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Interpretive Teleology Without Eschatology: A Study of the Hermeneutic Strategies of Nietzsche's Genealogical Project

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

INTERPRETIVE TELEOLOGY WITHOUT ESCHATOLOGY:
A STUDY OF THE HERMENEUTIC STRATEGIES OF NIETZSCHE'S
GENEALOGICAL PROJECT

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN PHILOSOPHY

BY

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For Helen V. Romine, Catherine E. Carroll, and Margaret Ann Penry

But a soul can only read within itself what is represented in it distinctly; it could never develop all at once everything that it enfolds, because it goes on to infinity.

- G.W. Leibniz, *Monadology*

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INTRODUCTION

NIETZSCHE AND THE MASKS OF INTERPRETATION

Of all the metaphors deployed by Nietzsche in his texts, perhaps none is as fitting to his own project as that of the ‘mask.’ In the Third Essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche presents a theory that in order to survive as a type, philosophers have found it necessary to adopt the garb of a priest or sage and represent the ideals of those types to the masses.¹ This echoes his statement from *Beyond Good and Evil*, where he states, “Every profound spirit needs a mask: what’s more, a mask is constantly growing around every profound spirit....”² In the act of representing a priest or a sage to the general public, the philosopher often comes to mistake himself as a priestly type and take seriously the mask of the ascetic that he is representing. Nietzsche’s argument is aimed at deciphering how philosophers have become moralizers and apologists for concepts and moral ideals that they themselves did not create. An immediate interpretation of Nietzsche’s text here would suggest that the philosopher adopts this mask to serve his own ends – ends which are, in actuality different than the priest’s or the sage’s. Therefore, it would seem that the philosopher must discard this mask if he is to be a true philosopher and avoid the pitfalls associated with the ascetic priest, the sage, and

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic in On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), Third Essay, Section 10.

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, eds. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Section 40.

those types' denials of life. However, one aspect of the appropriateness of the metaphor of the 'mask' lies in the manner in which the interpretation that it seems to suggest immediately is itself a mask for a deeper criticism that is being made in the text. The route out of asceticism is not the "resolute" adoption of a truthful "philosophical" existence in the face of this priestly interpretation of life. Instead, Nietzsche writes that the ascetic priest is the "classical representative of seriousness" who forces life to turn its powers against itself in search of a transcendent meaning with which it can justify its existence:

[The ascetic priest] juxtaposes [life] (along with what pertains to it: "nature," "world," the whole sphere of becoming and transitoriness) with a quite different mode of existence which it opposes and excludes, *unless* it turn against itself, *deny itself*: in that case, the case of the ascetic life, life counts as a bridge to that other mode of existence.³

Thus, our initial interpretation of the relationship between the philosopher, the priest, and the metaphor of the mask must be supplemented with the caveat that the philosopher cannot avoid becoming a priest simply by removing the mask that he has adopted out of its necessity for survival. In taking seriously the ends of the philosopher as being true to himself, his nature, or his ideals, the philosopher interprets himself into becoming a priest; the mask, in being discarded, paradoxically becomes the philosopher's ideal. This ideal that the philosopher now represents and takes seriously is freed to assume a position of judgment over life in the hands of the philosopher-priest, a situation which Nietzsche repeatedly warns his readers against. In this way, the "mask" is also an inappropriate metaphor for Nietzsche's task because it shows that a traditional understanding of the

³ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 11 (emphasis in original).

way in which the meaning of Nietzsche's text is revealed is not as simple as the deciphering or unmasking of a single metaphor. Nietzsche's metaphor of the mask must be considered twice, both in what it suggests about philosophers being masked and in the impossibility of their moving past being masked.

This "masking" and "unmasking" can also serve as a metaphor for the central concern of Nietzsche's philosophical project. For Nietzsche, the relationship between what we have traditionally taken to be true and good and the methods by which these concepts have been justified has become problematic. Nietzsche argues that philosophers, when constructing their concepts, have not been attentive to their own masks; that is to say, following the preface of *Genealogy of Morals*, that "we are unknown to ourselves."⁴ The effect that this has on the possibility of determinate philosophical knowledge is profound as far as Nietzsche is concerned and with good reason. With Descartes's radical questioning of the objective nature of philosophical knowledge, the guarantee of the univocity of meaningful statements about the world has been located in the philosophical subject's immediate reflective transparency to itself. Nietzsche, in doubting this transparent immediacy of the subject to itself opens a doubt into the possibility of knowledge that Descartes did not reckon with sufficiently: the doubt that the meaning of our own ideas is stable within the subjective consciousness itself. In some early unpublished writings, Descartes remarks: "Actors, taught not to let any embarrassment show on their faces, put on a mask. I will do the same. So far, I have been a spectator in this theatre which is the world, but I am now about to mount the stage,

⁴ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Preface, Section 1.

and I come forward masked.”⁵ Descartes, seeing the world as a theatre, conceives momentarily of himself as being like an actor who voluntarily masks himself in order to appear unembarrassed. But, it seems, this mask does not stay on Descartes for long; or, if it does, another mask becomes far more important: “The sciences are at present masked, but if the masks were taken off, they would be revealed in all their beauty. If we could see how the sciences are linked together, we would find them no harder to retain in our minds than the series of numbers.”⁶ This second invocation of the mask does not concern itself with the masking of the subject but of the possibility of unmasking nature so that the sciences may reveal their beauty. The necessity of this task in Descartes’s writings precludes any meaningful kind of mask on the side of the subject because it demands the objective truth that the mask hides. If consciousness is masked in Nietzsche’s sense and, therefore, not self-transparent, then the possibility of a stable meaning can be doubted as well. Nietzsche accepts that if the subject is masked, then the meanings of that subject are also masked. Paul Ricoeur observes that, in this way, “Nietzsche says nothing other than simply *I doubt better than Descartes.*”⁷ Nietzsche uses this insight, however, in such a way that enables a general critique of meaning beyond simply the criticism of consciousness. Nietzsche introduces the concern that the apparent meanings that concepts seem to bear may only be masks for some different meaning. For his philosophy, once the illusion of the subjective grounding of a univocal

⁵ Rene Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol I.*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 2.

⁶ Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol I.*, 3.

⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 15 (emphasis in original).

meaning is shown through consciousness' failure to ground itself in immediate reflection, any concept or meaning may be treated as a possible mask for some alternate function or end that the concept may serve:

There are still harmless self-observers who believe in the existence of "immediate certainties," such as "I think," or the "I will" that was Schopenhauer's superstition: just as if knowledge had been given an object here to seize, stark naked, as a "thing-in-itself," and no falsification took place from either the side of the subject or the side of the object.⁸

Therefore, the key to understanding a concept lies in a reflective interpretation of it because concepts can only appear and be understood through a process of mediation. Every attempt to decipher a concept's meaning must be accompanied by an act of interpretation that endeavors, through some kind of interpretive framework, to make clear the obstacles and conflicts that delay the understanding of that meaning. Because meaning is no longer thought of as immediately given, Nietzsche argues that the process of deciphering a meaning must be accompanied by an act of interpretation. This necessitates the approaches to knowledge that Nietzsche names "perspectivism," and, later in his career, "genealogy."

From Nietzsche's earliest philosophical writings in *Birth of Tragedy*, it is clear that Nietzsche conceives of philosophy, in its production of both metaphysical and moral concepts and ideals, as engaged in acts of interpretation with life as its object. Nietzsche's thinking of interpretation, of "genealogy," grows from the soil of this investigation into Greek tragedy and the conditions for its appearance and disappearance. However, from this "extremely strange beginning," Nietzsche develops a general

⁸ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 16.

methodology with which to critique and reinterpret concepts.⁹ The methodology that Nietzsche adopts takes, generally, a perspective on concepts that runs counter to the ways in which these concepts have traditionally been understood. His genealogical method utilizes two sorts of suspicion toward concepts. The first is exemplified in the very act of questioning the immediacy or transparency of meaning of any given concept. Nietzsche will treat the meaning of a concept or practice as an interpreted meaning, which is, therefore, always complex and always produced from an act of interpretation. This first suspicion – the suspicion of the possibility of any immediate meaning – makes Nietzsche’s second sense of suspicion possible. If meaning is produced or the result of a synthesizing activity then, as Nietzsche will argue, it is possible that any given meaning is an illusion fostered by forces of interpretation that seek to hide their motives. Thus genealogy is a double suspicion of the everyday meaning of concepts – at once treating them as masks for underlying forces and treating those forces as active agents in the dissembling of their interests.

In this work, I intend to answer two interrelated questions that Nietzsche’s method of genealogy indirectly raises with regard to itself. As Nietzsche’s philosophy is interpretive at every step, it no surprise that it would raise problems as to how that interpretation itself is to be understood reflexively. First, how are we to understand the project of genealogy as an interpretive gesture? And, secondly, under what authority is Nietzsche entitled to the interpretations and evaluations that he wields as unremitting

⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How to Become What you Are in The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, eds. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), “Why I write such good books, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Section 2.”

criticisms of traditional philosophical and moral concepts? This question is raised concerning the grounding of Nietzsche's genealogy. Although it has been argued that Nietzsche, ultimately, has faith in a purified or "naturalized" ideal of truth¹⁰ – presumably beyond the reach of a radical reinterpretation of it – I will argue that it is best to understand Nietzsche's genealogy as a hermeneutic philosophical project. As my vocabulary has already indicated, in doing this I am following the path partly laid down by Paul Ricoeur in *Freud and Philosophy* and in his essays collected in *The Conflict of Interpretations*. Ricoeur is the clearest proponent of the position that Nietzsche's philosophy is a reflexive philosophy engaged in a hermeneutics of meaning.¹¹ By "reflexive," Ricoeur means that Nietzsche's work can be placed in a philosophical tradition within which consciousness is investigated in an effort to clarify its contents to itself. Although Nietzsche appears in this way as the most skeptical of this line of thinking, this manner of situating Nietzsche's project enables a productive comparative study of Nietzsche's work with those thinkers that remain attached to many of the concepts that Nietzsche criticizes.

