and the Sublimities of Philosophy.” In it, Ansell-Pearson masterfully focuses his attention on a period of Nietzsche's career in which Nietzsche's views of the sublime are undergoing a significant change that will remain roughly consistent until the end of his career. In addition, Ansell-Pearson also draws attention to the relationship of what is being worked out in the middle period concerning the sublime with what had preceded it and what will follow it.

<sup>628</sup> Thanks to work by Ansell-Pearson, it is becoming significantly less neglected.

<sup>629</sup> Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche, the Sublime*, pg. 203

<sup>630</sup> Ansell-Pearson, “Nietzsche, the Sublime, ...” pg. 205

<sup>631</sup> Ansell-Pearson, “Nietzsche, the Sublime, ...” pg. 202

argued, concerning a bifurcation of the aesthetics of reflection. The bifurcation will serve to undo the superficial impression of a contradiction.<sup>632</sup>

Ansell-Pearson observes, “what troubles Nietzsche about the sublime is made explicit in his late text, *The Case of Wagner*,” where he criticizes the construction of the hinter-worldly and transcendence exemplified in Wagner’s operas.<sup>633</sup> This was, however, also evident in *Human*. Ansell-Pearson argues that Nietzsche “sets himself in opposition to this dependence on the sublime ... in the name of a certain rationalism. It is ‘rationalism’ that defines Nietzsche’s philosophical position in both his middle and late periods. The appeal to reason and principles of rationality is strong in [*Daybreak*] and informs his criticism of Wagner.”<sup>634</sup> I think Ansell-Pearson is correct insofar as Nietzsche venerates the

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<sup>632</sup> Ansell-Pearson claims that there are three different phases in Nietzsche’s ‘intellectual development’ pertaining to the sublime. The first, which we can associate with *The Birth of Tragedy*, “... he writes as an advocate of the sublime as that which we need to hold onto; in his middle period ... he adopts a more sober attitude toward the sublime; and in his late writings he is highly critical of our attraction to the sublime and warns against it (for example, the case of Wagner’s music”. (Nietzsche, the Sublime, pp. 203-204). I think Ansell-Pearson is on the right track regarding the evolution of Nietzsche’s thought concerning the sublime, but I also think it’s not quite as simple as this. In the middle period, Nietzsche is originally quite critical of the Sublime, asserting a need for people to ‘cool down’. This is not merely a sober view, but is a warning against the attraction of the sublime which is how Ansell-Pearson characterizes Nietzsche’s later works. Furthermore, Ansell-Pearson is correct that Nietzsche continues to warn against the sublime that he sees apparent in religions or in arts, of which Wagner is a consistent example. However, in the later period, Nietzsche also valorizes Dionysian *Rausch*, which can only be interpreted as the sublime. For Nietzsche, Ansell-Pearson observes, the sublime becomes “a matter of purifying ourselves of the origins and sources of our feelings and desire for the sublime because the higher feelings associated with it are bound up with humanity’s investment in an imaginary world: an ‘exalted humanity’ is full of self-loathing and this needs to be conquered” (Nietzsche, the Sublime, pg. 202).

<sup>633</sup> Ansell-Pearson, “Nietzsche, the Sublime...” pg. 231

<sup>634</sup> Ansell-Pearson, “Nietzsche, the Sublime...” pg. 231

release from unhealthy illusions that honest, scientific and rational research, for example, provides. But I must also emphasize that one should not place too much emphasis on rationality in Nietzsche as a distinguishing factor, for rationality can also deceive, as with rationalization, or be too removed from life, as with intellectualization.<sup>635</sup>

Ansell-Pearson writes that, for Nietzsche, “The new sublime” and “including the sublimities of philosophy, is bound up with a new comportment toward existence as it now concerns us as searches of knowledge, and a new fearlessness is required as we embark on this search free of ‘the prejudices of morality.’”<sup>636</sup> Ansell-Pearson is emphasizing the rational, scientific aspect of *der Freigeist*, and this is appropriate as it is science and rational thought that allow for that freedom by instigating disillusionment. However, one cannot move into the future as merely a scientist or seeker of knowledge (which, for Nietzsche, can only be negative); one must be an artist too in creating the knowledge one seeks. It is as a *creative* being that one can move on to new horizons, and it is the creativity coupled with rationality that provides the possibilities of health at these horizons.

Matthew Rampley observes, “While Nietzsche criticizes systematic thinking for its dishonesty, the constant focus of his relentless tirades against Wagner is the

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<sup>635</sup> Unfortunately, there isn’t the space to address this issue here, but I believe Nietzsche is as much of an ‘irrationalist’ as Schopenhauer or Freud. And common approaches, such as Kaufmann’s, that suppose *reason* is responsible for over-comings “smells offensively Hegelian” (to use Nietzsche’s phrase from EH). ‘Reason’, or rationality, does not operate independently of the irrational will to power, but is an expression of such an irrational principle. What makes it valuable is instead, as with everything else, the psychical, constitutional underpinning of reason that would increase or decrease the strength necessary for the honesty that is essential for disillusionment and over-comings.

<sup>636</sup> Ansell-Pearson, “Nietzsche, the Sublime...” pg. 206.

disorganization caused by his reduction of music to the micrological.”<sup>637</sup> For this reason, Nietzsche diagnoses Wagner the person, and especially Wagner the musician, as an hysteric. But this lack of organization isn’t necessarily an issue of rationality, but can be said to be an aesthetic concern. In this sense, Wagner characterizes precisely the sublime that Nietzsche criticizes consistently, and most acutely, in *Human* and later works. “Nietzsche regards ‘joy in uncertainty and polysemy’ as the sign of a strong spirit,” Rampley observes. But “Dissonance, contradiction and ambiguity are not ends in themselves, but rather strategic moves in the project of undermining the amnesiac illusions of metaphysics.”<sup>638</sup> In other words, Nietzsche favors the sublime insofar as it serves to expand the possibilities of becoming, and importantly insofar as it is not *merely* enjoyment in the destruction of order. This would never overcome nihilism; it would neither succeed in positing new values nor motivate one to fly out to new horizons. Nietzsche wants one to cease feeling at home among the rabble in the city and fly out to new horizons – not towards nothing, but towards new possibilities of home.

A bifurcation of sublime feelings might be conceptualized as follows: The religious (or ‘Wagnerian’), for example, *seek out* the *Rausch* of the sublime. The free spirit, on the other hand, more nobly is *open to Rausch* merely in being open to the ugliness or horrifying aspects of life. The task of the convalescent is not only to become open again to one’s nature, to allow the expression again of one’s drives, but to give style as well. In this sense, the convalescent is open to the sublime so as to make beautiful. By contrast, those of religious, or ‘Wagnerian’ or postmodernist

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<sup>637</sup> Rampley, *Nietzsche Aesthetics and Modernity*, pg. 238

<sup>638</sup> Rampley, *Nietzsche Aesthetics and Modernity*, pg. 238



seductions, may give a place for the beautiful, but generally for the task of producing sublime feelings of intoxication that serve as either analgesics (as in the case of Schopenhauer) or as stimulants where one lacks power and is exhausted (as in Nietzsche's frequent characterization of Wagner). The 'Wagnerian' 'beauty' – their 'home' – is necessarily something hinter-worldly, a schizoid fantasy, or something of an imagined past about which they feel nostalgic.<sup>639</sup>

I think Ansell-Pearson is correct with his assertion that here "Nietzsche is inviting us to replace the sublime dream of immortality" – which we can take to signify the sublime of the hinter-worldly and Wagnerian intoxications – "with a new sobriety toward existence."<sup>640</sup> This sobriety was first suggested in *Human* when Nietzsche writes of a need to 'cool down', which science provides.<sup>641</sup> The same sentiment in *Human* is again echoed in *Daybreak*, where Nietzsche writes, "It is a sad fact, but for the moment the man of science has to be suspicious of *all higher feelings*, so greatly are they nourished by delusion and nonsense. It is not that they are thus in themselves, or must always remain thus: but of all the gradual *purifications* awaiting mankind, the purification of the higher feelings will certainly be one of the most gradual."<sup>642</sup> And in *Human*, Nietzsche writes:

A church trembling with deep sounds; dull, regular, repressed calls from a company of priests who involuntarily transmit their tension to the congregation and excite them to listen almost in fear, as though a miracle were about to occur; the breath of the architecture, which, as the abode of a

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<sup>639</sup> See also Gemes, Ken, "Postmodernisms Use and Abuse of Nietzsche," on this point, which I address further on in discussions of beauty.

<sup>640</sup> Ansell-Pearson, "Nietzsche, the Sublime...", pg. 218

<sup>641</sup> See, for example, Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, 1.38, 1.81, & 1.38

<sup>642</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak* §33

divinity, reaches up into obscurity, in the dark spaces of which the divinity may at any moment make evident his dreaded presence.<sup>643</sup>

The religious sublime is such that weak or fettered spirits feel. And Nietzsche invites the speculation that it is in fact strength that is required for the giving of form and style, for incorporating reality, whereas the weak spirits subsist on the illusion of power that sublimity provides. Nietzsche writes, for example, “There is a unique consolation in affirming through one’s suffering a ‘profounder world of truth’ than any other world is, and one would much *rather* suffer and thereby feel oneself *exalted* above reality ... than be without suffering but also without this feeling that one is exalted.”<sup>644</sup> This passage in *Daybreak* is the same sentiment echoed in the *Genealogy* that one is not opposed to suffering so long as there is a supposed meaning or purpose to that suffering, in which case one will even desire suffering.<sup>645</sup>

Nietzsche writes that the decadent spirits no longer recognize pleasure as anything but intoxication: “The only pleasure they could still recognize was in the form of ecstasy and other precursors of madness.”<sup>646</sup> This ‘pure spirituality’ “has destroyed nervous energy with its excesses,” and “has produced gloomy, tense and oppressed souls.”<sup>647</sup> This is what I refer to as the ‘religious sublime’. Nietzsche writes, alluding to the same heated, ecstatic feelings in *Human*, “How repulsive enjoyment is to us now... The theatrical cry of passion now hurts our ears; that who

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<sup>643</sup> Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, I, § 130

<sup>644</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, §32

<sup>645</sup> See, for example, Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §28

<sup>646</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, §39

<sup>647</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak* §39

romantic uproar and tumult of the senses that is loved by educated mob together with its aspirations towards the sublime, the elevated, the distorted, how foreign it has become to our taste!"<sup>648</sup> Nietzsche thus criticizes the haughty, romantic, and hinter-worldly feelings that he sees epitomized by Wagner, religious fervor, and the growing political and revolutionary projects of Europe that are to become aligned with Nationalism and Socialism. These things cannot be enjoyed by free spirits, Nietzsche claims, because it is only through illness that the enjoyment of such things are possible. Free spirits have liberated themselves from the illness, and thus find such 'arts' repulsive. Society can no longer benefit from such art.

Indicative of the religious sublime – what Rampley refers to as reactive sublime – are feelings of intoxication and ecstasy reinforced, or caused by, delusions and repudiations of one's own nature. Nietzsche writes:

*Faith in Intoxication.* – Men who enjoy moments of exaltation and ecstasy and who ... are ordinarily in a wretched and miserable condition, regard these moments as their real 'self' and their wretchedness and misery as the *effect of what is 'outside the self'*; ... Mankind owes much that is bad to these inebriates: for they are insatiable sowers of the weeds of dissatisfaction with oneself and one's neighbor, of contempt for the age and the world, and especially of world-weariness. ... so mankind as a whole has been slowly and thoroughly ruined through the feelings made drunk by *spiritual* fire-waters and by those who have kept alive the desire for them: perhaps will go on to perish by them.<sup>649</sup>

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<sup>648</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, preface to second edition, § 4

<sup>649</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak* I § 50

The sublime, for such beings, would correspond with a weakness in one's constitution, whereby it is owing to the weakness(es) that one finds such fantasies or delusional beliefs intoxicating.

Furthermore, the intoxicating feelings are supposed to be cures for the ills of the world, instead of corresponding to what is unhealthy in man's relation to himself or the world. Nietzsche writes further: "The means which worked immediately, anaesthetizing and intoxicating, the so-called consolations, were ignorantly supposed to be actual cures; the fact was not even noticed, indeed, that these instantaneous alleviations often had to be paid for with a general and profound worsening of the complaint."<sup>650</sup> It is for this reason that Nietzsche proposes the therapeutic task of "calming the imagination of the invalid,"<sup>651</sup> because it is the imagination of the weak and ill spirits that are attached to the delusions and schizoid fantasies that spread their illness throughout the world.<sup>652</sup>

In "Hysteria and Histrionics," Gregory Moore observes a persistent concern of the modern era with the "degeneracy and hysteria" that people "saw plaguing the *fin de siècle*," of the nineteenth century. Creativity was often viewed as exemplifying

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<sup>650</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak* I §52

<sup>651</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak* I §54

<sup>652</sup> This, of course, foreshadows what Nietzsche writes of the ascetic priest as well. The ascetic priest merely offers an anaesthetic, treating the symptoms of the sick herd rather than curing them of their illnesses. The ascetic priest "Brings ointments and balms with him, of course; but first he has to wound so that he can be the doctor; and whilst he soothes the pain caused by the wound, *he poisons the wound at the same time* – for that is what he is best trained to do, this magician and tamer of beasts of prey, whose mere presence necessarily makes everything healthy sick, and everything sick, tame" (*Genealogy of Morality*, III §15).<sup>652</sup> And further... "The *alleviation* of suffering, 'consolation' of every kind, -- that is where his genius lies: how imaginatively he has understood his task as consoler" (*Genealogy of Morality*, III §17).<sup>652</sup> In a sense, Nietzsche is picturing Wagner as something like an Ascetic priest, the sick who make sick and provide an anaesthetic for the complaint.

such a “pathological origin,” and that this was repeating the same theme observed in Plato’s perspective of the “‘divine madness’ that is the well-spring of philosophical inspiration.”<sup>653</sup> But, he writes, it was “Not until the Romantic reaction against the Enlightenment ideal of the artist as the embodiment of reason, judgment and taste that widespread medical interest in the pathology of genius awakened in earnest.”<sup>654</sup> Moore observes that Charcot had used “hypnotic suggestion to induce or halt seizures, like the director of some macabre ballet” in front of large audiences. Furthermore, there appeared to be a similitude between the displays of ‘hysteria’ and “the stylized movements and gestures of the French Classical acting.”<sup>655</sup> This, Moore observes, was one reason why hysteria and histrionics had so captured the imagination in relation to art and theatrics in the modern era.<sup>656</sup>

In *Twilight*, Nietzsche makes a contrast between ‘Dionysian histrionics’ and hysteria. Moore observes that Nietzsche suggests, “The difference between the hysterical and the Dionysian artist lies predominantly in their respective states of health,” rather than “in the superficially similar forms of aesthetic intoxication which they experience.”<sup>657</sup> Both the hysteric and the histrionic Dionysian exemplify, for Nietzsche, a kind of ecstatic *Rauch*. Sublimity, we might infer according to Nietzsche’s analysis, can result from either an egosyntonic or egodystonic psychical constitution. The Sublime that he criticizes in *Human*, when he speaks of a need to ‘cool down’, is a sublimity felt in religious fervor, a symptom of egodystonic

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<sup>653</sup> Moore, “Hysteria and Histrionics,” pp. 246-247

<sup>654</sup> Moore, “Hysteria and Histrionics,” pg. 247

<sup>655</sup> Moore, “Hysteria and Histrionics,” pg. 253

<sup>656</sup> Moore, “Hysteria and Histrionics,” pg. 253

<sup>657</sup> Moore, “Hysteria and Histrionics,” pg. 265

vicissitudes that result from the release (or failures) of repressions or the delusions that result from disavowing a troubling reality. The sublime that reappears positively on the other hand, notably around the time of *Daybreak*, exemplifies the feelings of sublimity that Nietzsche enthusiastically praises as inspirations and incentives for free spirits to move beyond the sickness of the cities into future becomings.<sup>658</sup> Moore references a passage from *Twilight*:<sup>659</sup>

... In the Dionysian state, ... the entire system of affects is excited and intensified: so that it discharges all its modes of expression at once, releasing the force of presentation, imitation, transfiguration, transformation, and all types of mimicry and play acting, all at the same time. The essential thing is the ease of metamorphosis, the inability *not* to react (-- similar to certain hysterics who can take on *any* role at the drop of a hat). ... Music as we understand it today is also a total stimulation and discharge of the affects, just a *residuum* of Dionysian histrionics...<sup>660</sup>

An important aspect of the passage is the parenthetical note that it is *similar* to what hysterics exemplify; but, in saying it is similar, Nietzsche also observes a difference. He further speaks of the Dionysian as exemplifying histrionics. Moore asks, “what is the relation between hysteria and histrionics here?” and observes, “A recurrent theme in Nietzsche’s late writings is that there is a thin line separating health and sickness; that one state is frequently mistaken for the other.”<sup>661</sup> Moore further

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<sup>658</sup> see, for example, Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, §423

<sup>659</sup> The reference itself isn’t entirely sufficient because of its allusion to the *The Birth of Tragedy* in its discussion of the Apollonian and Dionysian

<sup>660</sup> Nietzsche, *TI Skirmishes*, §10. Moore only references the first half of what the portion I’ve cited. I have included the rest because of the important elements Moore omitted.

<sup>661</sup> Moore, “Hysteria and Histrionics,” pg. 260

observes that this is similar to the sense in which religious fervor might be confused with “potency experienced by strong, creative natures.”<sup>662</sup> The observance of this ‘thin line’ is also applicable in distinguishing kinds of self-mastery, where Nietzsche admires the mastery of which the convalescent is capable, but relentlessly criticizes the mastery of the ascetics for egodystonically repudiating their nature by repressing it. Nietzsche also claims that Modern music, implying the Wagnerian sort, is “a total stimulation and discharge of the affects, but it is only the remnant of a much fuller world of expressive affects, just a *residuum* of Dionysian histrionics.”<sup>663</sup> What makes it a mere ‘residuum’, I suggest, is the difference between unrepressed behavior – the Dionysian – and behavior resulting from the failures of repressions – hysteria. Hysteria is in a sense Dionysian, both entailing the ‘discharge of affect’, but is discharged in a way that is not only uncontrolled but quite uncontrollable, and it is always followed, after the discharge, by a return to the same repression from which it had emerged. In hysteria, there is a ‘return of the repressed’, as it were, and hence a residuum of what was repressed. Thus, hysteria is quite appropriately associated with *das unheimlich* as indicated above.

If we look at what psychoanalysis has brought to the table, and in conjunction with the preceding discussion of aesthetic feelings, we can differentiate hysteria and histrionics as being both feelings of sublimity – excitation and discharge in euphoric passion. Except, in the case of hysteria, the sublime feeling results from the discharge of a quota of affect that had been repressed, like a dog

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<sup>662</sup> Moore, “Hysteria and Histrionics,” pp. 260-261, he here references Nietzsche’s notes KSA 13[68]

<sup>663</sup> Nietzsche, TI “Skirmishes,” §10

being let off a leash. For the Dionysian, on the other hand, repression was not a prerequisite, and therefore its expression can only be a natural discharge unobstructed by egodystonic (inhibitory) vicissitudes. Or to formulate it differently, hysteria is *cathartic* and always returns in the end to exhaustion or the same repressions from which it emerged. The Dionysian, on the other hand, has the *potential* to be sublimated. In other words, as Moore writes, “The Dionysian artist only *appears* to exhibit the same symptoms as the hysteric.”<sup>664</sup> Moore quotes Nietzsche: “Wie man heute ‘Genie’ als eine Form der Neurose beurtheilen dürfte, so vielleicht auch die künstlerische Suggestion-Kraft, – und unsere Artisten sind in der That den hysterischen Weiblein nur zu verwandt!!! Das aber spricht gegen ‘heute’, und nicht gegen die ‘Künstler’.”<sup>665</sup> Nietzsche claims that Artists of his day were largely hysterical, but this is because of the *Zeitgeist* and *not* of the constitution of artists in general. Moore writes, “Hysterical and Dionysian frenzy represent different points on a continuum of human aesthetic experiences. The experience of intoxication, a heightened sensory awareness and extreme irritability are just as much the necessary preconditions for the production of art as they are symptoms of organic dysfunction.”<sup>666</sup> The hysteric artist, exemplified by Wagner according to Nietzsche, is in this way differentiated from the *Rauch* of the Dionysian.

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<sup>664</sup> Moore, “Hysteria and Histrionics,” pg. 261

<sup>665</sup> Moore, “Hysteria and Histrionics,” pg. 261, quoting Nietzsche, KSA 13, 14[119]. The German might read: “One might regard the ‘genius’ of today, as well as the artistic power of suggestion, as a form of neurosis – and such artists are in fact only related to hysterical little women!!! But this is an argument against ‘today’, not against the ‘artist’.” (my translation).

<sup>666</sup> Moore, “Hysteria and Histrionics,” pg. 261



If my reading is correct, what was Apollonian in *The Birth* is, afterwards, largely indicative of egodystonic vicissitudes such as of reaction-formations, schizoid fantasies that compensate for reality, or even psychotic delusions that paint over, and disavow, disturbing aspects of reality. But there are those convalescents who experience the Dionysian with a more egosyntonic constitution, however. This bifurcation is evident in the Case of Wagner, where Nietzsche writes of “Love, love that has been translated back into *nature*! *Not* the love of a ‘higher virgin’! No Senta-Sentimentality! But instead, love as fate, as *fatal*ity, cynical, innocent, cruel – and that is precisely what makes it *nature*!”<sup>667</sup> There is a love that has been ‘translated back into nature’ – a Dionysian love; and also a love that is unnatural, ‘Christian’, decadent, ascetic, and in opposition to nature. This is the bifurcation. Dionysian *Rausch* is a feeling of intoxication – of sublimity – that results from an egosyntonic orientation with the world. Hysteria and the ‘religious’ sublime, on the other hand, result from egodystonic orientations with the world.

## **A Bifurcation of Beauty**

Just as there is a bifurcation of sublimity, so too is there a bifurcation concerning beauty – a bifurcation that is itself responsible for a lot of the apparent inconsistencies in Nietzsche’s work, as will here be addressed. The reasons for these inconsistencies, which at times appear as strict contradictions, are two fold: First, they are the product of honesty. Just as the American president Thomas Jefferson once declared that it is in his inconsistencies that we know he is being

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<sup>667</sup> Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, §3

genuine, so it is with Nietzsche; he is inconsistent because he is being honest with his observations, thoughts, and feelings, rather than trying, at the expense of honesty, to *force* everything into an *unnatural* unity.<sup>668</sup> Secondly, and generally coupled with the first reason in the middle period, Nietzsche is experimenting with perspectives. Nietzsche feels that one of his strongest talents is the capacity to entertain varying, and at times conflicting, perspectives. The enthusiasm for discovering new perspectives and his disciplined honesty both result in apparent inconsistencies.

While some of the inconsistencies might be irreconcilable, the honesty in the experimentation allows for the possibility of retroductive reasoning that can render the inconsistencies consistent whilst nonetheless maintaining their perspectival integrity. This is quite apparent with respect to Nietzsche's engagement with aesthetic and ethical valuations, where what is important isn't so much the valuation or what is being valued, but instead *the reason for the valuation*, or rather, *its motivation*.

Above, I articulated the sublime as exemplifying a feeling of *heimatlos*, and the beautiful as exemplifying a feeling of *heimlichkeit*. So, I will begin with the sublime and some popular misunderstandings of Nietzsche in order to segue into a discussion of the beautiful. The sublime, Rampley observes, is "founded on the experience of internal dissonance."<sup>669</sup> This was true in Kant and Schopenhauer in the 'special effort' that is needed to render pleasurable what is at first felt as

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<sup>668</sup> That's not to say he doesn't want to construct a coherent whole; he does. But he will not sacrifice honesty for that coherence. Instead, he looks to create a coherence that is made possible through the disillusionment that such honesty provides.

<sup>669</sup> Rampley, *Nietzsche, Aesthetics, and Modernity* pg. 235

unpleasure. And this was a point emphasized by Lyotard, and is further observable in Nietzsche. Something that is commonly misunderstood is the idea of *Rauch* – intoxication – as it figures in Nietzsche’s aesthetics. Herbert Dreyfus, in his book *All Things Shinning*, supposes that Nietzsche privileged the ecstasy and sublime feelings of *Rausch* over that of the Beautiful. This is probably due to the attention that Nietzsche pays to notions of will to power and the Dionysian; the qualities of both of these would appear to be what draws one out of one’s self and fosters growth and expansion and strength, indeed feelings of power. However, as Ken Gemes correctly points out, this is a popular post-modern interpretation of Nietzsche that doesn’t really fit Nietzsche’s position. Nietzsche actually always values a kind of order, and only values *Rausch* insofar as it can be generative of that order. He never values intoxication or sublimity for its own sake.

Observing this post-modernist misunderstanding of the sublime in Nietzsche, Rampley writes, “For Lyotard the sublime is central to an understanding of both modern and post-modern culture; it underpins both, thus confirming their intrinsic affinity as well as underlying their difference.”<sup>670</sup> Rampley writes that one could include Nietzsche among various modernists identified by Lyotard,<sup>671</sup> and yet observes that the sublime of modernism “is founded on nostalgia; the unrepresentable remains as a palpable absence, a ‘missing contents’.”<sup>672</sup> Nietzsche’s philosophy, however, was not a nostalgic or melancholic philosophy as can be said of Schopenhauer’s. Gemes observes, “Nietzsche’s invocation of the notion of a unity

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<sup>670</sup> Rampley, *Nietzsche, Aesthetics, and Modernity*, pg. 235

<sup>671</sup> See Rampley, *Nietzsche, Aesthetics, and Modernity*, pg. 236

<sup>672</sup> Rampley, *Nietzsche, Aesthetics, and Modernity* pp. 236-237

never indulges in the nostalgic moment, the invocation of a lost purity.”<sup>673</sup> And this is true despite Nietzsche’s frequent and persistent gaze towards Ancient Greece. The health of human spirit that he claims was lost in the juxtaposition of humankind and nature – even man’s own nature – is not something to which we can, or should, return. Nietzsche writes in the *Gay Science*, “We conserve nothing neither do we want to return to any past periods.”<sup>674</sup> Nietzsche is rather, as Gemes accurately points out, a philosopher of the Future.<sup>675</sup>

In contrast to the nostalgia of the modern sublime, Rampley also writes, “The post-modern sublime is stripped of any such nostalgia and denies the imaginary solace of final reconciliation.”<sup>676</sup> In this sense, it would appear Nietzsche would fit more the post-modern, as it is consistent with both his lack of nostalgia as well as with the notion of *becoming*, of never reaching some completion. Against this, however, “the dissonance of the modernist sublime is sustained by the promise of ultimate solace,” but for the post-modernist there is a lack of resolution which is further “celebrated and figures as part of a much larger political aim of resisting the impulse towards totality,” where “the work of art” is “an irruptive event.”<sup>677</sup> For the post-modernist and contrary to the modernist, the sublime is identified as *Rauch* – as irruptive and intoxicating – and resists territorializing. It is essentially resistant

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<sup>673</sup> Gemes, “Postmodernism’s Use,” pg. 355

<sup>674</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §377, quoted by Gemes, “Postmodernism’s Use,” pg. 355

<sup>675</sup> See Gemes, Ken. “Post-Modernism’s Use and Abuse of Nietzsche” in which he successfully disentangles Nietzsche from a Nazi aesthetics.

<sup>676</sup> Rampley, *Nietzsche, Aesthetics, and Modernity*, pg. 237

<sup>677</sup> Rampley, *Nietzsche, Aesthetics, and Modernity*, pg. 237

to beauty.<sup>678</sup> Gemes observes, however, that postmodernists have overlooked the positive aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy in relation to the *Übermensch* and self-cultivation – the “positive construction of a new unified self.”<sup>679</sup> Nietzsche's philosophy is quite affirmative, and Nietzsche is adamant about the need to give form, style, and order. Regarding aesthetic feelings, *Beauty* is that order that is given to the disordered sublime, by ‘taming opposites’ and cultivating conflict into a harmonious whole. To prolong the above metaphor, beauty is a home bestowed on the homeless – we who are homeless are always creating our home. And the more conflict there is, the more there is to tame and the grander will be the product because more will have been incorporated into it.

Nietzsche privileges beauty, but he privileges beauty of *this* world, and nothing in this world can be static. Gemes observes, “Nietzsche is not content with mere chaos and unmastered discharges of affect. Nietzsche does not *only* negate all meaning in-itself, like the post-modernists, but is also affirmative, is a philosopher of the future who speaks of a need to give shape, and form, and meaning to existence.”<sup>680</sup> Nietzsche speaks of a need to ‘give style’. Nietzsche distinguishes two instances of the feelings of sublimity not according to some *aim* but instead according to one's psychical constitution. *Beauty* functions, rather than some distinct sublimity, as that which then unifies the Dionysian *Rausch* of sublimity. Beauty, for Nietzsche, is the ‘taming of opposites’, or the ‘taming’ or ordering of

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<sup>678</sup> I am reminded of a paper by Deleuze in which he discusses beauty as an ephemeral territory, a *house*, which is consistent with my metaphor of *heimlichkeit* above.

<sup>679</sup> Gemes, “Postmodernism's Use,” pg. 354

<sup>680</sup> Gemes, “Postmodernism's Use,” pg. 354

dissonance and disorder. Gemes writes, "The emphasis on Nietzsche's picture of the sublimated self as a coherent structure of sublimated drives under the dominance of the sublimating master drive may easily suggest a static notion of the self" – a "permanent harmony" of sorts between the drives.<sup>681</sup> But this is not the case. He observes, "Nietzsche rejected all such static notions on both descriptive and normative grounds. All life, or at least all healthy life, for Nietzsche involves overcoming and indeed self-overcoming."<sup>682</sup> Gemes suggests that the picture of sublimation in Nietzsche thus need not "transgress this Nietzsche dictum." And, as I hope to have shown already, the idea of a static harmony, or equilibrium, is actually *antithetical* to the notion of *sublimation*, and all static 'being' and notions of things are indicative of neurotic (egodystonic) orientations instead; that is, the very activity of sublimation necessarily entails constant disillusionment, mourning, grief (to be contrasted with melancholy), the undoing of repressions, and libidinal redistributions. *Reaction-formation* is actually responsible for the formation of 'stasis', or the attempts to make permanent. Even the *Übermensch*, an archetype of pure sublimation, can never acquire stasis; and, more importantly, would be repulsed by a static equilibrium. This is why, I suggest, Nietzsche has transformed the traditional view of beauty from something static, eternal, and formal into something *dynamic*.

Following the point about aesthetic interest made above, beauty can no longer be regarded as disinterested. Nietzsche regards beauty as Stendhal had defined it in his book, *Love*. Countering 'disinterestedness' with the aid of Stendhal,

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<sup>681</sup> Gemes, "Sublimation...", pp. 51-52

<sup>682</sup> Gemes, "Sublimation...", pg. 52

Nietzsche asserts that, on the contrary, Beauty is laden with interest: “Beauty is nothing but the promise of happiness.”<sup>683</sup> Nietzsche’s allusion to Stendhal here may also be very telling. Stendhal defines beauty in this way in a footnote to a passage where he describes how one is able to transform what is ugly into something beautiful through one’s *apperception* of it – the perception through a mode of relating that is often historically influenced. Stendhal describes a man who once loved a woman who had pockmarks. After the woman died, the man found more beautiful those women who also had pockmarks. So, Stendhal writes, “*Ugliness* even begins to be loved and given preference, because in this case it has become beauty.”<sup>684</sup> Stendhal thus expresses that beauty is a matter of perspective, constituted by one’s historical and possible socio-cultural paradigm, explaining in the footnote, “Beauty is only the promise of happiness. The happiness of a Greek differed from the happiness of a Frenchman in 1822,” continuing to justify the distinction with a comparison of the different appearances of women in art at those times.<sup>685</sup> And since their idea of happiness was different, so too was their valuation of beauty.

Stendhal also noted in a preceding footnote, “*Beauty* ... means the promise of a quality useful to my soul, and transcends physical attraction; the latter is only one particular kind.”<sup>686</sup> Beauty is more psychically than physically determined, hence why it ‘transcends’ physical attraction. But what is meant in ‘beauty’ here is not a *promise* of happiness, but as the *intimation* of that happiness – the result of engaging

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<sup>683</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, III §6 and repeated in *Ecce Homo*

<sup>684</sup> Stendhal, *Love*, pg. 66

<sup>685</sup> Stendhal, *Love*, pg. 66 fn. 1

<sup>686</sup> Stendhal, *Love*, pg. 59 fn. 1

the promise. Stendhal observes that it is improbable that men will agree on what is meant by 'love', and correspondingly, it is "improbable that they will agree about the meaning of the word 'beauty'," for, "The beauty a man discovers is a new capacity for arousing his pleasure, and since pleasures vary with the individual, each man's crystallization will be tinged with the color of his pleasures. ... [the] beauty [of the loved object] is nothing but the sum of the fulfillment of all the desires you have been able to formulate about her."<sup>687</sup> Interestingly, here, Beauty appears associated with the *happiness* – the fulfillment – rather than the *promise* of it. "Each new beauty," writes Stendhal, "gives us the complete fulfillment of a desire."<sup>688</sup> And again, "In passionate love, intimacy is not so much the perfect happiness, but the last step on the way to it."<sup>689</sup> Perhaps, where 'beauty is the promise of happiness', the sight of what is beautiful is the *thing* promised, but it awakens, in love, sublime, intoxicating feelings inspiring one towards what is promised.

As with the sublime, there is a bifurcation of beauty concerning one's psychical constitution and, as a result, a bifurcation of the *aim* the attainment of which is felt as pleasurable, or anticipated as pleasurable, and hence regarded as beautiful. I suggest that a proper way of viewing this bifurcation is with regard to interest, so that Kant and Schopenhauer's views should be regarded in their distinctive ways as egodystonic, as either supposing an intellectualized state of disinterest (in the case of Kant), or in seeking to acquire through aesthetic contemplation a state of disinterestedness, a schizoid escape from willing (in the

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<sup>687</sup> Stendhal, *Love* pg. 59

<sup>688</sup> Stendhal, *Love*, pg. 59

<sup>689</sup> Stendhal, *Love*, pg. 104



case of Schopenhauer), both of which would, in Nietzsche's terms, be regarded as repudiations of one's nature. Nietzsche, I argue, instead regards the beauty of healthy spirits to be dynamic and fluctuating (albeit enduring to a point in the 'grand style') and, importantly, *incorporative*.

Nietzsche writes, "*Beauty is certainly the goal of human sensual knowledge, it transfigures the world. Why do we chase after anything else? Why do we want to transcend our senses?*"<sup>690</sup> Why, in other words, is sensual knowledge devalued, from Plato on through Kant? Why does Kant look to the supersensuous? Rather, Kant was probably fighting a war against *his* perspective of ugliness that required him to neglect the senses and repudiate his inclinations. Kant could see "sensual knowledge" as beautiful only by subverting it to reasoning that is dissociated from the affective via the defense mechanism of intellectualization.

In a section of *The Will to Power* already mentioned regarding interest,<sup>691</sup> Nietzsche observes explicitly a bifurcation of Beauty as he writes on "the genesis of the *beautiful* and the *ugly*." I'll be referring to the *Nachlass* fragment subtitled "*Aesthetika*." He writes:

What is instinctively *repugnant* to us, aesthetically, is what the very longest experience has demonstrated to be harmful, dangerous, suspect to man: the aesthetic instinct which suddenly raises its voice (e.g., when we feel disgust) contains a *judgment*. To this extent, the *beautiful* belongs within the general category of the biological values of the useful, beneficent, life-intensifying; but in such a way that many stimuli which very distantly remind us of and are associated with useful things and states arouse in us the feeling of the

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<sup>690</sup> Nietzsche, *Unpublished Writings*, vol 11. Summer 1872-Early 1873 19[146]

<sup>691</sup> I will be referring to the passage in the late note-books, for the one in *Will to Power* appears edited significantly.

beautiful, i.e., of growth in the feeling of power (-- thus not just things, but also the feelings that accompany such things, or their symbols).

... The beautiful and the ugly are *conditional*; conditioned by our fundamental *values of preservation*. It's pointless to want to posit a beautiful and an ugly aside from that. *The* beautiful exists as little as does *the* good, *the* true. Each separate case is again a matter of the *conditions of preservation* for a particular kind of man: thus, *the value feeling of the beautiful will be aroused by different things for the man of the herd and for the exceptional and [Übermensch]*.

It is the perspective of the foreground, considering only the *most immediate consequences*, which gives rise to the value of the beautiful (also of the good, also of the true).<sup>692</sup>

Nietzsche notably addresses not only the *beautiful*, but *ugliness* and *disgust* as well, which is significant. Freud observes most philosophers tend only to focus on what is aesthetically pleasing (indicating an egodystonic constitution). The role of *disgust* also features significantly in ethics as will be discussed below.