Most notable for this project and for most of Ricoeur's works as well is the phenomenological school inaugurated by Husserl's works. Ricoeur interprets phenomenology as a reflexive philosophy precisely where it attempts to determine or

¹⁰ I will treat these non-hermeneutic readings of Nietzsche's texts in Chapter Three and attempt to demonstrate that Nietzsche's critique of "truth" is not designed to set up a better version of "truth" but to open the possibility of interpretation.

¹¹ Michel Foucault explores Nietzsche's genealogy in-depth as well but rarely makes explicit the connection between genealogy and hermeneutics, although it seems clear that he often had that in mind. See here Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx," in Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift, eds., *Transforming the Hermeneutic Context: From Nietzsche to Nancy* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 59-68.

constitute objective meaning through the interrogation of subjective consciousness.

Through the practice of phenomenology, Ricoeur becomes concerned that phenomenological reflection is unable to ground itself in a self-transparent consciousness and that that subjective consciousness cannot simply be posited but must be constructed. This is the shared concern between Ricoeur and Nietzsche – that consciousness does not appear clearly to itself and may be actively or passively obfuscating its origins. It is the very project of reflection that calls for hermeneutics, in Ricoeur's estimation, as the constitution of consciousness does not appear all at once and must, therefore, be interpreted from its many varied appearances. If the task of determining objective meaning is to be accomplished, then, for Ricoeur, this can only occur if the phenomenological method is "grafted" to a hermeneutics.¹² Interpretation becomes an integral moment of the constitution of meaningfulness because it supplies the possibility of the grounding of objective meaning for the Ricoeurian phenomenology.

Ricoeur's deployment of hermeneutics must traverse between two poles of certainty without ever settling on one or the other until the work of interpretation is completed. The reason for this bivalent approach lies in the problem Ricoeur has in mind to solve. The "poles" of interpretation that Ricoeur sees as essential to hermeneutics constitute the archaeological origin of meaning and the teleological destination of meaning. Each pole is necessary for the project of determining the full meaning of human consciousness but is not itself sufficient because an over reliance on either pole can create the illusion of a fully determinate meaning before interpretation has run its

¹² Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Ihde, (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 6.

course. Although Ricoeur's project assumes a hope for full mediation between competing interpretations, he takes great care to avoid the premature closure of interpretation into an encyclopedic moment.

The archaeological pole of interpretation, which has already been mentioned as the element of the hermeneutics of suspicion, is concerned with uncovering the hidden origins of meaning and of the constitution of human consciousness. Ricoeur's model for this hermeneutic pole is Freud's development of psychoanalysis, although both Nietzsche and Marx occasionally take prominent places in the analysis as well: "All three rise before [the contemporary philosopher] as protagonists of suspicion who rip away masks and pose the novel problem of the lie of consciousness and consciousness as a lie."¹³ Ricoeur argues that the hermeneutics of suspicion is a systematic interrogation of the forces and desires that construct and are also hidden by everyday meaning. In this way, Ricoeur enables the comparison between Nietzsche's genealogical method and a phenomenological hermeneutics. In terms of the moment of suspicion, both Nietzsche and Freud assert, against the immediate certainty of the Cartesian subject, "that 'think' is the condition and 'I' is conditioned, in which case 'I' would be a synthesis that only gets *produced* through thought itself."¹⁴ For the hermeneutics of suspicion, Ricoeur asserts that a theory of meaning and interpretation is advanced but that it takes the form of an "anti-phenomenology" where consciousness is reduced to the unconscious forces that are

¹³ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 99.

¹⁴ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 54.

synthesized in its production.¹⁵ This anti-phenomenological thrust of Nietzsche's and Freud's theories has kept them at a distance from the hermeneutic mainstream, but I will follow Ricoeur in arguing for the placement of Nietzsche's genealogy among the other general hermeneutic theories and methods. Ricoeur, however, argues that for any hermeneutics to reach a concrete or determinate meaning, archaeology alone is insufficient. For a concrete meaning to emerge in any situation, Ricoeur holds that a complementary teleological model needs to be present as the appropriation of meaning. For the work of interpretation, Ricoeur holds that the object that he names the "symbol" will call for both suspicion and the progressive recovery of meaning. Although Freud and Nietzsche are hermeneutic thinkers, Ricoeur will charge that they do not treat symbols as sites of both critique and appropriation but see them only as "idols" that must be destroyed.¹⁶ At this point we reach perhaps the most common problem in the interpretation of Nietzsche's texts and project. Ricoeur has recast this problem according to his phenomenological hermeneutic vocabulary, but the problem remains as one of appropriation.

To return to the initial Nietzschean metaphor, we can rephrase this difficulty in interpretation as the problem of the 'mask.' Nietzsche provides his readers with multiple tools for identifying, critiquing, and destroying the masked assumptions of metaphysics and morality. However, what possibilities for meaning are left in the wake of this critical

¹⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1970), 117, 118.

¹⁶ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 529.

genealogy?¹⁷ Is there some positive end that a reader of Nietzsche's works can point at once the archaeological project has run its course? Ricoeur denies that an appropriate end can exist alongside Nietzsche's radical attempts to de-mystify the meanings of morality and metaphysics. The charge is that Nietzsche remains mired in resentment and accusation and cannot raise his philosophy to the level of affirmation. The discipline of philosophy at this point would consist solely of the perpetual challenging of the interpretations offered for any meaning that is tied to an event; and philosophy would never be capable of prospectively granting any new or legitimate meaning to any phenomenon. The task for this present work is to dispute this interpretation of Nietzsche's project and identify how he is engaged in a hermeneutic philosophy and how his texts conceive of the interpretive pole of appropriation.

In order to approach this end there are several prior, proximate concerns that must be addressed in turn. The first is the necessity of attaching Nietzsche's concerns of interpretation to the phenomenological project. Ricoeur's work will here be my guide, as he identifies the necessity of the recourse to hermeneutics resulting from a gap in phenomenology between the apodicticity of the phenomenological ego and the adequacy of its content. When the phenomenological method moves to examine the constitution of consciousness in its passivity, the project of interpretation becomes relevant, as consciousness can only grasp its contents which are active. In order to understand its

¹⁷ Daniel Conway, in *Nietzsche's Dangerous Game*, highlights many of the difficulties associated with appropriating Nietzsche's texts in political contexts, as well. Conway argues that Nietzsche is unaware of the depths of his own decadence and that this necessitates a break with Nietzsche even when (and especially when) one is trying to follow him. See Daniel Conway, *Nietzsche's Dangerous Game*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), particularly chapters one and four. Although I am more concerned here with Nietzsche's conceptions of meaning, I will return to this when discussing the failure of any subjective attempt at pure reflection.

constitution, consciousness must reflect on the causes external to itself that have caused it to become what it is. Thus, despite being anti-phenomenological in its reduction of consciousness to its compositional forces, a method like Nietzsche's genealogy is a necessary part of any attempt to determine the meaning of the contents of consciousness or of a philosophical anthropology. The second preliminary concern of the current text again follows Ricoeur's lead in articulating Nietzsche's hermeneutic methodology. By arguing that Nietzsche's philosophy is a hermeneutics, I will make the case that Nietzsche's main concern is the building of a general theory of how meaning is created. I will argue that genealogy is, therefore, less an epistemic doctrine or position than a series of interpretations designed to uncover the processes through which meanings are ascribed to events. This concern will be present both in the discussions of Ricoeur's depiction of hermeneutics as well as in the general reception and interpretation offered to Nietzsche's texts directly.

With these concerns addressed, I will turn to the primary goal of this work, which is to elucidate the possible appropriative interpretive methods that Nietzsche's hermeneutic exegesis employs. Throughout his writings, Nietzsche is concerned with criticizing the unjustified ends to which previous thinkers have employed concepts, ethical rules, or history itself. I will examine this in chapters two and three. However, the genealogical critique of these ends does not necessarily preclude the possibility of appropriation through the practice of Nietzsche's method. Nietzsche is a careful critic of eschatology, the prospect and expectation of a final, static end; but the other sense of an end, that of teleology, which is understood as a limited way is not necessarily foreign to

Nietzsche's conception of interpretation. I will argue that Nietzsche employs a teleological prospect in his hermeneutics while maintaining a general criticism of "superfluous teleological principles."¹⁸ Although he does not frequently utilize either term, both the archaeological moment and the teleological moment figure into his method of genealogy as a whole. We will look at Ricoeur's descriptions of the routes of suspicion in the texts of Freud and Nietzsche, and this will serve as a contrast to the appropriative interpretive work that lies behind Nietzsche's uses of the concepts of "health," "nobility," and "strength." Ultimately, I will attempt to account for this appropriative and archaeological conception genealogy through a discussion of Nietzsche's moments of self-interpretation. The texts where Nietzsche is explicitly concerned with interpreting both his past written works, as well as his life itself, are much more fruitfully read with this full genealogical interpretive method in place. Nietzsche's self-interpretation, especially in *Ecce Homo*, clarifies both his critique of metaphysics and morality as well as gestures toward the creation of meaning that takes its place as an appropriative, prospective hermeneutics.

Finally, before turning to the investigation proper, I want to clarify and begin to justify my choice of primary texts. In the case of Ricoeur's works, I have focused on his works where the conflict and starts of a collaboration between phenomenology are most pronounced, namely *Freud and Philosophy* and his collection *Conflict of Interpretations*. To trace his development of phenomenology, I will look at *Fallible Man*; but this is primarily to see how the problem of the "symbol" arises out of phenomenology and to

¹⁸ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 13 (emphasis in original).

prepare the analyses of the hermeneutic works. Ricoeur's later work is addressed only obliquely as his interests spread into the philosophy of language, political philosophy, and to some small degree, away from a phenomenological hermeneutics in the service of a philosophical anthropology.