Nietzsche claims that there is a beauty peculiar to the herd, and a beauty peculiar to the *Übermensch*. What is regarded as beautiful or ugly (or disgusting) is a matter of perspective. And that perspective is contingent, ultimately, on one's constitution. Weaker spirits of the herd will see and enjoy a beauty that the *Übermensch* would likely find ugly, and vice versa. For example, Nietzsche writes, "Christianity is based on the rancor of the sick, the instinct *against* the healthy, *against* health. Everything well-constituted, proud, high-spirited, beauty above all,

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<sup>692</sup> Nietzsche, Writings from the Late Notebooks, 10[167] autumn 1887

hurts their ears and eyes.”<sup>693</sup> Thus Nietzsche also speaks of a beauty that, in its health and vitality, offends the senses of the sick, Christian spirit and would be regarded by them as possibly repulsive. Beauty is psychological, pertaining to one’s constitution, to the vicissitudes of one’s drives.

Recalling what I mentioned previously concerning the understanding’s role ‘retarding’ the instinctive judgments, Nietzsche goes on to summarize:

1. the judgment of beauty is *short-sighted*, it only sees the most immediate consequences
2. it *heaps* upon the object stimulating it a *magic* conditioned by the association of many different judgments of beauty – *but which is quite alien to the nature of that object*

To experience a thing as beautiful necessarily means experiencing it wrongly...<sup>694</sup>

What Nietzsche means, I believe, is that beauty is an illusion (just as is ‘the good’ and ‘truth’). That is to say, beauty (as ‘the good’ and ‘truth’) is an *interpretation*.

Nothing is *in-itself* beautiful, and isn’t conditioned by the object as much as by the subject, so claiming an object is beautiful is to claim something ‘false’ about the object. But what is subjective about the valuation is not, rational and pertaining to *a priori* cognitive faculties, but is *irrational* and determined largely by motivational states – our instincts and drives. The key difference between what the weaker spirits regard as beautiful and what the *Übermensch* interprets thus is the *reason* for the judgment or interpretation: the psychical constitution of each ‘subject’ allows for

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<sup>693</sup> Nietzsche *The Anti-Christ*, §51

<sup>694</sup> Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, 10[167] autumn 1887

a particular perspective or interpretation owing to the constellations of past and present associations.

There is also an inescapable conflict concerning art as a cultural artifact. The conflict concerns the way in which humankind will look upon great works. Although the production itself might have been egosyntonic, and although it might in its greatness have succeeded in making precisely the ugly aspects of life beautiful, it's greatness can seduce one away from life and live in it nostalgically as delusion or fantasy. This is one form of *velleity*. There is furthermore a tendency for the herd, or the rabble, to conservatively seek to preserve what is beautiful, to resist change, to insist on 'being'. This is another form of *velleity*. Here, what is regarded as beautiful might have once been life-affirming but, because nothing *is*, it too must die. To seek to preserve what is beautiful, to make it permanent, is to disavow life, becoming, and appearance. For Freud, it opposes the very nature of beauty itself.<sup>695</sup> This is the kind of *velleity*, perhaps, that Nietzsche recognizes in Antiquarian orientations that romanticize the past or indicate nostalgia for it.<sup>696</sup>

Nietzsche writes that the weak spirits might "take *refuge* in the *beauty of form*," as do the 'artists of decadence.'<sup>697</sup> Exemplifying *velleity* of a spectator, "Love of beauty," Nietzsche writes, "can ... be something other than the *ability* to *see* the beautiful, *create* the beautiful; it can be an expression of the very *inability* to do so."<sup>698</sup> In other words, to love what is beautiful is possibly a symptom of an inability to *discover* or *create* what is beautiful; it is a symptom of weakness, and a desire to

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<sup>695</sup> See Freud on *Transience*

<sup>696</sup> See, for example, Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, "history"

<sup>697</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §852

<sup>698</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §852

see what is given to one as beautiful. In *Daybreak*, Nietzsche writes, “When someone subjects himself to [custom] completely, ... his organs of attack and defense – both bodily and spiritual – degenerate: that is to say, he grows increasingly beautiful! For it is the exercise of organs ... which keeps one ugly and makes one uglier.”<sup>699</sup> Here, Nietzsche is describing what is ‘beautiful’ from a decadent perspective, as, for example, what the *Christian* might regard as beautiful, rather than from the perspective of a ‘higher type’. And the ascetic can only become ‘beautiful’ by making the tumultuous waves of passion and drives recede into faint murmurs, thus inviting no real effort in approaching homeostasis. The *Übermensch*, on the other hand, is invigorated by vehement drives, acquires his power from such, and would never seek to hold them back; the *Übermensch* is strong enough to be able to manipulate these multifarious forces into a *dynamic* homeostasis by contrast to the conservative, static, psycho-neurotic fixations of weak spirits.

Nietzsche’s general ‘principle’ of beauty might be this: “‘Beauty’ is for the artist something outside all orders of rank, because in beauty opposites are tamed; the highest sign of power, namely power over opposites; moreover, without tension: -- that violence is no longer needed; that everything flows, obeys, so easily and pleasantly – that is what delights the artist’s will to power.”<sup>700</sup> Of course, an egodystonically constituted spirit would ‘tame opposites’ and acquire feelings of power by not allowing their drives expression or by disavowing conflicting aspects of reality. But an egosyntonically constituted spirit would do so through sublimation. Nietzsche writes, “This ... self-violation, this artists’ cruelty, this desire

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<sup>699</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, §25

<sup>700</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, pg. 803

to give form to oneself as a piece of difficult, resisting, suffering matter ... which makes itself suffer for of the pleasure of making suffer, this whole *active* 'bad conscience' has finally, ... as a true womb of ideal and imaginative events, brought a wealth of novel, disconcerting beauty and affirmation to light, and perhaps for the first time beauty *itself*."<sup>701</sup> What, here, should be regarded as beautiful? I think one should distinguish the mere 'giving form to one's self' and the giving of form through a 'bad conscience'.

The giving of form through a bad conscience is responsible for a perception of beauty, but a beauty that is ultimately degenerate, a symptom of sickness. Nietzsche speculates as to whether or not this is the origin of beauty itself because it is perhaps the 'giving form to one's self' as well as the world that, *historically* occurred in ascetic practices, allowed one to be more cognizant of one's self, and further to *require* the comfort and release of one's bad conscience into 'beauty', the promise of happiness. Furthermore, the *weak* spirits, and ascetic spirits, are those who learned – albeit egodystonically – self-mastery. A noble spirit wouldn't have needed a promise of happiness as would the suffering, masochistic, ascetic spirit. The 'beauty' that Nietzsche describes here is, ultimately, egodystonic. However, there is also beauty that is egosyntonic and, although it too might require an 'artist's cruelty' in giving form, destroying in an act of creation, this beauty does not emerge from a 'bad conscience'. As Nietzsche writes, "... to master the passions, *not* to weaken or exterminate them! The greater the mastering force of the will, the more freedom may be given to the passions. The 'great man' is great through the free play

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<sup>701</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, II §18

he gives his desires and the even greater power that is capable of taking these magnificent monsters into his service.”<sup>702</sup> What Nietzsche means, therefore, is that nothing *Übermenschlich* arises from a bad conscience. The Beauty peculiar to the *Übermensch* is necessarily non-repressive and therefore of a ‘good conscience’, and is able to be of a good conscience because of the non-repressive mastery.

In some respects, there are points at which Schopenhauer and Nietzsche agree on the beautiful. For example, they both assert, according to their respective philosophies, that everything can, in theory, be experienced as beautiful. Schopenhauer writes, “Every existing thing can be observed purely objectively and outside all relation, and ... the will appears in everything at some grade of its objectivity.” For this reason, and because everything is “the expression of an Idea, everything is also *beautiful*.”<sup>703</sup> In other words, Ideas are always beautiful for Schopenhauer, and Ideas can be discovered in all existing things, therefore beauty is also always waiting to be discovered. Nietzsche also asserts, in *Human* that everything that is not experienced as beautiful, everything that is ugly, entails the possibility of discovering beauty in it. He, however, rejects Schopenhauer’s idealism.

Furthermore, Rampley observes that Schopenhauer regarded the body – its instincts and drives – as a problem to be overcome. Nietzsche also acknowledges the potency of the body’s influence in life. But instead of seeking to overcome it, Nietzsche seeks to incorporate it. Rampley writes, “While Schopenhauer acknowledges the body’s potency, he is still concerned to free the mind from its

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<sup>702</sup> Nietzsche, *Writing form the Late Notebooks*, 9[139], autumn 1887

<sup>703</sup> Schopenhauer, WWR I, pg. 210

effects, regarding it as a hindrance to true thought.”<sup>704</sup> Notice the implication of a Kantian notion of ‘disinterestedness’ as necessary for objectivity. “In contrast,” Rampley continues, “Nietzsche sees the body as one of the principle determinants of thinking; the two are inseparable, and as such the body gives thought its form, indeed, facilitates it.”<sup>705</sup> For this reason, the means of discovering beauty, for Nietzsche, are entirely different from that of Schopenhauer; for Schopenhauer, it still involves repudiation and disinterested contemplation, whilst for Nietzsche it involves not a repudiation of interest but necessarily an *incorporation* of it in order to render it pleasurable and therefore beautiful.

Beauty for weak and fettered or ascetic spirits is symptomatic of egodystonic vicissitudes, requiring repudiations of one’s instincts and drives or even of reality. It is conditioned by a failure or unwillingness to incorporate various elements. Beauty conceived by the *Übermensch* requires the incorporation of everything hitherto regarded as ugly, disgusting, or threatening through a mastery and creativity that renders the ugly and repugnant beautiful.

## On Ethical Values

Ethics, especially since the time of Socrates, has been a weighty concern in Western philosophy. Jonathan Lear observes, “The birth of ethics as a serious reflective inquiry simply is the introduction of the concept of *the* good as the

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<sup>704</sup> Rampley, *Nietzsche, Aesthetics, and Modernity*, pg. 169

<sup>705</sup> Rampley, *Nietzsche, Aesthetics, and Modernity*, pg. 169



concept in terms of which one should reflectively evaluate one's life."<sup>706</sup> However, instead of the birth of ethics being simply the introduction of the good, 'the good' and more importantly 'happiness', were introduced as answers to the question surrounding the birth of ethics: the question of how to live well. As Lear himself writes, "Socrates' fundamental question – how shall I live? – looks innocent but is in fact traumatic. Socrates rips open the fabric of Athenian life and creates a gap which no one can fill,"<sup>707</sup> and in this sense Socrates "is a traumatizing seducer."<sup>708</sup> Ethics, as a serious reflective inquiry, is then born from the *question* of how to live, for which 'happiness' and 'the good' are themselves enigmatic signifiers that signify nothing particular, stable, and effable.

In *BGE*, Nietzsche writes that, after reflecting on the various 'subtle and crude moralities' that have had some influence throughout history, he "found certain traits regularly recurring together and linked to each other. In the end, two basic types became apparent ...: There is a *master morality* and a *slave morality*." And he further adds that, in more 'mixed' cultures, there are moralities that appear to be a mediation between these two.<sup>709</sup> For the noble spirits, the contrast between 'good' and 'bad' amounted to the contrast between 'noble' and 'despicable'.<sup>710</sup> "The noble and brave types of people who think this way," Nietzsche continues, "are the furthest removed from a morality that sees precisely pity, actions for others, and

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<sup>706</sup> Lear, *Happiness*, pp. 11-12

<sup>707</sup> Lear, *Happiness*, pg. 101

<sup>708</sup> Lear, *Happiness*, pg. 102

<sup>709</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §260

<sup>710</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §260

*désintéressement* as emblematic of morality.”<sup>711</sup> Slave morality, on the other hand, Nietzsche describes as expressing a “pessimistic suspicion of the whole condition of humanity” and “perhaps a condemnation of humanity along with its condition. The slave’s gaze resents the virtues of the powerful.”<sup>712</sup> Everything noble becomes thought of as evil, inciting fear because of its strength and awesomeness. One might say the slave spirit experiences the noble spirit as ‘horrific’. Furthermore, “qualities that serve to alleviate existence for suffering people are pulled out and flooded with light ... Slave morality is essentially a morality of utility.”<sup>713</sup> Essentially, everything that is useful and comforting to the slave, to those weak and poor in spirit, become regarded as ‘good’. It is exemplified by “the desire for *freedom*, the instinct for happiness,”<sup>714</sup> for it is only those who are unfree and unhappy who would desire freedom and happiness as their chief aims. Notice that the free spirit, who is neither fettered nor ‘noble’ (in the original sense, though perhaps *ennobled* in a new sense) does not have a morality. The free spirit is an immoralist. It is *not* a ‘mediation’ between the two but is free of both.

Maudemarie Clark observes in Nietzsche a discussion of morality that is meant in both a narrow and a broad sense. She cites the work of Bernard Williams on this matter, where Williams refers to morality in the broad sense as ‘ethics’.<sup>715</sup> I am partial to this view as well, as it is impossible to escape the notion of some ethical valuations or proposals in Nietzsche’s philosophy, such as *amor fati* – the

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<sup>711</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §260

<sup>712</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §260

<sup>713</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §260

<sup>714</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §260

<sup>715</sup> see Clark, *Nietzsche on Ethics*, pp. 42-43

‘formula for human greatness’. But such a formula is quite broad and vague. This interpretation also remains faithful to Nietzsche’s proclamation that he, and other free spirits like him, are *immoralists*. Clark also observes, however, that Nietzsche writes of ‘noble morality’ and ‘higher moralities’. I’d like to suggest that Nietzsche’s perspective is that there are moralities that are symptomatic of healthier, more egosyntonic constitutions, and are thus more ‘noble’ and ‘higher’ because they do not repudiate nature as in the case of fettered or ascetic spirits. But this does not mean that he personally values these higher moralities as what *should* supplant the more decadent moralities. Just because Nietzsche regards a particular morality as higher than another in no way means he advocates for such a morality, especially when his concern is chiefly genealogical or comparative. He is still an immoralist – in the company of other hypothetical free spirits – where ‘morality’, in the narrow sense is something all too human and from which Nietzsche believes it is necessary for one to free oneself. Immoralism thus becomes the way of the *Übermensch*.

Nietzsche writes that he is particularly concerned with “*what origin our terms good and evil actually have.*”<sup>716</sup> More specifically, Nietzsche inquires, “Under what conditions did man invent the value judgments good and evil? *And what value do they themselves have?* Have they up to now obstructed or promoted human flourishing?”<sup>717</sup> Nietzsche obviously thinks they have obstructed human flourishing. Berkowitz correctly observes that Nietzsche’s *Genealogy* is a “prelude to the urgent task of establishing a new rank order of values.”<sup>718</sup> As a prelude, it does not itself

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<sup>716</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, preface §3

<sup>717</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, preface §3

<sup>718</sup> Berkowitz, *Nietzsche: the Ethics*, pg. 123

establish that rank order of revaluations. Its purpose is an historical critique, a genealogy, of the origins of values, which is a necessary philosophical prerequisite for the project of creating newer, healthier valuations. In order to ‘cure’ the disease, one must discover its underlying causes so that one does not, like the ascetic priest, merely treat the symptoms. “Morality,” writes Nietzsche, is “essentially a shield, a means of defense; to this extent a sign of the immature (armored, stoical).”<sup>719</sup>

Nietzsche thus states explicitly what I am asserting: morality is defensive, it is symptomatic of an egodystonic constitution. The ascetic, the stoic, all those who repress their nature – their instincts and drives – are egodystonically constituted. Morality is a reaction-formation. “The mature man,” by contrast, is *not* defensive. Nietzsche says “he attacks,” by which he means to express that the mature man is *active* rather than *reactive*. And also tellingly, with the mature spirit one observes “Instruments of war transformed into instruments of peace.”<sup>720</sup> I think this demonstrates: 1. by ‘he attacks’ Nietzsche merely emphasizes *action*; and 2. *Aggression* is not mature, but the propensity of aggression turned towards other ends *is* mature, for it does not repudiate the potential but masters it into something useful.

Below, I argue that the bifurcation of egodystonic or egosyntonic vicissitudes involves what one does with motivational states, i.e., one’s most intimate “interest.” For example, I argue that values can be cognized according to a repudiation of interest or a repudiation of reality. This was already demonstrated with aesthetics, where Nietzsche imagines a beauty that is cognized without such repudiations.

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<sup>719</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §727

<sup>720</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §727

Ethics echo aesthetic valuations in precisely the same way concerning interest. For Kant, disinterest is necessary in order to judge the beautiful. Similarly, the moral law is recognized only disinterestedly; i.e., *purely rationally* without admitting of any influence of one's inclinations. And for Schopenhauer too, the morally good action is the one that relieves suffering, just as aesthetic contemplation had done. For Schopenhauer, the ethical even seems preconditioned by the aesthetic, or that the aesthetic entices one towards the ethical. The ethical, for Schopenhauer, is in the end an eradication of interest – the acquisition of disinterestedness by repudiating the will – and thus, like in aesthetic valuations, there is an interest in being disinterested.

In what follows, I seek to demonstrate how ethical valuations are symptom formations that are reducible, retroductively, to the vicissitudes of our drives and the employment of defense mechanisms. Morality, I argue, is *always* the result of an egodystonic orientation with our instincts and drives. But an egosyntonic ethics is possible. This should all be regarded as a corollary to the discussion of aesthetics, such that there is a bifurcation according to one's orientation and corresponding psychical constitution. Just as slave beauty is indicative of an unhealthy disposition towards life, so too is morality. This is why Nietzsche infamously proclaims that he is an immoralist. But there is also a beauty peculiar to the *Übermensch*, and for this reason an ethics for the *Übermensch* as well. After showing in what way Nietzsche's philosophy is to be distinguished from other philosophies, I try to elucidate what an egosyntonic ethics might be.

The difference between Kant and Schopenhauer amounts to age-old conflict between rationalism and irrationalism. Is the ground of ethical valuations or moral judgments a rational or irrational ground? Ultimately, Nietzsche and Freud as well as contemporary psychology side with Schopenhauer concerning the ground for judgments and valuations.

## **Moral Masochism and Ethical Disinterest**

Jonathan Lear claims that psychoanalysis is not, or cannot provide, an ethical theory, natural or otherwise. However, even here, psychoanalysis is useful, as I hope to show, for understanding why this or that is regarded as moral or immoral. In fact, I believe that psychology is the only discipline that can provide a sufficient ethical theory as well as aesthetic theory. While ethics and morality might not have been the concern for psychoanalysis as it was for Nietzsche, we nonetheless can find that psychoanalysis has something to say about the life and character of an individual, an individual's development and relational vicissitudes, or even the functioning of a society. Psychoanalysis has a lot to say about how an individual can *live well*. In this sense, nothing is more appropriate for a description or explanation of the ethical than the fields of psychology of which psychoanalysis is possibly the most relevant, as it, especially in conjunction with neuro-science, can describe the origin of our valuations and the generation of the motivations for our expressions or behaviors. Our values, as Nietzsche observes, are *symptoms*. Of what are they

symptoms? The means by which one relates to one's self and the world; which is to say, the vicissitudes of our drives.

Psychoanalysis as a *practice* – as an attempt at a 'cure' – by contrast to the theory, generally will tend more towards "restoring a normative balance with the world."<sup>721</sup> That is to say, *clinically*, psychoanalysis as a practice aims towards enabling analysands to function normally in the world, with minimal disturbance and discontent, rather than actually making analysands more 'ethical'. But Freud nonetheless engages with ethical theories in his theoretical work. He uses Immanuel Kant's deontology, specifically, as an exemplar of what he refers to as 'moral masochism'.

Kant's perspective, I must point out, is *contrary* to what is articulated in this thesis: for Kant, the sublime appears to have a *moral foundation*; I am arguing the opposite: morality and ethics have an *aesthetic foundation*. Kant claims we "... presuppose moral feeling in man. And so we attribute necessity to this [kind of] aesthetic judgment as well."<sup>722</sup> In other words, for Kant, the morally good is judged according to a subjective feeling, but it is independent of the empirical and is instead purely rational. Furthermore, Kant also claims, "The beautiful is symbolic of the morally good."<sup>723</sup> Here again, there is a *moral* foundation of which beauty is symbolic. But also in contrast to Kant, and aligned with Nietzsche, I am not claiming

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<sup>721</sup> Lacan, *Ethics*, pg. 109

<sup>722</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pg. 125 (G 266)

<sup>723</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pg. I should point out that, contrary to Kant, I am presenting an ethical theory implicit in Nietzsche that makes ethics (or morals) *schematic* of aesthetic valuations, in a loosely Kantian sense, rather than seeing aesthetic valuations as *symbolic* of the ethical.

in this thesis that the ‘morally good’ is symbolic of beauty, but rather *schematic* of it, if not even structurally and etiologically indistinguishable from it.

Freud asserted early on in the *Three Essays* that all our moral feelings (as well as aesthetic valuations and feelings of disgust and shame) arise through the vicissitude of reaction-formation.<sup>724</sup> Furthermore, Kant has, unbeknownst to him, described the very process of reaction-formation and the vehemence of the super-ego on the self in conformity with the moral law that, in the Oedipal situation, is derived from the identification and internalization of the father.

In *The Economic Problem of Masochism*, Freud discusses various kinds of masochisms: a primary ‘*erotogenic*’ masochism (loosely corresponding with primary narcissism and the death drive); a ‘feminine’ masochism (what we can think of as secondary masochism... where one is the ‘recipient’ of attention); and *moral masochism*. The third, he writes, has “loosened its connection with what we recognize as sexuality.”<sup>725</sup> Freud associates moral masochism with the sense of feeling of guilt at one’s sexual urges, particularly in the desire for the mother. Notice, already, it is attributable to reaction-formation. Reaction-formation, noted previously, is responsible for our feelings of disgust, shame, as well as the generation of *conscience* and the super-ego. This is association with disgust is paramount, and I ask the reader to bear this in mind throughout. Freud then writes, “The superego – the conscience at work in the ego – may ... become harsh, cruel, and inexorable against the ego which is in its charge. Kant’s categorical imperative is

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<sup>724</sup> I ask the reader to bear in mind this claim concerning disgust, as it will feature heavily in discussions of moral judgment below.

<sup>725</sup> Freud, *The Economic Problem*, pg. 165



thus the direct heir of the *Oedipus Complex*.”<sup>726</sup> The repressions enacted in Kant’s deontology, the repudiation of inclinations, etc., are repetitions of the repudiation of the desire for the mother in the name of the father.

Kant claims that the derivation of the moral law cannot be found in happiness (as it will be for Utilitarians and Schopenhauer) because it is an *empirical* notion, and therefore admits of peculiarities between people.<sup>727</sup> Happiness, therefore, “can never yield a practical law” since “in the desire for happiness, what counts is not the form of lawfulness but solely the matter, viz., whether in complying with the law I am to expect gratification, and how much.”<sup>728</sup> So when Kant states the universal moral law, “So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle of a universal legislation,”<sup>729</sup> he is claiming to have found what allows for individual gratification, accommodating desire, but also provides a wholly rational universalizable maxim that is good for the general welfare of a community and each member’s ‘satisfaction with his/her existence’.

An essential requirement to following the moral law, for Kant, is that it be gratifying so as to provide an incentive. “To be happy is necessarily the longing<sup>730</sup> of every rational but finite being,<sup>731</sup> and hence is an unavoidable determining basis of its power of desire.”<sup>732</sup> This is articulated by Kant as a being’s ‘satisfaction with its

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<sup>726</sup> Freud, *The Economic Problem*, pg. 167

<sup>727</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, pg. 38 [25]

<sup>728</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, pg. 38 [25]

<sup>729</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, pg. 45 §7 [30]

<sup>730</sup> this has been translated from ‘*Verlangen*’ which Pluhar observes can also mean ‘demand’. See Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, pg. 38, fn. 47

<sup>731</sup> That is to say, every ‘human being’

<sup>732</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, pg. 38 [25]

own existence',<sup>733</sup> and Kant writes, "This satisfaction is a problem thrust upon the being by its finite nature itself; for the being is needy, and this need pertains to the matter of its power of desire, i.e., to something that refers to a subjectively underlying feeling of pleasure or displeasure."<sup>734</sup> The incentive is self-love, which should be understood as *primary narcissism* – 'all inclinations together' according to Kant – as it unfolds in an infant's relationships.

In order to find agreement with the moral law, the love for oneself must be a "*rational self-love*." But for Kant, the moral law must determine one's practical incentives. And yet, "The presentation of the moral law deprives self-love of its influence and self-conceit of its delusion," writes Kant.<sup>735</sup> He thus observes:

The effect of the moral law as an incentive is only negative, and as such this incentive can only be cognized *a priori*. For all inclination and every sensible impulse is based on feeling, and the negative effect on feeling is itself a feeling. Consequently, we can see *a priori* that the moral law as determining basis of the will, *by infringing all our inclinations, must bring about a feeling that can be called pain*.<sup>736</sup>

The incentive to follow the moral law is thus negatively related to pain. It appears, at first, that this incentive is purely negative.<sup>737</sup> In other words, the initial incentive for the moral law originates with *pain*. The moral law is impotent without pain.

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<sup>733</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, pg. 38 [25]

<sup>734</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, pg. 38 [25]

<sup>735</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, pg. 99 [75] concerning what Kant refers to as 'delusion' here, I am reminded of the biblical reference of St. Anselm, "The fool hath said there is no God," so that the delusional will accuse those who are not delusional of being so as a means of argument.

<sup>736</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, pg. 95-96 [73] *my emphasis*

<sup>737</sup> I ask that the reader compare this to Kant's account of the sublime as well.

And this is what leads Nietzsche to write, “The categorical imperative smells of cruelty.”<sup>738</sup> This same characterization is echoed by Freud who characterizes Kant’s deontological ethics as exemplifying “moral masochism.” However the humbling effect of the moral law on the subject produces the feeling of *respect*, which Kant claims is a *positive* feeling. There is then a primary unpleasure and a subsequent, secondary pleasure in respect.

Indicating the repression of instincts or drives where they run contrary to the moral law, Kant writes, “What is essential in all determination of the will by the moral law is that, as a free will, and hence not merely without the cooperation of sensible impulses *but even with the rejection of all of them* and with *impairment of all inclinations insofar as they could be contrary to that law*, it be determined by that law.”<sup>739</sup> Furthermore “Respect for the law,” writes Kant, is “the consciousness of a *free* submission of the will to the law,” and is “linked with an unavoidable constraint inflicted ... on all inclinations.”<sup>740</sup> This is the genesis of *duty*, which Kant writes is “an action that is objectively practical according to the law,” necessarily excluding the inclinations from providing any determining basis.<sup>741</sup> This would preclude any sublimation, which requires the inclusion of the inclinations as a determining basis. Instead, Kant’s deontology requires as its basis any of the neurotic defenses. It requires repression and the refusal to allow the instincts and drives a determining role. Duty, for Kant, requires above all reaction-formation.

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<sup>738</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, II §6

<sup>739</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, pg. 95 [72] *my emphasis*

<sup>740</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, pg. 104 [80]

<sup>741</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, pg. 104 [80]

Kant's deontological ethics, the categorical imperative specifically, is a product of reaction-formation. The formation that reinforces the repression is the 'moral law', the ethical valuation. Freud observes that it is directly generated by the oedipal complex in relation to the superego, where moral feelings arise in response to guilt or shame, one's sex drives are repressed and one acts in opposition to the demand of the original sex drives. That is, one acts according to *duty*, which is juxtaposed to one's natural inclinations, as respect for the 'father' and the 'father's law'.<sup>742</sup> Freud and Nietzsche are correct in asserting that Kant's deontology indeed involves the warping of one's nature to conform to ideals rather than the construction of ideals in conformity to one's nature, which, it will be shown in the final chapters, is what Nietzsche instead advocates.

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<sup>742</sup> Nietzschean scholars are often criticized for asserting that Kant's ethics involves a 'top-down' morality. On the face of it, the criticism appears correct; for, Kant's categorical imperative is not imposed from outside oneself as the Ten Commandments – the 'will of God' – or monarchical legislation had been; it is a rational principle that begins within oneself as the center of reason. In this sense it is distinguishable from the 'top-down' morality of religions in that, instead of involving the imposition of an external moral law or code, one instead imposes on oneself a moral law or code. However, it nonetheless displays the same characteristic of top-down morality. There is, in the application of it, an unavoidable reaction-formation in two senses:

1. It entails the moral masochism of the super-ego, which is a top-down morality of sorts in that a 'moral good' is held over the ego and the id.
2. The judgment of the 'moral' agent in virtue of the super-ego is often conditioned beforehand to by societal standards and structures, or in relation to the father (in Freudian psychoanalytic theory).

## A Bifurcation of Interest

Criticizing Kant's deontological ethics, Schopenhauer writes, "Kant ... ridiculed all empirical stimuli of the will, and began by removing everything, whether subjective or objective, on which a law determining the will's action could be empirically based. The consequence is, that he had nothing left for the substance of his law but simply its Form."<sup>743</sup> And while paying tribute to Kant for his 'rational gymnastics',<sup>744</sup> he goes on to argue that practical reason devoid of the empirical ends up virtually indistinguishable from theoretical reason.<sup>745</sup> In other words, when extracting what is empirical from the formulation of the categorical imperative, then it has no justified practical application. "Ethics," writes Schopenhauer, "has to do with actual human conduct, and not with the *a priori* building of card houses."<sup>746</sup> And further, "Because for men the only thing which has reality is the empirical, or else that which is supposed to have a possibly empirical existence, therefore it follows that the moral stimulus cannot but be empirical."<sup>747</sup> Thus Schopenhauer, as was the case in aesthetic valuations, returns us to an initially embodied and psychological *interestedness*.

To distinguish Kant and Schopenhauer, Kant rejects the empirical, and therefore compassion, from being a determining ground for ethics. Schopenhauer, by contrast, argues it can be nothing but compassion, the empirical. The selflessness

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<sup>743</sup> Schopenhauer, *Basis of Morality*, pg. 30

<sup>744</sup> Schopenhauer, *Basis of Morality*, pg. 30. He writes, "I pay Kant a tribute of sincere admiration for the great acumen he displayed in carrying out this dexterous feat."

<sup>745</sup> Schopenhauer, *Basis of Morality*, pg. 30

<sup>746</sup> Schopenhauer, *Basis of Morality*, pp. 31-32

<sup>747</sup> Schopenhauer, *Basis of Morality*, pg. 31

in Kant is intellectualized. For Schopenhauer, it is altruistic. To be disinterested is the same as being 'selfless' because the self is essentially motivated (by drives and instincts), is structured according to those drives and instincts, and disinterest precludes those motivational states. For Kant, the derivation of the moral law must be wholly rational, which is to say, objective and absent of subjective inclinations. Furthermore, acting in accordance with the 'moral law' requires the initial repudiation of one's inclinations. Following the moral law is a matter of desire, and in this instance the desire is for a secondary aim that succeeds repression or suppression when the moral law prohibits the primary interest. For Schopenhauer, selflessness is the desired outcome, and the *suffering* with others that occurs when one 'pierces the veil of Maya' induces one to act 'selflessly' to relieve others' suffering in order to also relieve one's own in order to become disinterested.

A key aspect of altruism in particular is the *selflessness* of an action, that is to say, *the compromise or sacrifice of one's own interests for the sake of another's*, to act selflessly is to act without regard for one's own interests or in direct opposition to them. Significantly, for Schopenhauer and the Utilitarians, the aim of acting for others is to relieve suffering.

But for Schopenhauer, there is no 'highest good' as there is for the Utilitarians (and Deontologists). Schopenhauer claims that there is no such thing as an *absolute good*, or *highest good*, which he claims "signifies the same thing, namely in reality a final satisfaction of the will, after which no fresh willing would occur; a last motive, the attainment of which would give the will an imperishable

satisfaction.”<sup>748</sup> But Schopenhauer nonetheless believes in an ethics that entails the same motive as aesthetic contemplation: to relieve suffering. For Schopenhauer, compassion occurs when one has ‘pierced the veil of Maya’ and recognizes the illusion of separateness among beings. Recognizing the illusion, one then *suffers with* others, and one seeks to alleviate that suffering by coming to the aid of others. Schopenhauer, ironically, also allowed into his philosophy the altruism of the ‘nihilistic’ faiths whilst criticizing Kant on this very point.

But as with aesthetics, Nietzsche wants to point out that, ethically, selflessness or disinterestedness is impossible, as in the case of Kant; and it is *undesirable* or indicative of decadence in the case of Schopenhauer. Nietzsche writes that at some point it will be realized that “altruistic actions are only a species of egoistic actions.”<sup>749</sup> He thus criticizes altruism for:

1. Being dishonest<sup>750</sup>

One might say that, in the case of Kant where the empirical is rejected as a determining ground, the postulation of the moral law is not straightforwardly rational but is unavoidably determined by our self-interest; i.e., our motivational states. Regarding altruism, Nietzsche writes, “The *motives* of this morality stand opposed to its *principle*.”<sup>751</sup> In other words, there is no such thing as altruism – as selfless action – for behind every action are self-interested motivations. Only the

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<sup>748</sup> Schopenhauer, WWR I pg. 362 Perhaps Schopenhauer is aware that his philosophy, were there a higher good, would imply a state that corresponds with death as a state of absolute disinterestedness, which would be an impossibility for a sentient being (which just ceases to exist).

<sup>749</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §786

<sup>750</sup> Jonny Anamoly states ‘inconsistent’. See Anamoly on “Nietzsche’s Critique of Utilitarianism”

<sup>751</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §21

noble spirit is honest about his motivation and acts on it with good conscience.

Nietzsche even praises noble spirits for acting generously.<sup>752</sup> His criticism of acting for others in the case of slave morality is that it is dishonest. It accomplishes its 'egoist' orientation – in the words of Schopenhauer – *indirectly*, which we can understand as being through reaction-formations.

Nietzsche writes, "The psychological error out of which the antithetical concepts ... arose is: 'selfless', 'unegoistic', 'self-denying' – all unreal, imaginary"; and "... The psychology of the saint, the priest, the 'good man' naturally had to be purely phantasmagorical. One had declared *real* motives of action *bad*."<sup>753</sup> These real motives are the free expressions of the will to power. The outcome resulted in "Rage against the instincts of life," which became regarded as "'holy', as venerable. Absolute chastity, absolute obedience, absolute poverty: the *priestly* ideal. Alms, pity, sacrifice, denial of beauty, of reason, of sensuality, a morose eye cast on all strong qualities one possessed: the *lay* ideal."<sup>754</sup> Furthermore:

Where [an instinct] weakens – the individual seeks a value for himself only in the service of others, one can be certain that exhaustion and degeneration are present. An altruistic disposition, genuine and without tartuffery, is an instinct for creating at least a secondary value for oneself in the service of other egoisms. Usually, however, altruism is only apparent; a detour to the preservation of one's own feeling of vitality and value."<sup>755</sup>

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<sup>752</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §229

<sup>753</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §786

<sup>754</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §786

<sup>755</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §785



Nietzsche thus consistently criticizes altruism for its dishonesty, but also criticizes it for being a *detour* towards its unconscious interest that is contingent, firstly, on repression/suppression of one's own nature. So, another criticism of altruism is that it involves...

2. The repudiation of one's own nature and an impoverishment of it, making one incapable of doing what is better and healthier.
3. It is a *detour* – a vicissitude – to a feeling of power and a corresponding valuation, but a vicissitude that is egodystonic.

Nietzsche discovers in it the same things as Freud: reaction-formation. So, there is no such thing as 'selfless' action. But that to which we can refer to as selfless or 'altruistic' is symptomatic of a particular psychical constitution that achieves a kind of compensatory or secondary interest.

To act out of compassion and to act altruistically involve acting for another. And this leads us to a distinction between deontology and compassion: in deontology, one compromises or sacrifices one's 'inclinations' – self-interest – for the sake of the *moral law*, although this is perhaps egoistically grounded; for an ethics of compassion or care, one compromises or sacrifices, one's self-interest for the sake of *someone*, for an *other*. One is regarded the more moral on Kantian terms the more one is able to oppose one's inclinations for the sake of the moral law. On the other hand, one is regarded as more moral on Schopenhauerian terms the more one is able to oppose one's inclinations for the sake of alleviating suffering. His 'compassion' is equally egoistic, however, as it is one's suffering with another that induces one to act for another. As observed regarding aesthetic valuations, in

Schopenhauer's philosophy one is *interested in becoming disinterested*. And this is no less true pertaining to his ethical theory as well.

In my view, the difference between Kant's ethics and Schopenhauer's is echoed precisely by the difference, and conflict, between that of Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan.<sup>756</sup> In her groundbreaking work, *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan writes that she had become aware of "two ways of speaking about moral problems, two modes of describing the relationship between other and self."<sup>757</sup> And I agree with her when she writes that this 'different voice' should be "characterized not by gender but by theme," despite the fact that, empirically, it is often generally attributed to the perspective of women.<sup>758</sup> I am here arguing that Schopenhauer himself embraced this "different voice" to which Gilligan alludes, and that the principle of utilitarianism might indeed embrace the same, despite the rational and 'disinterested' application of its principle because it's "highest good" is empirically derived.<sup>759</sup>

Discussing how children might learn ethics in play, Gilligan writes, "Lever extends and corroborates the observations of Piaget in his studies of the rules of the

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<sup>756</sup> Gilligan also criticizes Freud for thinking that women are morally inferior to men, but most of her criticism is reserved for Kohlberg's rationalist approach.