Regarding my selection of Nietzsche's texts, I have attempted to be as narrow as possible in scope in order to minimize several concerns which are commonplace in Nietzsche studies. The first concern regards the use of material from Nietzsche's unpublished *Nachlaß* as well as the material collected and published as the volume *The Will to Power*. The Colli and Montinari critical edition of Nietzsche's texts firmly establishes that *Will to Power* is not a work of Nietzsche's in the traditional sense of being planned, composed, arranged and edited by him and that Nietzsche himself had no plan for such a work at the end of his life. However, there is still the issue of the philosophical importance of the writings which Nietzsche left unprepared for publishing and in his notebooks, especially considering the use that several of the most valuable and influential studies of Nietzsche's philosophy have made of it.¹⁹ Bernd Magnus has notably divided Nietzsche scholarship into two groups that, while perhaps being oversimplified, still serve as a rough approximation for the opinions on the legitimacy of using the *Nachlaß*.²⁰ Magnus divides the "lumpers" who use the unpublished writings freely from the "splitters" who regard as appropriate only the use of those texts prepared

¹⁹ Of note here are works by Martin Heidegger, Pierre Klossowski, Gilles Deleuze, Alexander Nehamas, and Richard Schacht.

²⁰ See Bernd Magnus, "Nietzsche's Philosophy in 1888: *The Will to Power* and the *Übermensch*," in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 24, no. 1, January 1986, pp. 79-98.

for publication by Nietzsche himself. Although I think the relationship of Nietzsche's published works to those of his notebooks is more complicated than this division allows, for my work I have adopted the "splitter" methodology. I have done this for two reasons. The primary reason is that in imputing a hermeneutic method to Nietzsche I am undertaking a task more commonly associated with the "continental" interpreters of Nietzsche's works, who tend to be "lumpers." To establish my claim as persuasively as possible, I have chosen the more narrow of the textual fields and will use only the published works. My other reason for adopting this method is so I can focus more attention on a published work that has often languished for attention – *Ecce Homo*. While the *Will to Power* has had as much, if not more, scholarly attention than *Ecce Homo*, I hope to show in my final chapter and conclusion that *Ecce Homo* is a coherent philosophical work worthy of attention. If my theory is sound, *Ecce Homo* can be seen as the demonstration of the Nietzschean archaeology and teleology as it is practiced on Nietzsche's own life and texts. *Ecce Homo* thus gives us a philosophical anthropology of the author Nietzsche as well as illustrates the critical and appropriative workings of the genealogical method. In short, Nietzsche affirms himself as a product of this method in *Ecce Homo* while still dealing with the masks created for an by himself.

The second concern with the selection of Nietzsche's texts is the issue of Nietzsche's "periods." It is a fairly standard procedure to divide Nietzsche's work into "early," "middle" and "mature" periods; and I will not here challenge this division.²¹ I will restrict myself to the series of texts beginning with *The Gay Science*, which is a

²¹ See Maudmarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Chapter 4 for a detailed working out of these "periods."

marker between his middle and mature periods. Primarily, I will focus on those works written after *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, including Book Five of *Gay Science*, where Nietzsche's conceptions of strength, health, and interpretation take on the character that they retain throughout the remainder of his published works. The exception to this focus on the mature period will be a brief discussion of the Second *Untimely Meditation*. The conception of the values of historical thinking displayed there are remarkably relevant to the hermeneutic method that is to be gained from Nietzsche's mature works.

CHAPTER ONE

RICOEUR'S PHENOMENOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF CONCRETE REFLECTION

Paul Ricoeur's project of phenomenological hermeneutics arises as an attempt to achieve a philosophical anthropology through an analysis of mediation in general. This investigation of mediation becomes necessary when Ricoeur's project of an eidetic phenomenological description of human action and willing, announced in *The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, reaches an impasse that traditional phenomenology cannot surmount. This problem is the seeming inscrutability of human fault and the passions, which do not easily lend themselves to a rational reconstruction and are only expressed in figurative or indirect language, whereas for phenomenology, "a direct language was thought to be available."²² Because humans are subject to many passions that are not rational, a systematic philosophy such as phenomenology is not well-suited to deal with them because its insistence on rational reconstruction of objective meaning excludes them from its inception. There is nothing essential to a phenomenon like fault or evil because if a totalized concept could be created, that would show how it is necessary, stripping fault or evil of its non-rational character. For this reason, other discourses that strive to be purely rational will likely dismiss them as well: "Pure reflection makes no

²² Paul Ricoeur, "From existentialism to the philosophy of language," 316, in Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language*, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, SJ (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 315-322.

appeal to any myth or symbol.”²³ The essential forms of human willing can be spelled out phenomenologically or, in general, philosophically; but this, for Ricoeur, will not touch on the nature of how those forms interact with the concrete experience of fault in human reality. Domenico Jervolino states that “a gap remained between the description of the essences, in the phenomenological sense, and the concrete condition of humankind.”²⁴ To achieve a concrete reflection on human willing and also human being in general, Ricoeur states an “empirics” of the will is necessary to complement an eidetic description of its forms: “[T]he new description could be only an *empirics of the will* that could proceed by means of a convergence of concrete representations; it could not proceed by means of an eidetics, which is an essential description, because of the opaque and absurd nature of fault.”²⁵ This empirics will fill that gap, go beyond the eidetic descriptions of phenomenology, and attempt to show how a feature of human being – in this case fault – can arise, although there is nothing essential to it. However, Ricoeur notes, these experiences of the play of the passions are not without their own discourse and language. Myths and dreams attest for the particular sort of discourse that the passions may have or narratives that they may create. Therefore, for a concrete empirics of the will to be possible and for a philosophical anthropology to be completed, Ricoeur must search for a way to unite these seemingly diverse forms of discourse through a method of mediation. For this reason, hermeneutic reflection becomes necessary as a

²³ Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 347.

²⁴ Domenico Jervolino, *The Cogito and Hermeneutics: The Question of the Subject in Ricoeur*, trans. Gordon Poole (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990), 12.

²⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), xlii (emphasis in original).

method of interpreting the meaningfulness of these separate narratives and appropriating their content into a unified whole. Hermeneutics, for Ricoeur, will describe the concrete ways that discourse gives insight into the being of the human being.

This chapter will detail how hermeneutics becomes necessary for Ricoeur's phenomenological research and will also trace the development of Ricoeur's own hermeneutics as a mediation between the methodological poles of "suspicion" and "recovery." Ricoeur will follow a phenomenological method, rejecting scientific objectivity and other forms of reductionism, until that phenomenology appears as overly idealistic in its theory of meaning. The plurivocity of meaning that the phenomenologist encounters requires not just a change of approach towards meaningfulness but also a reconception of the ideality that guaranteed meaningfulness – the subject. The hermeneutic approach thus has as its goal a non-idealistic, concrete description of human being through the unpacking of the plurivocity of human expressions.

For Ricoeur, the disparity of and conflict between various discourses concerning the being of humanity are problematic in that all seem to suggest, because of their multifarious descriptions of human existence when considered together, that a unified account of what it is to be human is impossible. The explanations of the various sciences, history, theology, and art all seem to indicate and reinforce their standings as discrete and non-communicable fields of research. However, Ricoeur points out that for contemporary philosophy "there is an area today where all philosophical investigations cut across one another – the area of language."²⁶ These various explanations of human

²⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1970), 3.

existence must be expressed in language; and, as such, this necessitates that they have a stake in an explanation of language as a phenomenon that bears the meaning of their findings. But, as of yet, this discourse over human existence has not brought these disciplines closer together in understanding but has only reinforced their differences: “The very progress of the aforementioned disparate disciplines has both revealed and intensified the dismemberment of that discourse.”²⁷ The act of putting forth reasons in language means for Ricoeur that these discourses must enter into the mediation between perspective and sense that Ricoeur speaks of in *Fallible Man*. Ricoeur’s concept of language treats language less as a concept than as a “mediation; it is the *medium*, the ‘milieu’, in which the subject posits himself and the world shows itself.”²⁸ An analysis of the sorts of mediation possible through language may aid in a potential showing of the common root of all these discourses about humanity.

Ricoeur begins from the position that human consciousness does not and cannot grasp all at once all of the perspectives that a phenomenon or object displays. Phenomenologically speaking, human perception is open to the world but only through a particular point of view. Each human consciousness, when confronted with a perception that is in error or partial, can realize through reflection that it is “a finite center of perspective.”²⁹ But this point of view also will make claims as to the meaningfulness of the whole through the subject’s use of language. Discourse about a phenomenon

²⁷ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 4.

²⁸ Jervolino, *Cogito and Hermeneutics*, 37 (emphasis in original).

²⁹ Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, 21.

“transgresses” this finite perspective in order to express the totality of the object all at once in meaningful signification. Our perspectives strive for totality through our intended sense in discourse.³⁰ Therefore, consciousness both perceives singular perspectives of phenomena and mediates between them through the act of signifying universally in language. “This transgression,” for Ricoeur, “is the intention to signify.”³¹

Since all signification transgresses, Ricoeur will take this common feature of any discourse as an opportunity to demonstrate the possibility of communication between discourses. The method of Ricoeur’s philosophical project is always to oppose apparent “dismemberment” or recourse to “eclecticism” with a philosophical hermeneutics that seeks to mediate between the differences of each discourse through the discovery of a transcendental logic that makes each discourse possible.³² Ricoeur philosophically puts no stock in the idea that these accounts of language are completely incommunicable to one another; this would be “dismemberment.” He also will not be happy with recourse to an “idle eclecticism” that would depict these discourses as aspects of a preconceived idea of philosophical progress that ignores their concrete differences in both projects and solutions. “Eclecticism,” he states, “proclaims that all great systems ultimately say the same thing, at least if one knows how to distinguish the essential from the accessory.”³³

The methods of both dismemberment and eclecticism commit the mistake of presuming

³⁰ Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, 24.

³¹ Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, 26.

³² Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 161.

³³ Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 43.

to know precisely what is at stake before the phenomena and texts are studied. They take their particular expressions to account for the totality of the field under discussion rather than transgressions from a particular point of view. In this way, these methods can teach and reveal nothing new, because they fail to acknowledge other valid points of view; nor can they engage in a dialogue about their own possibility, because they appear to themselves as necessary and not as merely possible. Instead, Ricoeur argues that although totality cannot be abandoned as a regulative ideal, it cannot be gained all at once via reduction. However, in spite of the discrete points of view that discourses operate from, rational reconstruction must be possible, even if never attained, because it is the “horizon” in which all philosophical efforts take place.³⁴ It is the task of Ricoeur’s hermeneutics to account more fully for the nature of this “horizon.”