<sup>757</sup> Gilligan, *Different Voice*, pg. 1

<sup>758</sup> Gilligan, *Different Voice*, pg. 2 Schopenhauer, obviously, was not a woman, and was indeed sexist and a product of his time.

<sup>759</sup> Mill writes of the importance of being disinterested in moral judgments. He writes "The happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct is not the agent's own happiness but that of all concerned. Utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator" (*Utilitarianism*, pg. 17). This referral to 'disinterest' should not be conflated with Kant's, however. The ground of Kant's ethical theory requires the disinterested derivation of the moral law from pure reason as its ground. In the case of utilitarianism, however, the 'principle' or 'standard' is derived empirically; that is, according to the sensible. It is then *applied* with disinterest after its derivation.

game, where he finds boys becoming through childhood increasingly fascinated with the legal elaboration of rules and the development of fair procedures for adjudicating conflicts.”<sup>760</sup> Girls, on the other hand, “are more tolerant in their attitudes toward rules, more willing to make exceptions, and more easily reconciled to innovations.”<sup>761</sup> As for Kohlberg, he expands on this observing that “the moral lessons inherent in girls’ play appear to be fewer than in boys’.”<sup>762</sup> In addition to this, Gilligan observes that Kohlberg mostly excluded women from his studies, where his stages of moral development “... describe the development of moral judgment from childhood to adulthood [that] are based empirically on a study of eighty-four boys.”<sup>763</sup> It isn’t then surprising that populations not included in the study might not reach the higher stages of his moral theory since the theory was derived looking only at one of the sexes. Kohlberg thus excluded from moral analyses a voice of a significant portion of the population.

What is the ‘different voice’ to which patriarchal society has been deaf? Gilligan suggests it is an ‘Ethics of Care’. Kohlberg’s moral development theory is based on a paradigm of males who were raised in a patriarchal society in which women were also denied their voice. His theory concerns what Gilligan refers to as an ‘ethics of justice’; and the ‘different voice’ is an ethics of care.<sup>764</sup> Gilligan writes, “To admit the truth of the women’s perspective to the conception of moral development is to recognize for both sexes the importance throughout life of the

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<sup>760</sup> Gilligan, *Different Voice*, pg. 10

<sup>761</sup> Gilligan, *Different Voice*, pg. 10

<sup>762</sup> Gilligan, *Different Voice*, pg. 10

<sup>763</sup> Gilligan, *Different Voice*, pg. 18

<sup>764</sup> see, for example, Gilligan, *Different Voice*, pg. 63

connection between self and other.”<sup>765</sup> She further observes that the moral imperative that emerges in interviews with women is an injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the ‘real and recognizable trouble’ of this world.”<sup>766</sup> Introducing the “different voice,” she notes that one of her students, when explaining why she felt one individual was particularly moral, answered that it was because he had “given his life to help others.”<sup>767</sup> The ‘ethics of care’ is an ethics of compassion; its orientation is towards alleviating the suffering of others wherever that suffering is discerned and felt. It involves a feeling of responsibility for others. Astutely, she also observes that moral dilemmas such as what were developed by Kohlberg “recast moral judgments from a consideration of the good to a choice between evils.”<sup>768</sup> In other words, moral dilemmas as cast and scored by Kohlberg and others involve choosing a lesser of two evils, although the lesser evil will be judged, deontologically or consequentially, to be good, i.e., the right decision. For an ethics of care or compassion, however, the emphasis is on the imperative to *help*, to bring about a good consequence in the alleviation of suffering, *not* on what is theoretically *right* or *just*, but practically beneficial to those concerned.

Nietzsche is often *very* critical of compassion and pity. I’d like to argue, however, that it is not so much compassion itself that he opposes, but that he opposes it as a determining factor in our lives. For example, in the *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche writes that the ideal philosopher “destroys his earthly happiness through his courage; he must be hostile even to the human beings whom

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<sup>765</sup> Gilligan, *Different Voice*, pg. 98

<sup>766</sup> Gilligan, *Different Voice*, pg. 100

<sup>767</sup> Gilligan, *Different Voice*, pg. 65

<sup>768</sup> Gilligan, *Different Voice*, pg. 101

he loves and to the institutions from whose womb he issued; he may spare neither human beings nor things, though he himself suffers in hurting them."<sup>769</sup> His point is that the 'philosopher of the future', as he later describes such, must create into the future, and this creating will require the destruction of all the creature comforts of the present. Furthermore, this creating should not let itself be determined by the happiness or suffering of oneself or others, lest such concern degenerate the projects. This might seem very cold, and, in part, it is. But for Nietzsche, his point is that one needs to be cold in liberating one's self from the fetters that bind one to the present and the present's plethora of degenerate and decadent relations and consequent values.

As for the more contemporary 'ethics of care', what I am comfortable claiming is that an ethics of care does in fact risk the same danger that Nietzsche identifies in Schopenhauer: an opposition to primary self-interest. And I'd like to suggest that, in the interests of feminism, this danger should be taken seriously, for altruism demands precisely that one act *for* another's interests *at the expense of one's own*. In such an instance, an 'ethics of care' might serve to perpetuate the notion of servitude that Nietzsche critiques as slave morality and therefore ironically operate in opposition to feminist ideals whilst seeking to listen to a different "voice."

Altruism involves a reaction-formation. Schopenhauer's ethics is underpinned by compassion – suffering with others – and for Schopenhauer induces the same effect that was needed in aesthetic relations: a comportment towards

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<sup>769</sup> Nietzsche, UT SE.4

relieving suffering. Nietzsche is adamantly opposed to such a relationship to suffering, also indicated by his attacks upon the notion of *Mitleiden* – to suffer with, often translated into English as pity or compassion. Although it might not be similar in content or incentive, owing to the important weight of sentiment that is involved here in contrast to Kant's deontology, it nevertheless follows from a similar structure. One might say that Consequentialism is a middle road between an ethics of compassion and deontology, for it takes into account a *feeling* for others inherent in an ethics of compassion, but it approaches ethical issues rationality, through reason; its principle is derived empirically, but it is applied disinterestedly.

Compassion shouldn't be conflated with altruism, but an ethics of care, and utilitarianism, generally regard compassion and a feeling for others as a ground for altruist action. As I have so far argued, Nietzsche opposes altruism for advocating action that sacrifices primary self-interest for a compromise in a secondary interest. In addition to this, Nietzsche is opposed to an ethics that would eradicate suffering. Nietzsche criticizes the need to relieve suffering above all else rather than pursue a greater end that necessarily entails suffering. This is why Nietzsche also writes in *Daybreak*:

Is the nature of the truly moral to lie in our keeping in view the most immediate and most direct consequences to others of our actions and deciding in accordance with these consequences? But this, though it may be a morality, is a narrow and petty bourgeois one: a higher and freer viewpoint ... is to *look beyond* these immediate consequences to others and under certain circumstances to pursue more distant goals *even at the cost of the suffering of others* – for example, to pursue knowledge even though one

realizes that our free-spiritedness will at first and as an immediate consequence plunge others into doubt, grief and even worse things.<sup>770</sup>

Interestingly, it seems to propound a kind of consequentialism, only one that does not take, as utilitarians or Schopenhauerians (an ethics of care), the alleviation of suffering to be the desired consequence, but instead perhaps a distant *Eudaimonia* or flourishing for which much suffering is needed.

Criticizing democrats and socialists, as well as perhaps utilitarians and other moral theorists such as Schopenhauer – all of whom generally inform such political ideologies – Nietzsche writes that these spirits are ‘un-free’ and ‘superficial’,

... particularly given their basic tendency to think that *all* human misery and wrongdoing is caused by traditional social structures. ... What they want to strive for with all their might is the universal, green pasture happiness of the herd, with security, safety, contentment, and an easier life for all. Their two most well-sung songs and doctrines are called: ‘equal rights’ and ‘sympathy for all that suffers’ – and they view suffering itself as something that needs to be *abolished*.<sup>771</sup>

Nietzsche criticizes the tendency to eradicate suffering from life, or to find some eternally green pasture of happiness, a ‘promise land’, or ‘heaven’, or ‘perpetual peace’. He also writes:

A condemnation of life on the part of the living is, in the end, only the symptom of a certain type of life, and has no bearing on the question of whether or not the condemnation is justified. ... When we talk about values we are under the inspiration, under the optic, of life: life itself forces us to

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<sup>770</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak* §146

<sup>771</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §44

posit values, life itself evaluates through us, *when* we posit values. It follows from this that even the *anti-natural morality* ... the condemnation of life, is only a value judgment made by life – but *which* life? ... it is the judgment of a declining, weakened, exhausted, condemned life.<sup>772</sup>

Nietzsche thus expresses a bifurcation of moral values that echoes what is established aesthetically, between decadent, sick spirits and life-affirming convalescents, not to mention the *Übermensch* who is the archetype of affirmation (and egosyntonic relating). He condemns the acquisition of a state of being that is free of suffering and therefore condemns that utilitarian and Schopenhauerian notion of happiness and ‘the good’. For Schopenhauer, that happiness is the result of ridding oneself of all willing, and thus all interest: it is becoming disinterested. Schopenhauer’s notion of happiness is obviously a schizoid fantasy.

Central to Nietzsche’s criticisms of morality in general, regardless of the ethical theory involved or any moral system, is the egodystonic orientation upon which morality is, and *can only be* grounded. First, morality is generally grounded on the notion altruism – the notion of *selflessness* – or *disinterestedness*, which is itself ‘selfless’ in an intellectualized sense. But disinterestedness or altruism are themselves consequences of self-interest that have been turned against one’s self, requiring the vicissitude of repression (and generally reaction-formation), and essentially *compromise* or *substitute* the original interest with a second one in opposition to the first. If values are symptoms, as Nietzsche suggests, then ethical

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<sup>772</sup> Nietzsche, TI “morality,” §5



values are neurotic symptoms or symptoms of spiritual degeneration if they repudiate one's primary interest.

Nietzsche writes, "Egoism belongs to the essence of the noble soul."<sup>773</sup> The noble spirit acts out of self-interest, or with self-interested motivations. This is a quality that Nietzsche values in noble spirits to which free spirits return after breaking their fetters: a recentering of every *should* or *ought* on oneself, one's body, one's own *natural* becoming. The slave, or herd, by contrast, emphasizes the other (or a *disembodied ideal*, in the case of Kant) in action and motivation. But when a noble spirit takes to relating with others,

... the noble soul honors *itself* in them and in the rights that it gives them.; it has no doubt that the exchange of rights and honors belongs to the natural state of things, too, as the *essence* of all interaction. The noble soul gives as it takes, out of the passionate and sensitive instinct of retribution that is fundamental to it. The concept of 'mercy' is senseless and noisome *inter pares*; there might be a sublime way of letting gifts fall down on you from above ... but the noble soul has no talent for this art and conduct. Its egoism gets in the way: it does not generally like looking 'upwards', – but rather *ahead*, horizontally and slowly, or downwards: – *it knows that it is high up*.<sup>774</sup>

The act of allowing 'gifts' to sublimely 'fall on one from above' might be characterized as *velleity* of ascetic spirits and as a herd mentality, which was discussed previously concerning aesthetics. Such reception of gifts can, as an example, be seen in the creations of the ascetic priest, and which the weak spirits are easily seduced into receiving. It is an "art" for which the noble lacks talent –

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<sup>773</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §265

<sup>774</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §265

both in the reception and in the giving – because it hinders or impairs the self-interested bestowals indicative of noble spirits. To relate with others horizontally, as equals, can also be self-interested, and acting with self-interest is the natural state of things. All this would, quite possibly, offend many peoples' sensibilities because society is so accustomed to praising selflessness and altruism. But what is meaningful in selfless actions? This, I believe, is what Nietzsche questions. What is done selflessly is not as meaningful as what is done out of self-interest, and the meaning can only be decadent.

Nehamas observes, "Nietzsche certainly glorifies selfishness, but he is, once again, equally serious in denying a sharp distinction between egoism and altruism." And furthermore, imagines a future when "love and respect for others will just be love and respect for oneself."<sup>775</sup> I think Nehamas is correct on both fronts; technically, there is no such a thing as 'altruism', an action done without self-interest or entirely in opposition too one's own interests. Also, Nietzsche does glorify, and advocate, what Nehamas calls "selfishness." However, I'd like to modify that terminology to *self-interestedness*. The reason for the modification is to separate it off from the egoism and selfishness of secondary narcissism whereby there is a repudiation of, or ignorance concerning, otherness that resembles disavowal. Secondly, it makes the important connection to aesthetics, highlighting the parallel of ethical and aesthetic valuations. Nietzsche's point is essentially that all action is self-interested action, by which what is meant is that all action is done according to an individual's configuration of the will to power.

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<sup>775</sup> Nehamas, *Nietzsche*, pp. 191-192

Nietzsche writes, "For too long, man has viewed his natural inclinations with an 'evil eye', so that they finally came to be intertwined with 'bad conscience' in him."<sup>776</sup> And he wonders what kind of spirit would be better. He writes that these qualities belong "to another, younger man, one 'with more future', one stronger than me – something to which *Zarathustra* alone is entitled, *Zarathustra the Godless*."<sup>777</sup> We see here the self-interest, strength and vitality of a noble spirit combined with the self-mastery and clearer mountain air of free spirits.

What does it look like for one to act ethically with self-interest rather than selflessly in altruism? An example might suit. Imagine that there are two conflicting groups. One might think of immigrants with their own values and interests, and also the "native" society to which they immigrate. This is unfortunately an increasingly pertinent example. Altruism, or selfless action, of one group would require the sacrifices of their interests for the sake of the other group or society. It would likely, also, entail a kind of backlash exemplified in failures of repressions such as violence by oppressed (and therefore repressive), disenfranchised populations. And the flip side of the coin is that, instead of the one being altruistically accommodating, the one demands the altruistic self-sacrifice of the other. There is, then, the same echo of Hegel's master/slave dichotomy in altruism. One submits when one acts altruistically, or one demands that the other submits to one's own interests. But this is a false dilemma. Instead, one can find a third option: creatively aligning one's own interests with others' interests into a whole that is dynamically harmonious.

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<sup>776</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, II §24

<sup>777</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, II §25

Echoing a differentiation between free and fettered (or herd) spirits in Nietzsche's works, Donald Winnicott writes:

It is creative apperception more than anything else that makes the individual feel that life is worth living. Contrasted with this is a relationship to external reality which is one of compliance, the world and its details being recognized but only as something to be fitted in with or demanding adaptation.

Compliance carries with it a sense of futility ... and is associated with the idea that nothing matters and that life is not worth living.<sup>778</sup>

Notice the rather nihilistic tone where creativity is lacking – a passive nihilism.<sup>779</sup> A “link can be made, and usefully made, between creative living,” as in the case of artists, “and living itself, and the reasons can be studied why it is that creative living can be lost and why individual's feeling that life is real or meaningful can disappear.”<sup>780</sup> To be altruistic or demand altruism of another would appear to be a failure of creative living, an inability to resolve difference in creating a harmonious whole.

But such creativity also requires conditions that facilitate it. Regarding Winnicott's discussion of play, and with a very Anna-Freudian tone, Lois Oppenheim observes, “Favorable conditions are required for this kind of play, for the free and imaginative use of internal representations that is based neither wholly in the psyche nor in the reality of the external world. Deprived of these conditions, the child has an impoverished capacity to play and will, eventually, make a limited, if

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<sup>778</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, pg. 87

<sup>779</sup> I refer the reader to the discussion of Rampley's differentiation between passive and (re)active nihilism.

<sup>780</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, pg. 93

any, contribution in the cultural domain.”<sup>781</sup> But In *Daybreak* §449, Nietzsche gives us an example of this third possibility. Here, one is ‘like a little inn’ and imposes nothing on others, but does this out of self-interest and discovers that the paths to *the sublime* are always nearby in virtue of that openness. Against Stoicism and asceticism, perhaps as well Kant and Schopenhauer, Nietzsche writes, “Fear of the senses, of the desires, of the passions, when it goes so far as to counsel us against them, is already a symptom of weakness. ... and almost all the passions have been brought into ill repute on account of those who were not sufficiently strong enough to employ them.”<sup>782</sup> In other words, this ‘free spirit’ is powerful and creative enough to be able to *incorporate*, to *employ* one’s passions in such a way that demands neither one’s own selflessness nor another’s. There’s neither repression nor disavowal (nor aggression) on the part of such spirits. Such spirits are able to incorporate not only external reality (including another’s interests) but also one’s own instincts and drives (self-interest) into a harmonious and joyful whole. Whereas Kant asserts, “The presentation of the moral law deprives self-love of its influence,”<sup>783</sup> Nietzsche intends to reunite us with its influence. For this reason, Nietzsche is an immoralist. And through our self-love, it might be possible to create into the future in ways that neither disavow reality (including the interests of others) nor repudiate our own nature (our own interest).

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<sup>781</sup> Oppenheim, *Curious Intimacy*, pg. 18

<sup>782</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §778

<sup>783</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, pg. 99 [75] concerning what Kant refers to as ‘delusion’ here, I am reminded of the biblical reference of St. Anselm, “The fool hath said there is no God,” so that the delusional will accuse those who are not delusional of being so as a means of argument.

## Rational vs. Irrational Grounds

Kant and Schopenhauer exemplify, respectively, rational and irrational grounds of valuations. And according to Lawrence Kohlberg, one's moral aptitude is proportional to one's reasoning capacity, so that the more rational solution to a moral dilemma the more morally developed is the person making the judgment. However, "The roots of human intelligence, rationality, and ethical sophistication," observes the psychologist Jonathan Haidt, "should not be sought in our ability to search for and evaluate evidence in an open and unbiased way. Rather than ... worshipping reason, we should instead look for the roots of human intelligence, rationality, and virtue in what the mind does best: perception, intuition, and other mental operations that are quick, effortless, and generally quite accurate."<sup>784</sup> Contemporary research in the psychology of morality largely sides with Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Freud on the irrational grounds of moral valuations.