Therefore, with these two sorts of reductionism put aside, the question of grounding this revelation of the conflict of discourses about human being must be posed philosophically as a hermeneutic question: How can a critique of the possibility of conflict of accounts of the world be posed? An answer to this question will satisfy the requirement for the possibility of communication between these various discourses about human being. In both his hermeneutics and his phenomenology, Ricoeur seeks, through an analysis of actions and expressions, the fundamental manner in which the being of human being is embedded in the world and with others. This horizon of meaning is often referred to by the term “belonging” by Ricoeur. Belonging is the originary affirmation of

³⁴ Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, 50.

human willing and is “an immediate or unreflective relation.”³⁵ If these disparate discourses can be shown to illuminate various regional aspects of that fundamental belonging to the world, then a ground for communication between investigations can be posited and described as they emerge from that belonging. While Ricoeur does not claim to be the “Leibnizian” figure that could bring about the *unification* of all discourses, and he may in fact think that no such figure could exist, he does seek to reconstruct the differences between the conflicting viewpoints rationally and *reconcile* them.³⁶

Following the principles of Edmund Husserl’s phenomenological method, Ricoeur cannot accept any “objectivism” that would ground discourse and communication in the manner of the natural sciences, although this does not mean that these accounts have nothing to contribute.³⁷ The natural sciences constitute knowledge on the basis of an individual’s understanding of an objective and measurable exterior world. But Ricoeur states that Husserl’s phenomenology shows this subject/object constitution of knowledge in science as possible only on the basis of a prior “horizon” or “field of meanings anterior to objectivity for a knowing subject.”³⁸ The arguments that the sciences must provide to demonstrate their applicability to existence or a certain problematic are possible only on the basis of some other intuition about the world, be it

³⁵ Leonard Lawlor, *Imagination and Chance: The Difference Between the Thought of Ricoeur and Derrida* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 54

³⁶ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 4; and Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 456-7. The epigraph I have chosen for my entire project here points to Leibniz’s own awareness of this problem, even though he remains bound to an image of thinking as representation.

³⁷ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 8.

³⁸ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 9.

the truths of observation or of logic. All disciplines must have, for Ricoeur, a basis in the “prephilosophical character” of existence – belonging – that provides the horizon within which reflection can take place.³⁹ However, it is Ricoeur’s wager that each disparate discourse built on that horizon will reveal a different regional sense of that belonging as it is expressed in their discourse.

Phenomenology’s sense of its own foundation is different than the grounding for any other discipline – such as positivism, history, or anthropology – in that phenomenology’s grounding claims a radical beginning “that cannot be framed in a demonstrative argument.”⁴⁰ The radical claim here is that a phenomenological method must ground itself – be a *Selbsts-Begründung* – and, therefore, that its foundation must be directly or immediately found in intuition rather than provided by a deductive argument. In this, Husserl, and through him, Ricoeur, places himself in the one of the central debates of Plato’s *Theatetus* concerning the rational ground of perception and argumentation. Phenomenologically, recourse to the certainty of intuition must occur in every attempt to ground any further science; so, these other sciences are, at the least, epistemologically derivative in their nature by virtue of being posterior to the self-positing of intuition: “[T]he truth of science is erected as a superstructure upon a first foundation of presence and existence, that of the world lived through perceptually.”⁴¹ Although Ricoeur, as we will see shortly, will come to doubt the absolute primacy of

³⁹ Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, 4.

⁴⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 26-7.

⁴¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*, trans. Edward G. Ballard and Lester E. Embree (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 9.

immediate intuition, he will not abandon Husserl's critique of objectivist science or naturalism in general. Rather, Ricoeur will question the direct access to intuition that Husserl claims is possible and attempt to replace that technique with the longer path that passes through an activity of mediation.

For Husserl's phenomenology, this recourse to direct intuition is achieved through the application of the "phenomenological *epoche*" which is utilized to neutralize all mental acts that would posit "any judgment about spatiotemporal factual being."⁴² By bracketing all questions of the reference of the contents of consciousness to "factual being" or existence, the *epoche* opens up, for phenomenology, direct access to consciousness and its intentional objects, the essences of which it is phenomenology's task to describe.⁴³ These intentional objects are the objects considered only insofar as consciousness is 'consciousness-of' them. If Ricoeur were to remain utterly faithful to the Husserlian program, this would be the place where the investigation of language would begin. Ricoeur would look at the specific essential "objectivity" of language as it appears as given in consciousness.⁴⁴ It would then be the task to understand our perspective on it as it expresses a greater whole that we think as a totality. The *epoche* would reveal the ideal sense of the thing intended by consciousness when it intends the object – in this case, language. Thus we would come to understand the meaning of the object intended in consciousness through a synthesis of the intended sense and the

⁴² Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1983), 61.

⁴³ This is said in reference to Husserl's earlier phenomenological project of eidetic description.

⁴⁴ Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, 39.

perspective. However, for Ricoeur, Husserl's phenomenology remains too idealistic because this field of eidetic meaning that is opened, revealed by the phenomenological *epoche*, is grounded by the indubitability of the existence of consciousness. This grounding of sense is accomplished through the phenomenological assumption of the unity of the subject's consciousness "by designating the subject as an intentional pole, directed outward, and by giving, as the correlate of this subject, not a nature but a field of meanings."⁴⁵ While the *epoche* reveals the significance of the meaning of being and objects and not just the beings themselves (which have been bracketed), it achieves this by relying on a theory of a unified consciousness and of the self-transparency of that consciousness. Because Ricoeur is skeptical about the viability of this starting point of self-consciousness, as are most phenomenologists that historically follow Heidegger's implicit criticisms of Husserl in *Being and Time*, he thinks Husserl's theory an idealism because the univocal sense of beings is regulated by an inscrutable entity which seems achievable to Ricoeur only through interpretation and not eidetic description – the transcendental consciousness – and because the objective senses of intention are achieved prior to any experience.

I. Ricoeur's Critique of the *Cogito*

Although not an explicitly hermeneutic text, Ricoeur's phenomenological descriptions in *Fallible Man* take into account many of his criticisms of the Husserlian subject as well as set up many of the structures that his hermeneutics will later populate

⁴⁵ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretation*, 8-9.

with content. Here, Ricoeur begins the empiric description of human fallibility as it appears in acts of the will. The phenomenological explanation of human willing shows humans to be fragile beings, that is, beings that belong in an intermediate role between two opposed poles in human experience itself. These poles Ricoeur calls the “finite” and the “infinite.”⁴⁶ For example, in the realm of theoretical knowledge, we mediate between a limited perspective in perception and total sense in language.⁴⁷ However, we must be careful to see these poles as constituting the lower and the upper extents of human being and not as a mere spatial metaphor of humanity’s ontological locale: “Man is not intermediate because he is between angel and animal; he is intermediate within himself, within his *selves*. He is intermediate because he is a mixture, and a mixture because he brings about mediations.”⁴⁸ This statement, which Ricoeur will spend the entirety of the book unpacking, holds that human being is not immediately transparent to itself. Due to the mediating function of consciousness between immediate presence, which is always perspectival, and the anticipated sense of the whole, which is shown in discourse, consciousness cannot achieve direct intuition of itself in a meaningful way. Ricoeur stands strongly against any reductionist account of human being, which must assume a self-immediacy or transparency at some level with which to ground its theoretical grasping of the totality of the issue. Husserl’s phenomenology still relies on this self-immediacy. However, the concretely situated manner in which humanity exists precludes

⁴⁶ Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, 2.

⁴⁷ See here Don Ihde’s analysis of this “phenomenology within Kantian limits” in Don Ihde, *Hermeneutic Philosophy: The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 59-80.

⁴⁸ Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, 3 (emphasis in original).

any immediate shift in perspective to an easily totalized viewpoint. For ethics, ontology, and affectivity, it would be a mistake to attempt an anthropological explanation utilizing only either the finite or infinite standpoint because either alone would miss different concrete realities of existence. Instead, Ricoeur undertakes the arduous investigation of the character of the mediation that humans are, saying of humanity: “His ontological characteristic of being-intermediate consists precisely in that his act of existing is the very act of bringing about mediations between all the modalities and all the levels of reality within him and outside him.”⁴⁹ The “disproportion” of human existence – of being both “more than” and “less than” simultaneously – introduces a metaphoric distance between our abilities to reflect and comprehend.⁵⁰ Direct philosophical grasp of the entirety of human consciousness is deferred by the concept of consciousness as a mediator, which makes a starting point like Husserl’s impossible. Thus there is no direct access to the problem of a philosophical anthropology as a purely eidetic description because human consciousness never appears as whole to itself.

This main concern with the impossibility of grasping the totality of consciousness will also appear in Ricoeur’s hermeneutic texts. The “empirics of the will” will now be “determined as a symbolism” which must be hermeneutic.⁵¹ In these texts, however, Ricoeur deploys two complementary lines of thought to reveal the idealism of Husserl’s eidetic description of sense. While the univocity of sense is the primary target here,

⁴⁹ Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, 3.

⁵⁰ Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, 5-6.

⁵¹ Jervolino, *Cogito and Hermeneutics*, 12.

Ricoeur shows its impossibility by critiquing its correlate in the Husserlian system – the intentional pole of subjective consciousness upon which the unity of sense reposes. The first argumentative line is characterized by its place within what Ricoeur refers to as the “reflective tradition” of philosophy and marks a continuation of arguments in *Fallible Man*. The second marks the appearance of the “masters of suspicion.”⁵²

Reflective philosophy is, in Ricoeur’s understanding of the school, a philosophy that aims for self-understanding from the starting point of reflection on the self and its understanding of the world and the relations of objects in that world. It is, or has been, a philosophy of the subject; and its explicit historical trajectory runs roughly from Descartes, through Kant and the German Idealists, to Husserl and egological phenomenology.⁵³ It is also, as Ricoeur notes often, the tradition in which he himself was trained.⁵⁴ For philosophical systems of this sort, philosophical investigations proceed from the immediate certainty of self-consciousness toward representations, appearances, or meanings that are to be explained and understood. Thus, the subject is the self-grounded foundation for knowledge of the meaningfulness of the external world. As an example, Descartes’s attempt to ground scientific knowledge about the external world proceeds from the absolute self-certainty of the concept of the *cogito*; or, the

⁵² In the wake of Ricoeur’s work on Freud and the hermeneutics of suspicion, Ricoeur will broaden the scope of his dialectic and take seriously the work of structuralist linguistics, especially in the work of Levi-Strauss, Hjelmslev, and Greimas. Although I do not treat this debate here, much of it is similar in character with the approach that brings Ricoeur near to the “masters of suspicion” when they are conceived of as semiologists.

⁵³ Ricoeur sometimes extends this tradition beyond these “modern” figures to include the character of Socrates in the Platonic dialogues as well as St. Augustine. See Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 236 and *From Text To Action*, 12.

⁵⁴ See Paul Ricoeur, “Intellectual Biography” in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: The Library of Living Philosophers*, Vol. XXII, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 3-10.

indubitability of the inner life of self-consciousness provides the method for the grounding of the objectivity of scientific investigations into the behavior of material substance. Similarly, for Husserl, the unity of the sense of objects after the phenomenological reduction relies on the unity of the Husserlian ego, or the subjective pole of intentionality. This Husserlian subject produces the univocity of the sense of objects through the ideal sense that is either fulfilled or left empty through intentional perception. The ego actively synthesizes, through an intention of some thing, an “anticipated sense” with the expectation of fulfillment through the perceived object.⁵⁵ Intentional consciousness may be always of some thing, but it is the meaning of that intended object to the ego that is important for Husserl’s project. As Ricoeur writes, “It is this empire of sense, thus freed from any matter-of-fact question [after the *epoché*] that constitutes the privileged field of phenomenological experience, the domain of intuition *par excellence*.”⁵⁶ Thus, Husserl’s too is a reflective philosophy that holds self-consciousness to be an indubitable, immanent certainty that will provide a ground for all questions of the constitution of the sense of objects that appear in intuition. Husserl’s phenomenology holds that we can reflect on the contents of consciousness, after implementing the *epoché*, to realize the meaning of those objects that appear in consciousness. The fact of intentional consciousness sets forth ideals of sense-fulfillment that perception can fill. We are able to fix these meanings even though “every

⁵⁵ Ricoeur, *Husserl*, 95.

⁵⁶ Ricoeur, *From Text to Action*, 13.

apprehension of transcendence is open to doubt but... self-immanence is indubitable.”⁵⁷

The expressions and perceptions of objects are themselves grounded in meaningfulness by the subject’s intentionality of the sense of the object, which can either be filled or empty.

It is at this point, for Ricoeur, where reflective philosophy begins to outstrip its ability to be also an egology – an immediate science of self-consciousness. The discovery of intentionality, that consciousness is always consciousness-of something, raises the problem that it is impossible to capture the subject alone; that is, consciousness is never empty such that it can be known in a meaningful way. There is not a direct intuition of the self as there is of the other objects in perception. As consciousness is always consciousness-of, when it takes itself as its object, consciousness cannot in the same movement capture its own encompassing of the contents of consciousness. The very act of attempting to totalize consciousness through a reflexive phenomenology reveals the impossibility of that act; there is always the aspect of reflection that is left untotalized by direct consciousness. Because of intentionality, the phenomenological *epoche* does not itself get us closer to the totality of truths about the subject’s meaningfulness or adequately fulfill a philosophical anthropology. Instead, the self, or self-consciousness as an intentional object, is certain as existing but never fully saturated in terms of meaning because it can never come to full intentional presence. Therefore, if the sense of intuitions in consciousness is guaranteed as univocal by consciousness’ active syntheses, these active syntheses appear as founded on something without full

⁵⁷ Ricoeur, *From Text to Action*, 13.

meaningful content of its own. In this context, an effort to understand any truths about the subject pole itself will either be *illusory*, in attempting to describe something that does not exist, or *empty*, as the self does not directly appear. Consciousness, we are led to see, cannot totalize itself and become knowable directly; it cannot immediately account for itself because the only things given in it are the objects of its intentional perception. Therefore Ricoeur is justified in concluding, “Although this certainty [consciousness] is unquestionable as certainty, it can be doubted as truth.”⁵⁸ The phenomenological account of consciousness gives us apodicticity in the certainty of the existence of consciousness, but consciousness’s concept of itself is never adequate to the meaningful totality of that consciousness.

With this conclusion, Ricoeur moves the reflexive tradition away from one of its idols – self-consciousness’s immediate transparency – by virtue of a tool discovered within phenomenology. “The great discovery,” Ricoeur writes, “of phenomenology, within the limits of the phenomenological reduction itself, remains intentionality, that is to say, in its least technical sense, the priority of consciousness *of something* over self-consciousness.”⁵⁹ This entails that phenomenological egology need not accompany phenomenological intentionality in philosophical reflection. Without this egology, however, phenomenology can no longer assume the univocity of meaning, as its final bulwark is removed; but it is now also free for a less illusory reflection about the meaning of things and the self. Don Idhe rightly claims that, “Ricoeur’s claim... means that all

⁵⁸ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 101.

⁵⁹ Ricoeur, *From Text to Action*, 13 (emphasis in original).

intentions stop short of total fulfillment.”⁶⁰ The signifying intention never finds full presence because the depth of the intention cannot be fully known through immediate consciousness. Therefore, the intention always remains somewhat indeterminate. If univocal, determinate meaning must be sought in full presence to consciousness, this is always a task for reconstruction rather than a specifically given meaning because consciousness is never identical to itself. In this form, intentionality, in the Husserlian sense, remains central to Ricoeur’s phenomenological hermeneutics; but it is an intentionality deployed from a position that is skeptical concerning questions of the univocity of meaning. As is demonstrated in *Fallible Man*, Ricoeur’s phenomenological hermeneutics will instead start from the objective pole to reveal the transcendental structures that make that appearing or sense possible.

Whereas Ricoeur criticizes Husserl’s early phenomenology for its excessive idealism of sense, Ricoeur does not abandon the structure of the synthesis of meaning that Husserl had been developing since the *Logical Investigations*. Ricoeur notes that Husserl develops a theory that ties intentionality to signification where the act of signifying shows a movement from an empty sign in consciousness towards its fulfillment in the perception of the object it signifies.⁶¹ As we have seen, Husserl’s insistence on the immediacy of the ego forces this theory of signification towards idealism, but to Ricoeur this problem of the fulfillment of sense shows the necessity of interpretation to the constitution of the self. Because the signs in consciousness cannot

⁶⁰ Ihde, *Hermeneutic Phenomenology*, 60.

⁶¹ Ricoeur, *Husserl*, 6.

be completely fulfilled because of the perspectival nature of perception, their unity must be the product of a synthesis between the ideality of the sign and the various perceptions of the presumed unified object. “Therefore,” writes Ricoeur, “what we call ‘intuition’ is itself the result of ‘synthesis,’ of passive syntheses that already have their syntax, that are articulated in a prereflective and prejudicative (or prepredicative) sense.”⁶² Thus the phenomenological problem becomes the unpacking of these syntheses that make intuition itself possible; but Ricoeur must now accomplish this without the foundational subject to which Husserl refers.

The other track taken against the self-immediacy of the meaningfulness of the *cogito* is what Ricoeur broadly labels “the challenge of semiology.”⁶³ Reflexive philosophy, after its self-criticism, finds itself at the starting point of much of “semiotics.” If phenomenology can be characterized as giving a semantic theory of how signs are fulfilled by objects that they designate in intuition, the semiological standpoint will argue that such fulfillment and immediacy of intuition as is required by phenomenology cannot be found. Instead of being transparent, consciousness’s workings are hidden from itself and can only be accessed as mediated through the expressions of sign systems. Although structuralist linguistics plays a considerable role in this portion of Ricoeur’s thought, here I will focus only on the role of psychoanalysis as a semiotic theory in order to bring in gradually the importance of “suspicion” to Ricoeur’s hermeneutic work.

⁶² Paul Ricoeur, “Husserl and Wittgenstein,” in Edward N. Lee and Maurice Mandelbaum, eds. *Phenomenology and Existentialism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), 213.

⁶³ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 237.

Freud's account of psychoanalysis challenges the self-immediacy of the *cogito* of the reflexive tradition but from a position outside that tradition. What is most important at this point for Ricoeur's reading of Freud is that Freud views consciousness as the product of forces or effect of causes that are hidden from itself. Unlike the reflexive tradition, for Freud consciousness is not the sole, primary location of interest. The fact of consciousness is undisputed, but the question of "what consciousness is" is accounted for by Freud in a distinct manner from its handling by Husserlian phenomenology. Ricoeur argues that Freud shows the *cogito* to be "wounded" in that its existence is apodictic (just as Descartes, Kant, and Husserl have shown) but that our idea of self-consciousness is false and can never be adequate to itself.⁶⁴ Consciousness is not merely opaque but false because it is generated on top of a wholly other unconscious that cannot be made transparent.⁶⁵ The Freudian topographic theory reduces what we refer to as consciousness to a contested field fought over by three forces – the id, superego, and Reality – of which the individual's self-consciousness is largely unaware. This renders "the question of consciousness... as obscure as the question of the unconscious."⁶⁶ For Freud, consciousness is not a static location but is merely part of the system of the production of meaning and cannot be the supreme arbitrator that Husserl *et al* would have it be, because consciousness is not master of itself. At the very least, the ego (or consciousness) is used by the competing forces of id and superego to produce their

⁶⁴ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 243.

⁶⁵ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 103.

⁶⁶ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 428.

desired perception of reality. The “wounded *cogito*” that Ricoeur sees in Freud’s work can set itself up as the lone judge of experience, but it cannot itself decipher its own conditions for being – the unconscious forces that give it efficacy – through naïve reflection. This can only be determined through the interpretive process that takes place in analysis concerning the patient’s expressions. Because of this, consciousness is a *lie* insofar as it sees itself as the determining judge of the reality of what appears to it, when in fact it is only the effect of the productive forces have already determined our relationship to reality. As David Kaplan writes, Freud indirectly shows Husserl’s egology to be founded on “the ‘transcendental illusion’ of a subject that ostensibly is immediately transparent to itself.”⁶⁷

The semiotics that Freud proposes acts as a reading of the signs of conscious expression so that the unconscious workings of desire can be interpreted. If we want to come to know the self, or consciousness, we must pass through the signs of the forces of the unconscious that have dominated the ego and will continue to try and do so. The ego is here reduced to the forces of desire that that produce it, in contrast to Husserl’s reduction of experience to the unity of intuition in consciousness.⁶⁸ Thus, Freudian semiology removes consciousness from the position of ground or self-ground and makes it a field of signs (such as guilt or repetition) that derive their meaning from the processes of desire that come from the unconscious. In this way, Freudian theory can be seen as an “anti-phenomenology” because “psychoanalysis undoes the evidence of consciousness,”

⁶⁷ David M. Kaplan, *Ricoeur’s Critical Theory* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 19.