Haidt, a substantial contributor to emerging findings in moral psychology, argues against the rationalist approaches to morality. Instead, he puts forward an *intuitionist* account of morality. The dominant rationalist approaches that he identifies are deontology and consequentialism, each of which entails reasoning to ascertain their respective moral judgments. On the other hand, "Moral intuition is a kind of cognition, but it is not a kind of reasoning."<sup>785</sup> There is also a social aspect for a moral intuitionist, writes Haidt, but in such an instance, "moral reasoning is usually an *ex post facto* process used to influence the intuitions (and hence

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<sup>784</sup> Haidt, *The Emotional Dog*, pg. 821

<sup>785</sup> Haidt, *The Emotional Dog*, pg. 814

judgments) of other people.”<sup>786</sup> Moral intuitions appear to be ‘self-evident’ and these ‘moral truths’ are cognized “not by a process of ratiocination and reflection but rather by a process more akin to perception.”<sup>787</sup> Haidt, thus, identifies the derivation of ‘moral intuitions’ with what has been described previously as aesthetics of sense, and which further finds coherence with Nietzsche’s assertion concerning instinctive judgments that procure perspectives and interpretations.

Haidt identifies four reasons for “doubting the causality of reasoning in moral judgment.” These are:

1. Of the two cognitive processes at work in moral judgments – reasoning and intuition – “reasoning has been over emphasized”
2. “Reasoning is often *motivated*”
3. Although we illusorily experience reasoning to be prior to a judgment, reasoning often “constructs post hoc justifications”
4. “Moral action covaries with moral emotion more than with moral reasoning”<sup>788</sup>

The first point is moot if the others are true. The second point should, as I have argued, be regarded very much in the same sense as the argument Nietzsche made against Kant regarding aesthetic judgment: i.e., all judging is irrational and *motivated*; that is, there is no such thing as a judgment that is disinterested. The fourth point follows closely from this, and the third point follows from what was laid forth in the chapter on the Will to Power as interpretation: the ways we think about

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<sup>786</sup> Haidt, *The Emotional Dog*, pg. 814

<sup>787</sup> Haidt, *The Emotional Dog*, pg. 814

<sup>788</sup> Haidt, *The Emotional Dog*, pg. 815

the world are constructions imposed upon it, only some more or less incorporative of various elements.

Psychologists such as Kohlberg who are influenced by a rationalist approach (either deontological or consequentialist) tend to presuppose the reverse etiology. Exemplifying his rationalist orientation, Kohlberg writes, “The moral force in personality is cognitive. Affective forces are involved in moral decisions, but affect is neither moral nor immoral. When the affective arousal is channeled into moral directions, it is moral; when it is not so channeled, it is not. The moral channeling mechanisms themselves are cognitive.”<sup>789</sup> That is to say, moral judgment is rational, and ‘affect’ is ‘moral’ only when feeling the channel carved by moral reasoning. Haidt writes, “Psychologists have generally assumed that morality is learned in childhood, and they have set out to discover how morality gets from outside the child to inside. The social intuitionist model,” on the other hand, “proposes that morality, like language, is a major evolutionary adaptation for an intensely social species, built into multiple regions of the brain and body, that is better described as emergent than as learned yet that requires input and shaping from a particular culture. Moral intuitions are therefore both innate and enculturated.”<sup>790</sup> This is remarkably inline with Nietzsche’s assertion concerning “instinctive judgments.”

Haidt writes, “Our moral life is plagued by two illusions. The first illusion can be called the *wag-the-dog illusion*: We believe that our own moral judgment (the dog) is driven by our own moral reasoning (the tail). The second illusion can be

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<sup>789</sup> Kohlberg, “from is to ought”, pp. 230-231, qtd. by Haidt, *The Emotional Dog*, pg. 816

<sup>790</sup> Haidt, *The Emotional Dog*, pg. 826



called the *wag-the-other-dog's-tail illusion*," where we assume that our reasoning *qua* rationality might convince another of our own judgment, as when judging a thing as beautiful or good, and proceeding to argue for the case.<sup>791</sup> Furthermore, a rationalist's approach to ethics can "*create* an unusual and nonrepresentative kind of moral judgment. ... moral reasoning is not left free to search for truth but is likely to be hired out like a lawyer by various motives, employed only to seek confirmation of preordained conclusions."<sup>792</sup> Significantly, moral reasoning can often be engaged in *rationalizations* of affectively determined orientations. Reasoning, although not thus described by Haidt, can actually entail defense mechanisms. It can be either a rationalization, in which case it is underpinned by disavowal; or it can be an intellectualization, in which case it is underpinned by repression; or it can utilize any number of other defenses. In both cases, the 'reasoner' attempts to dissociate the reasoning from the motivational states for the reasoning, which is an impossible task.

What all this implies is that affective states matter far more greatly in moral judgments than reasoning. Further evidence of this, Haidt writes, "comes from the study of psychopaths." Psychopaths generally have "good intelligence and a lack of delusions or irrational thinking. [They] know the rules of social behavior and they understand the harmful consequences of their actions for others. They simply do not care about those consequences. ... [they] show a general poverty of major affective reactions, particularly those that would be triggered by the suffering of

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<sup>791</sup> Haidt, *The Emotional Dog*, pg. 826

<sup>792</sup> Haidt, *The Emotional Dog*, pg. 822

others.”<sup>793</sup> The psychopath, claims Haidt, “illustrates Hume’s statement, ‘... ‘tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the world to the scratching of my little finger’.”<sup>794</sup> The preference entails what it is that most offends the senses, such as a sense of disgust, as well be articulated in the following chapter.

In the diagrams below, Haidt illustrates a comparison of the rational model of judging (figure 1) and the non-rational, what he calls the intuitionist, model (figure 2). Although not indicated by Haidt’s diagram concerning the rationalist approach to judgments in Figure 1, there is also a social element to the rationalist approach, which Haidt means to illustrate with links 5 & 6 in Figure 2. All of Figure 2., however, illustrates the intuitionist model, where reasoning is regarded as having a contributing factor at times, but where the most weight of the judgment still falls on intuition.<sup>795</sup> This is called the social interactionist model. Social interaction pertains to social aspects of behavior such as “taking turns, sharing, harming, and responding to harm.” Haidt observes, “In the social interactionist model, people are said to think about the consequences of an action before determining whether the action is a moral violation.”<sup>796</sup> In other words, we think that our moral judgments are caused by our reasoning. And we use reasoning to try to argue against, or for, other peoples’ judgments (whether aesthetic or moral), but in reality, the only power reasoning seems to have across the board in effecting other peoples’ judgments has nothing to do with reason at all; instead, it would appear to concern rhetoric or something aesthetic – an appeal to affective elements.

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<sup>793</sup> Haidt, *The Emotional Dog*, pg. 824

<sup>794</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, pg. 461. qtd. by Haidt, *The Emotional Dog*, pg. 824

<sup>795</sup> Haidt, *The Emotional Dog*, pg. 819

<sup>796</sup> Haidt, *The Emotional Dog*, pg. 816

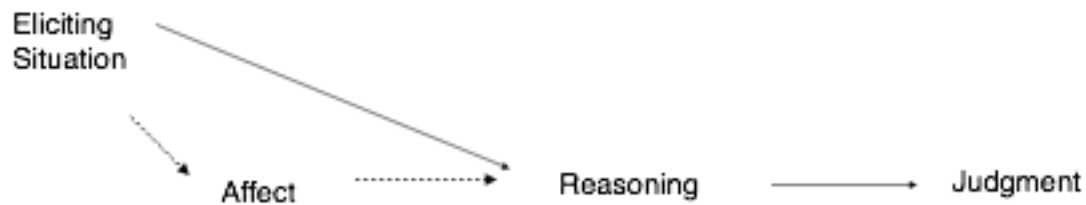


Figure 1. The rationalist model of moral judgment. Moral affects such as sympathy may sometimes be inputs to moral reasoning (*Haidt, Emotional Dog, pg. 815*)

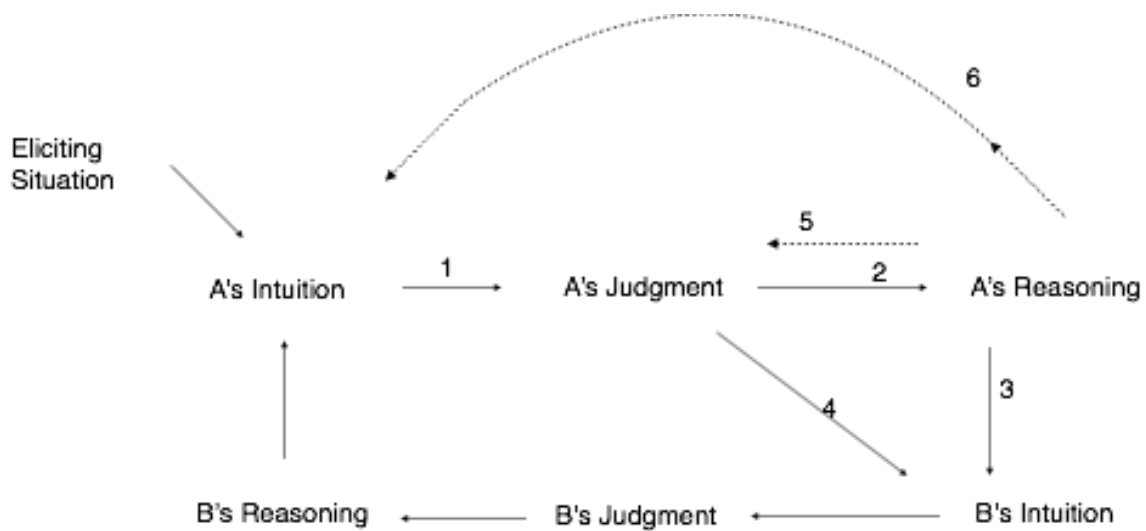


Figure 2. The social intuitionist model of moral judgment. The numbered links, drawn for person A only, are (1) the intuitive judgment link, (2) the post hoc reasoning link, (3) the reasoned persuasion link, and (4) the social persuasion link. Two additional links are hypothesized to occur less frequently: (5) the reasoned judgment link and (6) the private reflection link. (*Haidt, Emotional Dog, pg. 815*)

## The Aesthetic Influence on Ethical Valuations

I believe Haidt is wrong to attribute moral valuations to *intuition*. Moral intuitionism runs the risk of implying that people have evolutionarily acquired certain *intuitions* that are inherently of a quality that can be judged as moral or immoral. It runs the risk of postulating the existence of a *thing* called an '*intuition*' that is elicited by various situations or perspectives.<sup>797</sup> This is a danger with an account of intuitionism, observable in Haidt's work, despite the fact that, in subsequent research, Haidt observes the causal link of the affect *disgust* – an *aesthetic response* – on moral reasoning.<sup>798</sup> If feelings of disgust are the stuff of intuitions, for example, then there are no evolutionarily inherited moral intuitions, but evolutionarily inherited aesthetic capacities, *qua* aesthetics of sense and feeling, that serve as a ground of the 'moral intuitions'. In other words, the *intuition* of a 'moral intuition' is nothing more than an aesthetic response, an embodied sensation or feeling that might be universal or particular, and which guides moral reasoning. This is the claim I'm making in the present work. It is therefore doubtful that there exist intuitions inherited *as such*, but the existence of *affects* is unquestionable.<sup>799</sup>

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<sup>797</sup> This becomes clearer where Haidt asserts that moral intuitionism is comparable to phonemes in the development of language, where children are born with the phonetic capacity for every language, but that they lose the ability to make certain sounds, or to contrast certain sounds, after sufficient exposure to specific languages that do not use such sounds. There is evidence that Haidt himself might be making the mistake where he makes assertions like "cultural knowledge is far more than a set of *inherited beliefs about the right and wrong* ways of doing things." See Haidt, *The Emotional Dog*, pg. 827

<sup>798</sup> see, for example, Schnall, Simone "Disgust" & Wheatley, Thalia "Hypnotic Disgust"

<sup>799</sup> However, the existence of an affect as inherited from an ancestor's life, as Freud postulates in *Moses and Monotheism*, is clearly false. But that we have acquired, through evolution, the capacity for such affects is without doubt.

That which Haidt regards as *intuition* is actually an *aesthetic valuation*. This makes even more sense regarding the below research on the influence of disgust on moral judgments. And it's not that Haidt's research can't allow for this possibility; rather, it is quite consistent with it. He just doesn't acknowledge that the aesthetic aspect has priority. Haidt inappropriately regards what appears empirically as exemplifying an 'intuition'; but really the 'intuition' is nothing more than an aesthetic feeling. What I aim to show in what follows is: moral judgments are valuations that have an *aesthetic foundation* and are causally correlated to aesthetic valuations. In other words, what is valued as 'beautiful' is likewise regarded as 'good' and believed to be 'true'.

In philosophy, Kant claimed that Beauty is symbolic of the morally good. Schopenhauer also appears to affiliate 'piercing the veil of Maya' with the experience not only of *compassion*, but also with the experience of the contemplation of the beautiful. In each case, one gets beyond the *principium individuationis*. Nietzsche, usually implicitly, recognizes a connection between what is judged as ugly or beautiful with ethical valuations. Nietzsche, as noted previously in the discussion of Aesthetics, appeals to "instinctive judgments,"<sup>800</sup> where judgments are made before reflection takes place. And as mentioned previously, Freud asserts explicitly that Kant's categorical imperative is the product of reaction-formation,<sup>801</sup> the vicissitude by which Freud asserts we acquire our feelings of

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<sup>800</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §804

<sup>801</sup> Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, pg. 167. This is an inference. Explicitly, he refers to it as the product of an Oedipal complex in relation to the super-ego, but the explanation itself parallels everything he has said about reaction formation.

disgust, moral sentiments, and aesthetic valuations.<sup>802</sup> Until recently, there has been little, if any, empirical research done on the relationship between feelings of disgust and moral judgments, but psychologists are beginning to examine the connection that Freud observed explicitly in 1905 with the publication of the *Three Essays*.

In an experiment done by Thalia Wheatley and Haidt, participants were hypnotized to “feel disgust in response to one of two arbitrary words.”<sup>803</sup> These words were then used in vignettes of situations where some action traditionally valued as immoral was taking place (such as bribery). They found that “moral transgressions” were experienced by the participants in the study as “more disgusting when their hypnotic disgust word was embedded within the vignettes than when this word was absent,”<sup>804</sup> by triggering a ‘sickening feeling’. For a second experiment, participants were asked to rate a list of activities according to preference, where some of the activities were described using the words affiliated with the hypnotically implanted feeling of disgust. The results show that “Participants judged actions to be more disgusting when their hypnotic word was present than when it was absent.”<sup>805</sup> Furthermore, it was observed, “participants sometimes experienced puzzlement as they watched themselves make severe judgments,” and when asked to explain the evaluations, it was clear that post hoc moral reasoning, as described by Haidt, was taking place.<sup>806</sup> “Rather than over-rule

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<sup>802</sup> Freud, *Three Essays on Sexuality*

<sup>803</sup> Wheatley, *Hypnotic Disgust*, pg. 780

<sup>804</sup> Wheatley, *Hypnotic Disgust*, pg. 781

<sup>805</sup> Wheatley, *Hypnotic Disgust*, pg. 782

<sup>806</sup> Wheatley, *Hypnotic Disgust*, pg. 783

their feelings..., some participants launched an even more desperate search for external justification.”<sup>807</sup> Wheatley thus concludes, “augmenting feelings of disgust through hypnosis can increase the severity of moral judgments ...” and provides evidence for Hume’s assertion that reason can only serve and obey the passions.<sup>808</sup>

In another study by Simone Schnall and Haidt,<sup>809</sup> published in an article titled “Disgust as Embodied Moral Judgment,” Schnall writes, “Affective feelings have been shown to influence ratings of life satisfaction, estimates of risk, and other evaluative judgments.”<sup>810</sup> Schnall writes that, evolutionarily, “Disgust evolved to help our omnivorous species decide what to eat in a world full of parasites and microbes that spread by physical contact. ... Disgust indicates that a substance either should be avoided or, if ingestion has already occurred, should be expelled.”<sup>811</sup> But although disgust appears to be food-related, it was also “well-suited for use as an emotion of social rejection.”<sup>812</sup> And furthermore, indicating the process of reaction-formation as articulated by Freud, “as with other emotions, feelings of disgust can be transferred to objects for which they are irrelevant.”<sup>813</sup> And “Disgust,” notes Schnall, appears to have a privileged place among affective states concerning evaluative judgments owing to the fact that it “may be the most effective ... at triggering the gastroenteric nervous system.”<sup>814</sup> Ethical judgments, then, would appear to be as embodied as anything else, quite literally. At this point, it might be pertinent to

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<sup>807</sup> Wheatley, *Hypnotic Disgust*, pg. 783

<sup>808</sup> Wheatley, *Hypnotic Disgust*, pg. 783

<sup>809</sup> Schnall, et al. “Disgust and Moral Judgment”

<sup>810</sup> Schnall, et al. “Disgust and Moral Judgment” pg. 1097

<sup>811</sup> Schnall, et al. “Disgust and Moral Judgment” pg. 1097

<sup>812</sup> Schnall, et al. “Disgust and Moral Judgment” pg. 1097

<sup>813</sup> Schnall, et al. “Disgust and Moral Judgment” pg. 1097

<sup>814</sup> Schnall, et al. “Disgust and Moral Judgment” pg. 1097

remind the reader as well of Nietzsche's assertions concerning 'instinctive judgments' that, whilst psychically bifurcated according to a person's psychical constitution, largely act for biological reasons concerning what is 'self-preserving' or 'life-enhancing'.

Schnall et al. conducted a series of experiments, the first of which sought to replicate the findings of Wheatley and Haidt in their experiment of hypnotically induced feelings of disgust, only here by inducing the affect by means of repugnant smells. In a series of other experiments, they also found that where a feeling of disgust was induced in participants, "Disgust influenced moral judgment similarly for both disgust and non-disgust vignettes,"<sup>815</sup> but interestingly correlated with a susceptibility to visceral reactions.<sup>816</sup> After showing the influence of disgust on moral judgments, another experiment was done to determine if disgust has a privileged position as an influential factor in judgments of moral worth, or if other negative affects such as sadness can play a similar role.

For this experiment, three conditions were examined: one of disgust, one of sadness, and a neutral condition. It was found that "participants in the disgust condition gave more severe moral judgments than did participants in the two comparison conditions," and where those in the "disgust condition gave significantly higher ratings than did those in the sadness condition."<sup>817</sup> Sadness, contrary to expectations, "showed a trend in the opposite direction of influence on moral judgments," which "suggests that the effects of disgust on moral judgment are not

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<sup>815</sup> Schnall, et al. "Disgust and Moral Judgment" pg. 1102

<sup>816</sup> Schnall, et al. "Disgust and Moral Judgment" pg. 1103

<sup>817</sup> Schnall, et al. "Disgust and Moral Judgment" pg. 1103



merely a manifestation of a general tendency for negative affect to amplify moral judgments. It thus appears that the more clearly participants are experiencing disgust, the more directly this feeling is taken as input to moral judgments.”<sup>818</sup> What I’d like to highlight is that “sadness” is an emotion, not an aesthetic feeling, whereas disgust is deeply aesthetic.

Schnall further makes four important observations regarding the experiments on the effects of disgust on moral judgments.

First, ... the effect of disgust applies regardless of whether the action to be judged is itself disgusting. Second, ... disgust influenced moral, but not additional non-moral judgments. Third, ... the results appear to concern feelings of disgust rather than merely the primed concept of disgust. Fourth, that there is something special about the connection between disgust and morality was indicated by the fact that induced sadness did not have similar effects.<sup>819</sup>

“Disgust is often experienced as a particularly visceral feeling,” owing perhaps to the various physical responses it can trigger.<sup>820</sup> This suggests that moral judgments, rather than being rational especially in the extreme sense of being able to operate independently of, or even in opposition to, bodily affective states, are instead very much embodied valuations or reactions *against the visceral feelings of disgust* in particular. In other words, what is rational in a moral judgment appears to be *aesthetically grounded*, meant broadly to encompass aesthetics of sense (agreeable/disagreeable) or aesthetics of reflection (beauty, ugliness, etc.).

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<sup>818</sup> Schnall, et al. “Disgust and Moral Judgment” pg. 1105

<sup>819</sup> Schnall, et al. “Disgust and Moral Judgment” pp. 1105-1006

<sup>820</sup> Schnall, et al. “Disgust and Moral Judgment” pg. 1106

We see the same in Nietzsche's works as well, and it is precisely this relation to disgust that informs *reactive nihilism*. Nietzsche often refers to *Ekel* throughout his works, and significantly in *Zarathustra*. *Ekel* can be translated into English as *disgust* or as *nausea*. Most English translations of Nietzsche's work use 'nausea', perhaps because it highlights existential concerns. But *disgust* is equally appropriate, more so when acknowledging the visceral response it indicates.

In the final section of *Zarathustra*, Zarathustra speaks to the motley crew gathered in his cave of the 'higher types' for whom he has been waiting and laboring. "Not for you do I wait here in these mountains, not with you shall I go down for the last time," the motley crew were omens of the *Übermenschlich*. Such 'higher ones' are "not the people of great longing, of great nausea, of great surfeit and what which you called the remnant of God."<sup>821</sup> These 'higher types' Zarathustra refers to also has his children and as his "beautiful new species,"<sup>822</sup> indicating the *Übermensch*. This should also be understood in relation to Nietzsche's description in "*On the Sublime ones*," where sublimity appears to indicate a longing and beauty a realization of what is longed for, and a kind of harmony impossible for post-modernism.

One of the motley crew in the final part of *Zarathustra*, the magician, identifies himself and others as those "who suffer from *the great nausea*."<sup>823</sup> Each of the motley crew enters as one feeling disgust or nausea.<sup>824</sup> Such nausea is also affiliated by Nietzsche with the spirit of gravity. In "*The Awakening*," he writes of his

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<sup>821</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, "The Welcome," pg. 229

<sup>822</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, "The Welcome," pg. 229

<sup>823</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, "The Song of Melancholy," pg. 241

<sup>824</sup> See also the Kings, Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, "Conversation with Kings," pg. 197

motley crew convalescing and, in convalescing, “*the spirit of gravity*” is “already retreating.” And furthermore, “*Nausea* retreats from these higher men ... they’re becoming grateful. / *That* I take as the best sign; they’re becoming grateful. ... They are *convalescing!*” In *On the Spirit of Gravity*, Zarathustra states, “Only the human being is a heavy burden to himself!” and “This is because he lugs too much that is foreign to him,” not least of which are *foreign values*, which makes life itself seem like a desert,<sup>825</sup> and thus implicitly would lead one to the hinter worldly for recompense. But, in addition to this, “much that is one’s own is also a heavy burden! And much of what people are on the inside is like an oyster, namely disgusting and slimy and hard to grasp.”<sup>826</sup> What is “one’s own” are the instincts and drives – one’s nature; and what people are “on the inside” are the instincts and drives – that beyond which one can’t get up or down to any other inference, as Nietzsche describes in BGE §36. And here, Nietzsche writes, “A noble shell with a noble ornamentation must intercede for it. But one must also learn this art: *to have* a shell and seemly sigh and clever blindness. ... [but] many a shell is meager and sad and too much shell.” The art is to have ‘Choosy tongues and stomachs,’ for “chewing and digesting everything – that is truly the swine’s style.”<sup>827</sup> Thus, while Nietzsche advocates making the disgusting into pearls or mother of pearl shells, we must have a ‘shell’ – we must have a discerning taste and we must learn the art of cultivating what we know of our selves into pearls, into works of art, but must do so with refined tastes and without saying yes to everything, as might a postmodernist. But

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<sup>825</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, “*On the Spirit of Gravity*”

<sup>826</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, “*On the Spirit of Gravity*”

<sup>827</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, “*On the Spirit of Gravity*”

the art itself is not something that can be taught, as Kant also writes of genius. But unlike Kant, It concerns each person's own unique taste. This is what Zarathustra answers those who ask 'The way'. "*The way after all – it does not exist!*"<sup>828</sup>

What becomes clear from this exposition is the guidance one receives from disgust, and even more importantly, it is not *that* one feels disgust that is important but *the means by which one responds to such disgust*. Previously, in "On Old and New Tablets," Zarathustra speaks, "There is much filth in the world: *that much* is true! But the world itself is not therefore a filthy monster! / There is wisdom in the fact that much in the world smells foul: nausea itself creates wings and water-divining powers! Even in the best there is something that nauseates; and the best is still something that must be overcome!"<sup>829</sup> In *On the Sublime Ones*, Zarathustra criticizes one who is sublime, and contrasted with himself, "There is still contempt in his eyes, and [disgust] lingers on his lips."<sup>830</sup> This sublime one is referred to as an 'ascetic of the spirit' who Zarathustra regards as ugly.<sup>831</sup> The ugliness prompts Zarathustra to assert, "His happiness should smell of earth and not of contempt for the earth. I want to see him as a white bull, snorting and bellowing ahead of the plow – and his bellowing should praise everything earthly."<sup>832</sup> In other words, Zarathustra is again criticizing the influence of the hinter worldly, and states that what makes this being ugly is the inability to reconcile himself with the earth, with nature, and all that is of this world, such as the body and the senses. The sublime one is a 'hero', but

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<sup>828</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, "On the Spirit of Gravity"

<sup>829</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, "On Old and New Tablets," pg. 164

<sup>830</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, "On the Sublime Ones"

<sup>831</sup> ugly is, for reflection, what is disagreeable or disgusting for sense

<sup>832</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, "On the Sublime Ones"

“Precisely for the hero *beauty* is the most difficult of things. Beauty is not to be wrested by any violent willing. ... To stand with muscles relaxed and with an unharnessed will: this is the most difficult for all of you sublime ones! When power becomes gracious and descends into view: beauty I call such descending.”<sup>833</sup> The point is that there is no order or harmony for sublime ones, for the heroic will, driven only by passion. But importantly, Nietzsche also asserts that, were ‘form’ and ‘style’ to be achieved, it would need to be achieved without force. In other words, and regarding Nietzsche’s foray into drive psychology, it would require a harmonious arrangement of the drives, but no *forceful* efforts – no repression – in order to acquire such harmony. This Zarathustra would find beautiful.

This is also coherent with what Nietzsche writes in *Daybreak*,<sup>834</sup> where he writes that one should be as a gardener with one’s drives. One can garden by imposing a strict order (in the English or Chinese style), one could let the ‘plants’ grow wild as direct expressions of nature, or one could give embellishments here or there, implicitly allowing their expression but also giving style to it, not repressing it in the English or Chinese fashion. Nietzsche seems to opt for the third possibility – order, form and style that isn’t forced. To let the plants grow wild would be noble, to impose and force order – slavish, involving a reaction-formation; but to give style – *detours* – to their growth without forcing the order would be like sublimating one’s drives, precluding repressions and disavowals.

In addition, the above speech of Zarathustra’s also indicates what Gemes argues in his essay on Nietzsche and post-modernism: namely, that the

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<sup>833</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, “*On the Sublime Ones*”

<sup>834</sup> See, for example, *Daybreak* §560

postmodernist celebrates sublimity and exemplifies an ugliness that results from an unordered chaos. Beauty requires the giving of style and order. Disgust figures in Nietzsche's philosophy as a necessary component in overcoming and also of giving style and order. The rabble are unable to recognize it. In a sense, they *repudiate* it, react against it, disavowing or repressing it. But Nietzsche makes the point that it is something that must be encountered, that must be experienced as that which can give one the comportment to overcome it by first acknowledging it. And it is only thus that one can *beautify* existence. Otherwise, beauty remains only something hinter worldly, and it is precisely the hinter worldly that must be rejected.

Importantly, for Nietzsche there is a bifurcation according to how one responds to disgust. A noble spirit might, aggressively, simply try to annihilate what's disgusting in order to make its world beautiful. A weak or fettered spirit will repudiate, through disavowals or repressions, what is regarded as disgusting and thereby 'beautify' the world by refusing what is disagreeable a place in it, at times passive-aggressively and cruelly using others as scapegoats for the disagreeableness that such spirits are unable to avoid facing. Only the *Übermensch* is capable of facing and beautifying what is disgusting, the free spirits to a lesser extent whilst providing the possibility for the *Übermensch*. And again, the means of such beautifying must be, for an egosyntonicly oriented spirit, *sublimation*.

## Sublimation and Morality

Walter Kaufmann explicitly associates sublimation with morality where 'self-overcoming' in general is regarded as sublimation, and 'morality' as the ethos of that overcoming. This, however, should by now clearly be regarded as a mistake, whereas morality is peculiar to reaction-formation or other egodystonic vicissitudes. Sublimation is actually, as I hope to make clear, antagonistic to specifically moral valuations. Kaufman states that Nietzsche identifies the common thread of morality as will to power. He correctly observes that Nietzsche advances a kind of moral relativism, whereby every moral code will differ in proportion to the difference in perspective and interpretation of a society. Thus, against utilitarians and, loosely, deontologists, one "cannot *a priori* assert the superiority of the values of [one's] own society; nor can [one] judge, or even compare, the values of different societies unless they have something in common,"<sup>835</sup> but in that case all that can be compared would be that in reference to which there is common ground. However, Nietzsche also is not absolutely relative. Kaufmann observes, "Against the relativists" Nietzsche claims "there *is* a common element that makes possible comparative judgments of value," and that is the will to power. For Nietzsche, then, what determines the valuations is the will to power, and this everyone has in common; here there is not relativity but a universal substratum of sorts. But the valuations that are the symptoms of the various expressions and manifestations of will to power are quite contingent on various aspects in the environment.

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<sup>835</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, pg. 200

What should be emphasized here, as elsewhere, is the establishment of harmony, i.e., the acquisition of the *feeling* of homeostasis. Contrary to Kaufmann, even slave morality results in a kind of ‘harmony’,<sup>836</sup> since the purpose of every vicissitude upon which morality is grounded is the procurement of harmony and a resolution of conflict – of homeostasis. But a slave morality, or even a ‘higher’ morality, are harmonies that result from the exclusion of various elements. For the slave, it involves either the repression of drives or the disavowal of external elements; for the noble, it often results in a lack of freedom with respect to the expression of his or her drives, as they need to be expressed directly. In instances of frustration, this can mean a violent annihilation of conflicting external elements rather than an incorporation of them.<sup>837</sup> A harmony of sorts is procured in both instances, but it is contingent on secondary satisfactions provided through egodystonic orientations with the world. The slave, for example, harmonizes its existence with the world by repudiating troubling aspects. This might be accomplished by repressing troubling drives and erecting schizoid fantasies as substitute satisfactions due to the lack of satisfaction with reality. This is what Freud termed a compromise formation. The basis of this secondary satisfaction is that it counteracts the dissonance and conflict with the primary satisfaction (which, for Nietzsche, is the slave’s own impotence). The noble, on the other hand, might harmonize its existence by annihilating the conflicting elements, analogously to disavowal but through physical rather than psychical action. In *Civilization and its*

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<sup>836</sup> see above, Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, pg. 227, Kaufmann asserts that harmony is only possible through sublimation.

<sup>837</sup> I refer the reader to the above discussions concerning the ‘vicissitudes’.



*Discontents*, Freud spoke of a hermitic existence as one akin to disavowal. It is a means of feeling harmonious with the world by removing oneself from aspects of it. Egodystonic constitutions achieve a kind harmony psychically, but generally at the expense of real relations (with one's drives or external reality) and usually result in the formations of compensatory neurotic or psychotic symptoms.

'Harmony' is an essentially aesthetic concept (indicated 'homeostasis' for sentient beings). All the preceding discussions should be sufficient in demonstrating that this conceptualization is appropriate because the task at hand is, basically, an aesthetic task. Every ethical valuation, as well as every aesthetic valuation, refers in every case to a ground of feeling or sensibility, and the only way of altering a feeling or sense with regard to content is again aesthetic: it involves the reorganization of content and a perspectival alteration that can establish a new harmony. Self-overcoming is a transfiguration and transformation in which harmonies are created that are either only psychical harmonies (at the expense of drives or external nature) or both psychically and externally incorporative (although all external reality is also only an interpretation, it coheres with empirical verifications and a background of consistent interpretations).

Kaufmann claims the "differences between particular moralities may be due to divergent conceptions not only of the aim and sanction, but also of the manner of self-overcoming."<sup>838</sup> I think he couldn't be more correct, taken both as a general interpretation of morality as well as an accurate reading of Nietzsche's ideas. 'Self-overcoming', and the valuations that stem from it, emerge from one's psychical

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<sup>838</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, pg. 214

constitution regarding the ways drives are or are not allowed expression. He further observes, “The classical ideal was that reason should control the inclinations, while Kant insisted ... that inclination must be overcome to such an extent that it may not even be a co-motive of action.”<sup>839</sup> This is certainly the case with what has been argued up to now. Arguably, the Kantian position was inherited from the Stoic position as well, as Kant himself appears to indicate;<sup>840</sup> Kant inherited a stoicism that spawned from the encountered of Alexander’s conquests with Buddhism, and later was the germ influencing the Christian renunciation of instincts, a renunciation that itself was purified increasingly through the centuries

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<sup>839</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, pg. 214

<sup>840</sup> This is also a point on which Kant elaborated in describing the difference between Epicureans and Stoics. Kant characterizes the Epicureans and Stoics thus, “The Epicurean said, to be conscious of one’s maxim leading to happiness – that is virtue; the Stoic, to be conscious of one’s virtue is happiness. To the former, *prudence* was tantamount to morality; to the latter, who selected a higher designation for virtue, *morality* alone was true wisdom” (*Practical Reason*, pg. 142 [111]). Furthermore, he writes, the Epicurean “posited the principle thereof on the aesthetic side” and the Stoic “on the logical side.” Further clarifying the relation:

The [Epicurean] in the consciousness of sensible need, the [Stoic] in the independence of practical reason from all sensible determining bases. ... According to the Epicurean, the concept of virtue already resided in the maxim ... to further one’s own happiness; according to the Stoic, ... the feeling of happiness was already contained in the consciousness of one’s virtue (*Practical Reason*, pg. 142 [112]).

Kant, it is easy to see, aligns himself more with the philosophy of the Stoic. And one could argue that the Epicurean can be used to denote the empirical or utilitarian position, which hold ‘happiness’ as the greatest good so that actions are done to procure happiness as the consequence.

Mill himself seems to align Utilitarianism with the Epicurean school of thought. Addressing criticisms concerning the relationship between utility and pleasure, Mill writes:

Those who know anything about the matter are aware that every writer, from Epicurus to Bentham, who maintained a theory of utility meant by it, not something to be contradistinguished from pleasure, but pleasure itself, together with the exemption from pain; and instead of opposing the useful to the agreeable or the ornamental, have always declared that the useful means these, among other things (Utilitarianism, pg. 6).

and became particularly responsible, although not solely,<sup>841</sup> for the weakness and psychical impairment that Nietzsche came to identify with Europe.

### ***Amor Fati* – an Imperative to Dance**

Nietzsche advocates *willing* one's fate rather than repudiating, avoiding, or even merely tolerating it. This is expressed by *amor fati*. It is a synthesis of the strengths of stoic and Epicurean orientations in life. It embraces a stoical fatalism and simultaneously an epicurean sensitivity, gratitude, and attunement with oneself. It further removes those detrimental aspects: the ascetic repudiation of the instincts and passions and the desensitization of Stoics, and the hermitic weakness of Epicureanism – repressions on the one hand and disavowals on the other. Nietzsche's synthesis ultimately promotes incorporation.

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes, "I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them – thus I will be one of those who makes things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love from now on!"<sup>842</sup> And again in *Ecce Homo* he writes, "My formula for human greatness is *amor fati*: that you do not want anything to be different, not forwards, not backwards, not for all eternity. Not just to tolerate necessity ... but to *love* it."<sup>843</sup> *Amor fati* is, while sparsely referred to explicitly, an imperative characteristic of strong spirits. In *Thus*

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<sup>841</sup> Nietzsche also identifies elements of Epicureanism and Skepticism, and significantly Platonism, with the weakness and psychical impairments. But Plato and Aristotle had been largely forgotten until the Renaissance. Elements of Stoicism and Epicureanism, however, were preserved and enhanced within the Judeo-Christian Faiths.

<sup>842</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §276,

<sup>843</sup> Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, Why I am so Clever, §10

*Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra asks us to think of the possibility that all that will happen has already happened, the same events occur time and again.<sup>844</sup> This is presented as both inevitable and unavoidable, and Nietzsche sees that only a strong character can will this to be the case. In order to *will* eternal recurrence, *amor fati* is necessary. Nehamas writes, "The self-creation that Nietzsche has in mind involves accepting everything that we have done and, in the ideal case, blending it into a perfectly coherent whole."<sup>845</sup> Significantly, Nietzsche discusses *amor fati* as a process of *beautification*.