⁶⁸ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 237-240.

from which phenomenology starts.⁶⁹ Knowledge of consciousness is, then, not a given to be found univocal meaning upon but is rather a task accomplished by a long interpretation, and not merely self-interpretation, of its expressed signs.⁷⁰

Together, these two critiques of the *cogito* that reveal it to be opaque and a product of other forces rather than its own auto-affection lead Ricoeur to seek an alternate method of articulating language and its plurivocity. Rather than look to the ego or self-consciousness directly, Ricoeur will focus on its expressions in order to find a concrete sense of self and the belonging from which it arises: “The beginning is not what one finds first; the point of departure must be reached, it must be won.”⁷¹ This shift will lead us to the founding of Ricoeur’s phenomenological hermeneutics and the need for a philosophy of language.

II. The Ricoeurian Reduction

If Husserl’s account of the univocity of sense has failed to ground itself, this does not entail Ricoeur’s abandonment of the insight of intentionality. Instead, since the *cogito* is now seen as insufficiently unified to suit the task of guaranteeing univocity, Ricoeur will turn and embrace that which Husserl attempted to exclude with his logic – the plurivocity of sense. As Husserl himself, according to Ricoeur, seems to realize in later works such as the *Crisis of the European Sciences*, “[i]t is in spite of itself that

⁶⁹ Leonard Lawlor, *Thinking Through French Philosophy: The Being of the Question* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2003). 28.

⁷⁰ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 44.

⁷¹ Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 348.

phenomenology discovers, in place of an idealist subject locked within a system of meanings, a living being which from all time has, as the horizon of all its intentions, a world, the world."⁷² The active synthesis of sense that occurs in a signifying intention is not made possible by an *a priori* univocal logical system - this would be the idealism of which Ricoeur speaks - but by a lifeworld [*Lebenswelt*]. Consciousness appears as finite in its possible determinations of sense because, in order to make determinations at all, it must be bounded. The lifeworld is the pre-reflective, intersubjective world of relations of belonging to sedimented meanings as well as future possibilities of meaningfulness that consciousness finds itself in before it can begin reflection.⁷³ It is this lifeworld (or our *belonging* to it) that is the condition for the possibility of phenomenological meaningfulness, but this world is not immediately given as bearing just one sense. Or, rather, it is always carrying too much sense in that its plurivocality always threatens to undermine the grounds of science and objective knowledge for the consciousness that attempts its determination.

Because of this excess of meaningfulness in the lifeworld, Ricoeur will hold that Husserl's version of the phenomenological *epoché* fails to reduce completely the being of the world to the sense of the being of the world.⁷⁴ If eidetic description cannot account for the whole of experience, then the constitution of sense must occur in interpretation, which narrows the field of possible meanings from a horizon steeped in plurivocal

⁷² Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 9.

⁷³ Richard Kearney, *On Paul Ricoeur: The Owl of Minerva* (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2004), 16.

⁷⁴ See here Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 9 as well as *Husserl*, 10.

expressions. With the guarantee of the ideal, whole *cogito* removed, we move from eidetic description to hermeneutics, which discovers “a manner of existing which would remain from start to finish a *being-interpreted*.”⁷⁵ In place of Husserl’s idealistic *epoche*, Ricoeur will offer an *epoche* of a different sort from which to begin a phenomenological hermeneutics. Rather than a reduction to a subjective pole of intuition, Ricoeur will argue for an *epoche* to expressions already in language. The radical self-grounding that phenomenology seeks has discovered instead the lifeworld, which demonstrates that a simple starting point for reflection is not possible. “Consequently,” for Ricoeur, “philosophy has to proceed as a second-order elucidation of a nebula of meaning that at first has a prephilosophical character.”⁷⁶ Phenomenological analysis opens up the field of the lifeworld and the manner in which understanding functions as mode of human being, however there can only be access to this understanding through reflection that is a reflection on language: “the point of departure [of ontological questioning must] be taken on the same level on which understanding operates, that is, on the level of language.”⁷⁷ Again we see that language is the field upon which philosophical discourses must prove themselves, but now Ricoeur has raised the stakes.

While an eidetic phenomenological investigation into language is proven to be excessively idealistic, the broader picture produced has shown language to be fundamental to the reflective understanding of the ontological constitution of the self in

⁷⁵ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 11 (emphasis in original).

⁷⁶ Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, 4.

⁷⁷ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 10.

the lifeworld, a self that is always a being-interpreted. The beginning of a philosophical investigation, here Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology, must start in the already mediated realm of human expressions and traditions. Consequently, the question of language has become tied not to its virtual logical structures but to its actual expressions by human beings. Because the field of the meaning of human being cannot be immediately reduced to a totalized realm of sense, Ricoeur thinks we instead must start from within what comprehension we do have of the possible totality. And it is Ricoeur's wager that if we bracket the possible transcendent reference of expression to examine the process of expression alone, we will be lead to a more complete knowledge of the manner in which language is a mediation between human desires and social reality. We can no longer hope to discover the concrete meaning of language and the root of communication in consciousness alone. Ricoeur discovers a "gap" between our total comprehension of the object and our pure reflection on it.⁷⁸ Instead of referring to the supposedly pure contents of consciousness, the Ricoeurian *epoche* advises us to seek understanding of the consciousness of meaning in the "deciphering of its expressions."⁷⁹

However, as we have seen, eidetic phenomenology cannot accomplish this as it can only justify language as being bound by the meanings in consciousness. The publicity of meaning, its pre-philosophical existence as the horizon of our experience, requires that the meaningfulness of language not simply be bound by one consciousness. Ricoeur is here proposing that the surplus of meaning in the lifeworld and in language is

⁷⁸ Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, 5.

⁷⁹ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 33.

what provides the boundaries of consciousness and that language can only be studied as an ontological mode of understanding in its *fullness*, not in its “subjective” or “objective” structures alone. Ricoeur’s philosophy of reflection now insists we reflect on meaning to understand consciousness – thereby inverting the reflexive tradition. He states: “Seeking meaning no longer means spelling out the consciousness of meaning [as Descartes and Husserl do] but, rather, *deciphering its expressions*.”⁸⁰ This entails that meaningfulness’s condition of being can no longer be sought internally to consciousness, for Ricoeur. Meaning and sense are external and in the world and in our traditions before they are appropriated to a singular consciousness. And as consciousness itself is intentional, we can only understand it by understanding those signs produced by humans that bear an external, expressed sense that are then intended by consciousness. We have moved from understanding consciousness as the condition of possibility of the meaningfulness of language to the fullness of language as being the condition of the possibility of understanding self-consciousness itself.

In this way, Ricoeur’s phenomenology again reasserts the critical philosophy of Kant. He will seek to articulate the structures of self-consciousness through a transcendental deduction based on the “object” understood as the fullness of language. Ricoeur states that this argument in the transcendental style is “a reflection that starts not with myself but with the object before me, and from there traces back to its conditions of possibility.”⁸¹ This transcendental investigation will not start with the immediate given

⁸⁰ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 149.

⁸¹ Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, 5.

of consciousness or the sense of its noetic objects; instead it starts with the object of expressed language and search for the conditions of its possibility as the modes of understanding that exist in consciousness. The conditions of the varied expressions in language will correspond to the synthesis constituted through intentional consciousness. By starting with the fullness of language, Ricoeur will attempt to work backwards to the synthesizing mediations effected by consciousness and, thereby, enable a description of that mediating and mediated consciousness.

However, to this phenomenology of expression that Ricoeur is proposing, there must also be a method. Even though a radical starting point cannot exist for philosophy, Ricoeur will attempt to reach or demonstrate the core of human being as the object of his method: “However, if philosophy is not a radical beginning with regard to its sources, it may be one with regard to its method.”⁸² The method that Ricoeur will propose is a “grafting” of a hermeneutics onto this phenomenology.⁸³ A hermeneutics is necessary because, with the rejection of the Husserlian model of meaning, the meaningfulness of any phenomenon now exists as an external plurivocal field of meanings that must be appropriated or intended to be understood. Gianni Vattimo’s statement about Gadamer’s hermeneutics holds true here for Ricoeur’s as well: “[I]t becomes clear that every type of knowledge and experience of the truth is in fact hermeneutical. However, this universalization of the hermeneutic implies that all experience and all knowledge is to be

⁸² Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, 4.

⁸³ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 3.

understood as linguistic.”⁸⁴ Ricoeur follows classical hermeneutics here in holding that this work of reducing the distance between the sense of a text, whatever that is taken to be, and the reader is a work of interpretation. Any instance of life that can understand itself can only accomplish this understanding through a process that passes through expressive objectification to appropriation. By rejecting the self-immanence of consciousness, Ricoeur has refocused interpretation on expressions, specifically “expressions of life which have become fixed through writing.”⁸⁵ Thus, if we are to understand language and, through it, ourselves via a reflective philosophy, we must undertake an interpretation of the plurivocal expressions of language and see what this reveals of their unity and ground. To avoid any distorting reductionism, the sort that Husserl and the other purely “logical” views of language provide, attention must be paid to the “fullness, the diversity, and the irreducibility of the various *uses* of language.”⁸⁶ The transcendental grounding must take the form of a hermeneutics. However, Ricoeur’s method also contains the goal of seeking the common belonging that these various expressive modes of language utilize and arise from. The task of his philosophical

⁸⁴ Gianni Vattimo, *The Adventure of Difference: Philosophy after Nietzsche and Heidegger*, trans. Cyprian Blamires with Thomas Harrington (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 23.

⁸⁵ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 12. Ricoeur’s reference here is to Schleiermacher and Dilthey, with whom he is in agreement on this matter. It should be noted, however, that Ricoeur takes issue with Dilthey’s position that we can reproduce the psychological state of the author and with Schleiermacher’s belief that we can reproduce the total historical location of the text. Both aim at restoring the event of the creation of the text’s meaning in its inscription. See here Lawlor, *Imagination and Chance*, 61.

⁸⁶ Ricoeur, *From Text to Action*, 2.

anthropology, despite the character of existence as being-interpreted, will be rational reconstruction of the totality.⁸⁷

The commonality that Ricoeur finds lies in the possibility for expressions to have more than one sense. Depending on how an expression is interpreted, it can bear more than one meaning. Interpretation can only begin, in fact, where plurivocality has been actualized: “To interpret is to understand a double meaning.”⁸⁸ Rather than immediately undertaking a concrete hermeneutic reflection on these double meanings in language, Ricoeur proposes a more indirect path. It may lead to a phenomenological hermeneutics, but Ricoeur must begin with a critique of the hermeneutic method. This is what is most distinctive about Ricoeur’s hermeneutics. If interpretation is to be an appropriation of a double meaning, then it must also be possible for alternate interpretations of any given expression to be articulated. To launch into hermeneutics (or phenomenology, for that matter) without undertaking a critique of that particular hermeneutics’s ground of interpretation opens the door, for Ricoeur, to a one-sided exegesis and illusion. Therefore, with interpretation freed from univocity and interiority, Ricoeur must provide a new foundation for hermeneutics and his phenomenology. In his earlier hermeneutic works, this ground is the symbol.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, 49.

⁸⁸ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 8.

⁸⁹ Although Ricoeur later changes the focus of his hermeneutics to the “general problem of written language and texts,” this does not deny the hermeneutics of the symbol (“From existentialism to the philosophy of language,” 317). Ricoeur’s discovery of structuralism and the problems of linguistics reveals to him that all language, insofar as it can be metaphorical, can be symbolic, at the level of the word, sentence, or text. Plurivocity is now a much broader horizon, with univocal expressions becoming possible only through contextualization.

III. The Ricoeurian Symbol

The entryway to a philosophical anthropology for Ricoeur will always be mediated by language. In his search for a coherent philosophy of language in which a philosophical anthropology can be couched, Ricoeur discovers that psychologistic theories of meaning are untenable and, with them, univocal theories of meaning. So the turn to expressions and their plurivocality must be made, which has the effect of turning all reflection into interpretations of expressions in language. Hermeneutic work, then, becomes central to any philosophy insofar as philosophy attempts to decipher the meaning of the expressions of consciousness; but here we are back to a seemingly diverse field of possible interpretations as well as theories of interpretation. Importantly, Ricoeur does not deny this range of interpretation of what he calls the “hermeneutic field” but seeks to preserve it and understand its conditions for possibility. For these reasons, Ricoeur’s hermeneutics is not presented directly but is developed only after a functional critique (in the Kantian sense) of hermeneutic possibility. Ricoeur’s own hermeneutics will be a dialectic of concrete reflection on opposing hermeneutic methods; but first he must account for their mutual possibilities. The opacity of self-consciousness when posited as the site of the grounding of the unity of sense leads Ricoeur to focus instead on the language in which intentional life is expressed. In order to complete or at least critique the limits of a philosophical anthropology, Ricoeur holds that the mediating function of language must be accounted for. This general theory of language that Ricoeur proposes and attempts is needed to decipher the plurality of ways that humans

express their interactions in the world and their self-reflection. There is no direct access to the self; instead the self can only be known through its expressions, which exteriorize consciousness and make it available as an object. These various types of expressions, however, characterize existence in radically different ways. To account for this plurivocality, Ricoeur wishes to reflect on the condition for the possibility of this conflict of interpretation between fields of study. He finds, in his early work, that it is the symbol that conditions the possibility of the actuality of polysemic language. Adopting a phrase from Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Ricoeur states "symbols give rise to thought."⁹⁰

Ricoeur finds this hermeneutic method by making interpretation the correlate of a concept he calls the "symbol," which defines "symbolism and hermeneutics in terms of each other."⁹¹ The symbol is any object of any hermeneutic field that bears a double meaning or has been interpreted in more than one way, which means that it can, from one perspective, be misunderstood. Symbols account for the possibility of a conflict of interpretations because they occur when "one meaning, not satisfied with designating some one thing, designates another meaning only in and through the first intentionality."⁹² The symbol stands as a trace of the thought of those who have come before, but, in appearing as symbolic, it has no one clear meaning but the possibility of intending several different meanings. Symbols are the originary sites of double meaning

⁹⁰ See Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 347-357, and Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 37-38.

⁹¹ Ricoeur, "From existentialism to the philosophy of language," 317. As the symbol excludes the possibility of totality, it might be more appropriate to call it a "non-concept." However, Ricoeur's insistence on its boundedness within a horizon indicates its possible conceptualization.

⁹² Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 16.

that both appear before reflective thought can begin and also call upon philosophical reflection in language. This distance from being univocal calls forth, for Ricoeur, the task of thinking and interpreting what the symbol's meaning and intentional fulfillment could be. Although humans must first utter words or inscribe marks which are symbols, those symbols have a depth that is not exhausted in just one intentional meaning – they do not refer to only one possible noetic object. Instead, symbolic expressions denote not only one intentionality but more meanings than can be appropriated by the interpreting party simultaneously. Thus, while intentionality of meaning is the universal moment of the mediation from a finite perspective, the intentionality of the symbol “is not universal and necessary in a univocal sense.”⁹³ The total fulfillment of the intentionality of a symbol cannot occur because it always refers beyond itself. The depth of meaning in the symbol, its intentional plurivocity, provides the possibility of hermeneutics by provoking an attempt to grasp and account for the range of meanings contained within the symbol. In this way, Ricoeur writes of the symbol as an “enigma” that is capable of fulfilling several different sorts of intentionality without ever ceasing to leave room for further interpretation and exegesis.⁹⁴ Any hermeneutics must deal with the excess of meaning that a symbol has, because this excess is what makes hermeneutics possible. Exegesis cannot begin without a misunderstanding or “enigma” that spurs it forward as well as constituting its field. The symbol raises the possibility of interpretative work through its complex intentional structure that keeps escaping all attempts to fix its meaning in its

⁹³ David M. Rasmussen, *Mythic-Symbolic Language and Philosophical Anthropology: A Constructive Interpretation of the Thought of Paul Ricoeur* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 45.

⁹⁴ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 18.

entirety. Lawlor writes, regarding this, “[b]y making contact with that which is totally other, the symbol for Ricoeur is actually the transgression of human finitude; it is completely unlike any mundane reality.”⁹⁵ This transgression aims at a more immediate connection with the field of belonging.

With this working concept of symbol, Ricoeur can bound its use – and therefore define the boundaries of the hermeneutic field – to specific sorts of exegetical work. On the one hand, there can be, as of yet, no general hermeneutics of totalized mediation. Although all meaningful experience may be mediated for Ricoeur because of the nature of intentionality, the complex intentional structure of the symbol does not allow a total rational reduction or explication. As Ricoeur wants to meditate on the fullness of language, he will hold that part of the excess of meaning of language is not immediately recovered in consciousness. Only the immediate self-clarity of consciousness (or an equivalent idealism) could provide the unification necessary for a general theory of hermeneutics that accounts for the multiplicity of apparent meaning as a univocal totality. Without this unified subject, which is given, as we have seen, only as a task, a general mediation is not possible. Instead, we must approach a general hermeneutics through the specific regions opened by particular interpretations of symbols. In other words, all hermeneutic approaches are regional, construct their own hermeneutic fields, and are based in their own historical moments.

In this way, Ricoeur argues against a “too broad” sort of hermeneutics that immediately bypasses all regional techniques or methods and moves to establish a

⁹⁵ Lawlor, *Imagination and Chance*, 70.

general mediation or primordial understanding too quickly. This may be seen in Ricoeur's criticisms of Cassirer. Cassirer's project, as it is understood by Ricoeur, is to establish symbolic mediation as the root of all expressions.⁹⁶ The "symbolic" is here named as "the common denominator of all the ways of objectivizing, of giving meaning to reality."⁹⁷ This definition is too broad for Ricoeur's liking because it tends toward the elimination of the distinction between univocal and plurivocal expressions. Cassirer's system may not immediately reduce all expressions to univocity, but it does posit that this is possible as well as desirable. Plurivocality is expressed for Cassirer only on the basis of a signifying univocal process. Ricoeur will instead argue that univocity and plurivocality are both required for hermeneutics to begin. A generalized order, such as Cassirer's, reduces hermeneutics to a discipline of the not-yet-conquered realms of experience. This does not entail that Ricoeur thinks of the hermeneutic field as a generalized disorder, however. Instead, each hermeneutics operates on specific plurivocal expressions by fixing the univocity of other expressions. This relationship between the whole (the fixed signs) and the parts (the plurivocal) makes hermeneutics possible and is also necessary for the accounting of the fullness of language. Cassirer will be forced to deny, ultimately, that the complex structure of intentionality inherent to the symbol is real – that his position is but one further historical moment of interpretation.

⁹⁶ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 10 and *Conflict of Interpretations*, 12.

⁹⁷ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 10.

Therefore, the symbol cannot be taken as emblematic of all mediation, only that of meaning to meaning. But, on the other hand, the relationship of meaning to meaning cannot be analogical. This hermeneutics, which Ricoeur calls “too narrow,” seeks to obtain a perspective of the whole of symbolics from an exterior perspective. If the position of Cassirer is that we can understand mediation clearly from the interior of its workings, an analogical hermeneutics would seek to contain the symbol’s meaningfulness within a determinate relation that would force it to reveal its real truth – its real referent. As Ricoeur says, “The symbol does not conceal any hidden teaching that only needs to be unmasked for the images in which it is clothed to become useless.”⁹⁸ Symbolic meanings are not exhausted by one specific interpretation or determination that resolves their enigmatic status. Interpretation is not a disposable ladder that discovers the real analogy between signs but is rather a successive unpacking of latent meanings hidden in a patent one. And these latent meanings, *contra* the too narrow view (Biblical and Neo-Platonic hermeneutics) are not resolvable to a depiction by mere explication from a supposedly external viewpoint. Thus, even though Ricoeur’s thought of the symbol flies under the Kantian banner of “the symbol gives rise to thought,” Kant’s own analogical use of the symbol must be denied.⁹⁹

With this act of double limitation, Ricoeur sets the boundaries on the concept of the symbol. It is neither an expression that can be completely explicated immanently, nor

⁹⁸ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 348.