According to my interpretation, this emphasizes the importance of incorporation. And incorporation precludes egodystonic vicissitudes. The vicissitudes of repression, disavowal, and aggression, e.g., all exemplify failures of incorporation. Furthermore, only egodystonic vicissitudes exemplify rigidity and stubbornness. As Nehamas observes, "The creation of the self is not a static episode, a final goal which, once attained, forecloses the possibility of continuing to change and to develop."<sup>846</sup> As mentioned above, this is one aspect of the traditional view of happiness that Nietzsche rejects. This is observed in the neurotic compulsion to make permanent, to postulate fixed, eternal 'truths', and so on. Egodystonic vicissitudes, particularly of the neurotic sort, are configured *in opposition* to becoming. They want constancy and operate against the flux of life, seeking the unchangeable. They are essentially a hindrance to incorporation. Nehamas observes, "Zarathustra's mistrust of unity – his desire to avoid goals of stability – is

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<sup>844</sup> See also Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §341 for his first mention of eternal recurrence

<sup>845</sup> Nehamas, *Nietzsche*, pp. 187-188

<sup>846</sup> Nehamas, *Nietzsche*, pg. 189

his aversion to the permanence of specific character traits, parallel to Nietzsche's praise of 'brief habits' in section 295 of *The Gay Science*.<sup>847</sup> In the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche also writes that one should not be as snakes who lie too long in the same sun. Likewise, Zarathustra is much like a nomad. He begins in solitude, but cannot remain too long in that solitude, that 'sun' as it were, and requires social interaction, a 'different sun', so to speak. He descends the mountain. But Zarathustra never reaches a point of stably existing here nor there, for as soon as he feels content among his friends or disciples, he feels an imperative to climb a mountain and breathe the clear air of solitude once more. Every book of *Zarathustra* is enveloped by the perpetual ascending and descending of Zarathustra, from solitude to community, from community to solitude. And one can infer that, for Zarathustra, this would go on *ad infinitum*, never relinquishing his opposition to a static, flat-line of existence, such as he encounters on the Epicurean blessed isles. It is inherently antagonistic to incorporation in virtue of the rigidity; it repudiates change and thus, in a sense, disavows 'reality'. Only egosyntonic vicissitudes allow for the openness needed for the incorporation implied by the great health. Indeed, this was noticed above in the distinction between reaction-formation and sublimation, the former being rigid and inflexible, the latter more adaptive and flexible.

A central determining factor of valuations, whether aesthetic or ethical, is relational. Everything that is judged is so judged on account of the way by which one relates to the thing judged, for the relation determines the perspective and the interpretation, and therefore the way one might choose to relate further, contingent

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<sup>847</sup> Nehamas, *Nietzsche*, pg. 190

on such perspectives. Thus Nietzsche writes, “There is no ‘essence-in-itself’; (the *relations* ... constitute the essence)...”<sup>848</sup> The *relations* constitute the essence. And what determines one’s relation – in other words, one’s orientation – is one’s psychological constitution or configuration of drives. One relates to a thing in a particular way owing to a particular constitution that opens up particular perspectives and interpretations of that thing, or possibilities of such. If one’s psychological constitution is egodystonic, then one will be oriented towards things in the world in such a fashion that is egodystonic; that is, one will disavow things or value and relate to things with a filter of repression, both of which hinder incorporation.

The great health that Nietzsche imagines, however, entails a harmony that is constructed out of conflicting drives. It can involve neither repression nor disavowal (nor aggression), but only sublimation (wherever direct expressions aren’t appropriate). In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche writes, “The word ‘*Übermensch*’, is a designation for a type that has the highest constitutional excellence, in contrast to ‘modern’ people, to ‘good’ people, to Christians and other nihilists – a word that really makes you think when it comes from the mouth of Zarathustra, a *destroyer* of morals.”<sup>849</sup> Thus, beauty from the perspective of the *Übermensch* is of the *highest constitutional excellence*; and, correspondingly, the perspective of the *Übermensch* is beyond the moralizing of good and evil. The values of good and evil are generated by weakly constituted spirits; that is, they result from egodystonic orientations with the world. “The strength of a spirit would be proportionate to how much of the

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<sup>848</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §625

<sup>849</sup> Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Good Books,” §1

truth he could withstand.”<sup>850</sup> What Nietzsche means here is not the ‘truth’ that is made beautiful by interpretation (what we take to be the truth), but *the Nihilistic Truth* that is ugly and uncomfortable.<sup>851</sup> A strong spirit is able to incorporate more ugliness and more suffering than a weaker spirit, and incorporates it by beautifying it. The *Übermensch*, supposedly, is such a spirit capable of that incorporation.

Decadent and degenerate spirits are often described as those spirits least capable of incorporating and putting to use various aspect of their world, be it environmental or ‘internal’, i.e., concerning one’s own nature, one’s own instincts and drives. Both weak and strong spirits appear to be oriented towards establishing a kind of psychical harmony or unity, but the means they have of doing so are very different. The weak or the ascetic spirits generally obtain this mastery by repressing antagonistic drives or by disavowing antagonistic aspects of external ‘reality’. Nehamas recognizes, “Unity can always be achieved by refusing to acknowledge an existing multiplicity.” And goes on to point out, “it would be more accurate to say, however, that *only the feeling of unity*, and not unity itself, can be secured in this way.”<sup>852</sup> What Nehamas points out is the possibility of establishing a *feeling* of unity, an interpretation of unity, that is procured by vicissitudes of repression or disavowal. While Nehamas focuses on the aspect of disavowal, it is equally plausible that a semblance – or illusion – of the *feeling* of unity can be acquired by repression as well, the repudiation of the disrupting influences of the drives. Stronger and healthier spirits, by contrast, are able to discern and practice

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<sup>850</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §39

<sup>851</sup> ... that there is no ‘Truth’, no meaning or purpose in things, etc.

<sup>852</sup> Nehamas, *Nietzsche*, pg. 186

means of incorporating these diverse and often antagonistic elements into a harmonious configuration.

Nietzsche observes this, Nehamas points out, by referring to two types of spirits who have faith in themselves; those who “have faith because they refuse to look at all,” and those who “must acquire it slowly and are faced with it as a problem themselves.”<sup>853</sup> And importantly, For Nietzsche, psychical harmony, or unity, does *not* imply a *fait accompli*. Nehamas observes:

Nietzsche does not think of unity as a state of being that follows and replaces an earlier process of becoming. Rather, he seems to think of it as a continual process of integrating one’s character traits, habits, and patterns of action with one another. This process can also, in a sense, reach backward and integrate even a discarded characteristic into the personality by showing that it was necessary for one’s subsequent development.<sup>854</sup>

This, according to my reading, is what is behind the imperative of *amor fati*, it embraces the moment, incorporates even those aspects of one’s existence that are unpleasurable, and redeems, as it were, even those aspects of the past that one has overcome by viewing them as *necessities* to be where one is now. *Amor fati* is a formula for greatness because it is a formula for gratitude, for love, for possibilities of enjoyment – above all, for *incorporation*.

I’d now like to turn to what is Nietzsche’s metaphor for this incorporation: *dancing*. In Nietzsche’s book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra Encounters a Saint, and the saint recognizes Zarathustra because “No disgust is visible around his

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<sup>853</sup> Nehamas, *Nietzsche*, pg. 186

<sup>854</sup> Nehamas, *Nietzsche*, pg. 185



mouth. Does he not stride like a dancer?"<sup>855</sup> Why is no disgust visible on his mouth? What does the absence of an appearance of disgust have to do with being a dancer? Recalling the discussion above about how we relate aesthetically with the world, and the influence that the visceral feeling of disgust has on ethical orientations specifically, Nietzsche's association of 'dancing well' with 'no disgust being visible' is significant. Below, I seek to illustrate that 'dance' is Nietzsche's chosen metaphor for egosyntonic relating. In other words, it is through *dancing* (figuratively) that we incorporate external reality and our visceral, internal life of drives into a unified work of art, and this metaphor expresses the positive ethics one can observe in Nietzsche's philosophy.

The metaphor of Dance coheres with the symbol of the child at play that is so essential to Nietzsche's concept of the innocence of becoming, a symbol he acquires from Heraclitus. But I think an often over-looked significance of this metaphor is that it illustrates beautifully the connection, even the *identity*, of aesthetics and ethics. Dance, for Nietzsche, is always discussed in terms of self-overcoming, relating, and all things of ethical consideration. But dance is, first and foremost, an art. I suggest that dancing is actually Nietzsche's metaphor for *his* ethical imperative, an imperative that he cannot otherwise put into words but which coheres with the formulas he does articulate, such as *amor fati* and *naturalism*.<sup>856</sup>

In *Human*, Nietzsche asserts that if the scientific "pressure is not relaxed," then "there arises the other danger of a feeble vacillation back and forth between

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<sup>855</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, preface §2

<sup>856</sup> See above on *Amor Fati*

different drives,”<sup>857</sup> implicitly between those of science and those of art. But to return to a world without science – to refuse the disillusionment that opens up the horizon to healthier ways of being/becoming – is unthinkable for Nietzsche. In order to prevent oneself (or one’s culture) from taking a step back each time one takes a step forward, Nietzsche asserts that the different, often conflicting drives, need to incorporate each other into a harmonious whole, which he refers to as the *parable of the dance*. He writes, “The *dance* is not the same as a languid reeling back and forth between different drives. High culture will resemble an audacious dance: which is ... why one needs a great deal of strength and suppleness.”<sup>858</sup>

Claudia Crawford talks about dance in Nietzsche’s works referencing Hinduism. While I find the comparison problematic in some ways, in other ways I’m partial to this view. Nietzsche often affiliates Schopenhauer with ‘Buddhism’. Buddhism was largely a reaction against the sensuality in Hinduism, and so affiliating one’s self with Hinduism is a rejection of the “nihilistic” path – the vicissitudes – that Schopenhauer took. Nietzsche writes, “The spiritualization of sensuality is called *love*: it represents a great triumph over Christianity.”<sup>859</sup> This is good for Nietzsche precisely because of the return to sensuality, to embodiment, and the rejection of the ‘beyond’ whether metaphysical, religious, or otherwise supersensuous. And this recentering on oneself opens up a horizon of *natural* possibilities of giving style.

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<sup>857</sup> Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, 1.278

<sup>858</sup> Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, 1.278

<sup>859</sup> Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “morality,” §3

In addition to this, the imagery Nietzsche uses often obtains with Hindu myths. Crawford appropriately acknowledges the Hindu god Shiva explicitly.<sup>860</sup> Crawford writes, "The similarities between the mystical dances of [Shiva] and Zarathustra are so striking that it is not at all unreasonable to suggest that Nietzsche consciously made use of Indian sources."<sup>861</sup> Crawford also observes a spiritual experience in dancing<sup>862</sup> where "all things are dancing together in harmony with the will to power."<sup>863</sup> This, she appears to claim, is the epitome of dance as it figures in Nietzsche's 'Dionysian arts', particularly in Zarathustra. This experience, "for Nietzsche, is of the body, an awakened relationship of the senses to all the complexity of forces and movements with which we move in harmony."<sup>864</sup> Harmony, I agree, appears to be the central significance to dance: a harmony of everything sensual and embodied with all the forces of nature and all the various becomings of will to power. Importantly, it also indicates celebration, lust, and implies a strength, suppleness, and vitality of strong spirits essential for overcomings.

What I'd like to suggest is that dance, more than anything else in Nietzsche's writings, is indicative of his ethical propositions. It exemplifies an attunement to

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<sup>860</sup> For example, in *Zarathustra "On the Vision and the Riddle,"* Zarathustra is climbing a mountain but weighted down by a 'dwarf' described as the 'spirit of gravity'. Zarathustra is also the union of two forces: creation and destruction. Similarly, in Hindu myth, the God Shiva represents both creation and destruction, and dances the *tandava*, the dance that destroys the world and brings forth a new beginning – a very 'Dionysian' dance – and does the dance on top of a dwarf, the dwarf signifying ignorance.

<sup>861</sup> Crawford, "Nietzsche's Dionysian Arts," pg. 318

<sup>862</sup> she uses the word 'mystical', the use of which I find problematic

<sup>863</sup> Crawford, "Nietzsche's Dionysian Arts," pg. 318

<sup>864</sup> Crawford, "Nietzsche's Dionysian Arts," pg. 318

one's body, to the senses, and to the environment. It also indicates a substantial openness and receptiveness to the universe, including one's own nature. And, I'd like to argue, it expresses metaphorically what I have been arguing throughout my paper: a constitution and an orientation with oneself and the world that is egosyntonic. Those who dance *well*, one might say, are egosyntonically constituted; those who dance poorly – in opposition to their body or to the 'music of the spheres' – are egodystonically constituted. Dancing requires the incorporation of diverse internal and external elements, and one who is egosyntonic facilitates such incorporation. One who is egodystonically constituted, on the other hand, hinders or directly opposes such incorporation.

The weakness of Crawford's account is her sole focus on the Dionysian as if a free expression of the Dionysian was enough. But rather, a key aspect of dancing is the *giving of form* and the *giving of style*. It is not 'free expression'. In her book on neuropsychology, Lois Oppenheim notices that Martha Graham, whom she adorns with praise for being one of the geniuses of the last century, once said, "You should *be* the beat, not *follow* the beat."<sup>865</sup> To *be* the beat, to *live* the music, would mean to allow the expression of the Dionysian. In this sense, dance involves investing one's nature in each action in such a way that what is being done is self-referential. But it also requires style and form. Dance requires the imposition of form on what is formless. Following from what was previously articulated in the chapter on beauty, it is the rendering of what is sublime – the Dionysian *Rausch* – beautiful. Dance is

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<sup>865</sup> Martha Graham, quoted by Oppenheim, *Curious Intimacy*, pg. 124

*infused* with self-interest and is a very poor art if one moves in opposition to either the music or to one's own body.

If we regard our nature – our instincts and drives and the experiences of external reality in relation to them – as a musical score, then the weak and fettered spirits move juxtaposed to the score, in a way that might appear clumsy and awkward, and which healthier witnesses would regard as ugly and repugnant whilst a fettered spirit would experience it as beautiful. The ascetic dance is a reaction against nature that is decadent and indicative of a degenerate spirit. But were the dancer strong and healthy, and the witness degenerate, the witness may yet still regard the dance as ugly – perhaps horrific – for it would appear to affirm everything the degenerate spirit denies about the world. If we regard music not as our nature but as custom or as the socio-cultural valuations to which we must as social beings respond for better or worse, a free spirit and a noble spirit might also dance in such a way that they would also appear to the theoretically objective witness as ugly – dancing juxtaposed to a score emanating from society. But this dance is peculiarly Dionysian, in that it allows the expression of one's nature. This is perhaps exponentially the case were the *Übermensch* to dance the Tandava or even the Lasya.<sup>866</sup>

Regardless of the vicissitudes, dance is an expression of the will to power, and according to both bifurcations it will often be juxtaposed and seen by others as ugly. In the case of weak or fettered spirits, the ugliness comes from the aversion to,

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<sup>866</sup> "Tandava" is the name of the dance performed by Shiva to bring about the destruction of the world and its regeneration. The Lasya is performed in response to it by Parvati, and is said to be an erotic dance exemplifying beauty and grace, and thus one should say, a 'giving form' or a 'transformation'

and reaction against, nature. In the case of the *Übermensch*, the aversion comes from the offense that decadence causes upon the senses. But what is important to Nietzsche is that the dance of convalescent spirits has the capacity to produce from it a future music of societal valuations. The dance of free, Dionysian spirits is pregnant with the music of the future, and allows the possibility for a becoming beautiful where coherence is established with the musical score that is coming to be. The only beauty in an ascetic dance is fantastical – or even delusional – in virtue of the fact that it can weaken but cannot change one's nature, and therefore cannot alter the music that their dance reacts against. The disharmony in the dance of the weak, sick, and fettered spirits is symptomatic of degeneration. Dance always involves a 'self-overcoming' and the feeling of the sublime that motivates it and also results from it. But the self-overcoming entails something different for both decadent and convalescent spirits.

Oppenheim writes that the medium of dance "may relate to homeodynamic stability in ways that literature and painting do not."<sup>867</sup> She also observes that, unlike words...

Musical notes ... have no innate meanings. Their significance derives purely from the relationship between them. Though in a sense grammatical and syntactical, they do not signify by sign and symbol, as language does. The same is true of the movements choreographed into a ballet or modern dance. The only reality is that of the dancer's body, which cannot designate any other reality existing *a priori* outside it.<sup>868</sup>

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<sup>867</sup> Oppenheim, *Curious Intimacy*, pg. 121

<sup>868</sup> Oppenheim, *Curious Intimacy*, pg. 123

This echoes the same sentiment Nietzsche argues that, as Cox observes, there is no reality outside of one's interpretation of it. Every interpretation is itself an embodied work of art.

Dance, more than anything else in Nietzsche's writings, exemplifies an attunement to one's body, to the senses, and to the environment. It indicates a substantial openness and receptiveness to one's own natural inclinations. And, I'd like to argue, it expresses metaphorically a constitution and an orientation with oneself and the world that is *incorporative* and requires both free expression as well as strength and discipline. That is to say, dance expresses for Nietzsche the strength, creativity, and self-mastery necessary for philosophers of the future; it involves neither repression nor disavowal, but instead a discipline peculiar to the vicissitude of sublimation. It epitomizes the activity and *ethos* of the *Übermensch*.

## V. Concluding Remarks

For sentient beings, living involves our vicissitudes of drives and instincts – our motivational states – that structure how we relate to ourselves and to the world. As Nietzsche writes, “... *relations* ... constitute the essence” of things.<sup>869</sup> These vicissitudes seek to preserve what is agreeable by mastering or repudiating what is disagreeable. They are therefore influenced aesthetically as the means by which sentient beings procure homeostases in life, a feeling of harmony, according to one’s strength or weakness. And this also occurs through any number of vicissitudes (e.g., repression, disavowal, aggression, or sublimation). But the vicissitudes also determine our orientation in the world. In this way, the vicissitudes structure our aesthetic interpretations of the world, such that repressions or disavowals will determine what is beautiful for egodystonically constituted spirits, or sublimations determine what is beautiful for egosyntonically constituted spirits. Beauty is indicative of homeostasis for each. Ethical values are schematic of these aesthetic values. When we speak of ethics, we refer to our means of relating. What is ‘ethically’ or ‘morally’ good is that which was determined, aesthetically, to procure homeostasis.

Homeostasis is, in life, a *detour* of entropic trends that Freud refers to as the death drive. Living well, according to Nietzsche, necessarily involves sublimation as only that vicissitude allows for the incorporation of diverse, often conflicting elements, including self-interest (the will to power and our motivational states).

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<sup>869</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §625



Sublimation is an egosyntonic means of the will to power expressing itself for sentient beings. If at bottom every vicissitude is a particular means of expressing an entropic trend in psychical life – the death drive, as I have argued – then to *live well* entails living by sublimating the death drive. To live well requires egosyntonic, homeodynamic processes. The *Übermensch* is Nietzsche's archetypal representative of that kind of living, and this is expressed, metaphorically, by living as sublimated dying.

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