⁹⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5:352-3. Kant’s most famous example here is how the object of a judgment of beauty symbolizes and refers analogously to the idea of the good.

reduced to a simple relationship to another meaning from without. The symbol is an expression of the surplus of literal meaning, the excess of the meaningfulness of language, as it arises in experience. Ricoeur encloses this entire thrust of hermeneutics in the phrase “The symbol gives rise to thought.”¹⁰⁰ The phrase indicates that thinking and interpreting results from the multiple possible determinations of meaning found in the symbol – the excess of meaning sets thought in motion in an effort to create a univocity out of a presentation of plurivocality. We will study this directional aspect of interpretation more fully shortly. Symbols function, in Ricoeur’s hermeneutics, as the objects of interpretation and are the correlates of true hermeneutics. Where there are symbols, there is hermeneutics, and where there is hermeneutics, there are symbols. This leads Ricoeur to his philosophic hermeneutics proper, which he calls “a philosophy that starts from the symbols and endeavors to promote the meaning, to form it, by a creative interpretation.”¹⁰¹ His philosophy is no longer strictly phenomenological because the failure of the phenomenological reduction points to a horizon that is a world of sense that cannot be completely idealized. Therefore, all investigations into sense will have to wrestle with the fundamental plurivocality of its expressions as well as the manners in which that plurivocality has been determined into univocal expressions by the act of interpretation.

¹⁰⁰ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 347-348.

¹⁰¹ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 355.

IV. The Hermeneutic Poles

This hermeneutics of symbols, however, presents the interpreter with multiple ways in which to decode the possible meanings and intentions of symbols. Since the possibility of a general hermeneutics has been ruled out as a hasty totalization of the hermeneutic field, there is no “general canon for exegesis” and all hermeneutic methods will be regional.¹⁰² Each will proceed from its own choice of interpretive objects towards the structures of meaning that make its object of interpretation possible. Thus, as the objects of interpretation differ, so will the hermeneutic methods and the description of reality they give. As Ricoeur says, “[t]he hermeneutic field, whose outer contours we have traced, is internally at variance with itself.”¹⁰³ This variance arises from the symbolic object but also from the hermeneutic approach employed. Ricoeur’s “hypothesis is that each [hermeneutics] is legitimate within its own context.”¹⁰⁴ The analysis of symbols through interpretation necessitates a methodology that both calls for the “enumeration of symbolic forms” and a “study of the operations of interpretation.”¹⁰⁵ Taking the symbolic forms under discussion as the historical symbols that are related to us by tradition, we have to consider the specific methodologies of interpretation that allow us to follow the intentionality of the symbols considered. Hermeneutics “looks at the symbols in texts as phenomena, and so in doing uncovers the intentional attribute that

¹⁰² Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 317.

¹⁰³ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 27.

¹⁰⁴ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 323.

¹⁰⁵ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 13-14.

makes them meaningful;” but this intentionality can be interpreted or followed in a multitude of ways.¹⁰⁶

This is the place of Ricoeur’s famous distinction between two supposedly opposite tendencies that are employed in the act of interpreting how meaning is transferred from the latent to the patent expression. Although these competing methodologies are not the only two possible approaches to the problem of interpreting symbols, Ricoeur chooses this pairing to highlight the “most extreme opposition” of interpretive activities that still remain within the hermeneutic field and are concerned with the same symbols.¹⁰⁷ His goal will be to demonstrate that even these antagonistic hermeneutic methods are not diametrically opposed and can be seen to explicate various complementary modes of human belonging through their exegetic work: “the double meaning aims here at deciphering an existential movement, a certain ontological condition of man, by means of the surplus of meaning attached to the even which, in its literalness, is situated in the observable historical world.”¹⁰⁸ Each hermeneutic method will unpack the surplus differently, leading to differing characterizations of belonging, based on the presumed referent of the symbol. Although Ricoeur gives this distinction many different formulations, we will refer to the distinction here as being between the “hermeneutics of suspicion” and the “hermeneutics of recollection.”¹⁰⁹ For the

¹⁰⁶ Karl Simms, *Paul Ricoeur*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 38.

¹⁰⁷ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 318.

¹⁰⁸ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 66.

¹⁰⁹ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 32. It is worth noting here that this distinction is still operative in Ricoeur’s work addressing the Gadamer-Habermas debates, with Gadamer’s hermeneutics occupying the recollective pole and Habermas’s critique of ideology as the pole of suspicion.

hermeneutics of suspicion, symbols are to be interpreted as distortions of some other, often hidden, meaning that dissimulates itself. Their goal, as stated by Ricoeur, is to dispel illusion. Their practice of interpretation “refers to a new possibility which is no longer either error in the epistemological sense or lying in the moral sense, but illusion...”.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, to the hermeneutics of recollection, symbols are the sensible manifestation of a forgotten depth of human reality.¹¹¹ The presence of symbols here indicates an authentic relationship with something outside of human experience that has been forgotten and is in need of retrieval. Here, we will spell out in more detail the relationship between these rival hermeneutics, broadly conceived, before moving on to a more detailed analysis of Ricoeur’s reading of Freud’s hermeneutics and its relationship to Nietzsche’s hermeneutics in the next chapter. The guide here will be Ricoeur’s statement: “Rival hermeneutics conflict not over the structure of double meaning but over the mode of its opening, over the finality of showing.”¹¹² Their quarrel is over how the plurivocal object’s intentional sense is to be treated and the kind of ontology it points towards.

A glance at Ricoeur’s description of hermeneutics that employ interpretation as a technique for demystification reveals “[t]hree masters, seemingly mutually exclusive:

¹¹⁰ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 26.

¹¹¹ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 7.

¹¹² Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 66.

Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud.”¹¹³ Although they differ in their choice of the object of exegesis, the commonality between these three thinkers is twofold: each treats our everyday consciousness of meaning as *naïve* and our expressions as mediate products of something other than immediate consciousness; and each constructs, in the place of this naïve consciousness, a method of exegesis that works against this illusory meaning. This first tack of their critique is against the immediacy of self-consciousness regarding meaningfulness. Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx employ varieties of Ricoeur’s “semiotic” criticism to denounce consciousness as a false consciousness that is the product of a series of dissimulations. Because of the illusion of immediate consciousness created by the idealist conception of the self, the apparent immediate meaningfulness that phenomena possess in consciousness cannot be taken as merely given because the meaning of consciousness is underdetermined. Instead, the expressions of consciousness are to be taken as symptoms or symbols of disguised prejudices, be they economic forces, instincts, or desires. Their diagnoses of false consciousness point toward conditions for the production of meaning that are often at odds with the meanings that are produced. These forces and instincts are self-concealing in the manner in which they produce illusions of morality and of metaphysics. In this way do Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx not only denounce immediate consciousness and the immediacy of meaningfulness, they also strenuously deny the very object of the “sacred” sought by the opposing hermeneutics.

¹¹³ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 32. Ricoeur will also include other thinkers as practitioners of demystification – Heidegger, de la Rochefoucauld and Feuerbach, for example - but the “three masters” retain their status across his writings on hermeneutics.

This object, too, in an illusion that can be reduced as expressions of certain drives or forces.

However, even as iconoclastic hermeneutic approaches, their philosophical projects are not to be taken, for Ricoeur, as aiming at the total destruction of meaning or as nihilistic pursuits. Ricoeur states, “These three masters of suspicion are not to be misunderstood as three masters of skepticism.”¹¹⁴ Although their projects have one goal as the demystification of illusory meanings, all three also attempt to decipher the workings of these illusions through their differing practices of interpretation. The diagnosis of the genesis of illusion in each case is the result of the creation of a “mediate *science* of meaning, irreducible to the immediate *consciousness* of meaning.”¹¹⁵ This mediate science is a hermeneutic method derived from the objects of their critiques – ideology, libido, or moralistic metaphysical concepts. In the next chapter we will look at Freud’s hermeneutic in more detail, followed by the examination of Nietzsche’s method of exegesis. However, here it is enough to show that their methods are traced from the “unconscious” work of the production of meaning. The hermeneutics of suspicion all “reverse” the processes that result in the creation of illusions.¹¹⁶ The technique of each is to trace the expressions of everyday life and consciousness, the patent meanings of symbols, backwards to their latent source of meaning, which can then be reinterpreted in a more meaningful way. And in these reinterpretations, new practices can emerge or be

¹¹⁴ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 33.

¹¹⁵ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 34 (emphasis in original).

¹¹⁶ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 34.

imagined. For example, Nietzsche's work in *Genealogy of Morals* is an interpretation of the commandments of Christian morality as expressions of drives that can also be interpreted as *ressentiment* and bad conscience. He treats "good" and "evil" as plurivocal expressions – as symbols – rather than innately meaningful concepts and then exposes other ways of actualizing the forces he has diagnosed. Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx all practice variations on a theme that Ricoeur describes in this way concerning Freud: "it is a question of substituting for this narration [the dream], unintelligible at the first hearing, a more meaningful text, which would be to the first as the latent is to the patent."¹¹⁷

All three hermeneutics of suspicion, then, motivate their programs of demystification according to what Ricoeur refers to as an archaeological principle. Their methodologies start from the overdetermination of the meaning of certain concepts and expose that surplus of meaning in an effort to delegitimize those concepts traditionally taken as univocally true entities. They show traditional philosophical concepts to have the status of symbols that rely on interpretation for their meaningfulness. Without the guarantee of a simple, immediate meaning, these symbols can then be subjected to an immanent critique that reveals their status as kinds of transcendental illusions. The mode of this critique is said to be archaeological because the illusions are reinterpreted through a mediate science of meaning with a reference that points backwards to a moment that is preconscious. Conscious meaning is shown to depend on forces that precede the development of consciousness: Freud's unconscious, Nietzsche's will to power, Marx's economic substructure. They "displace the center of reference" for the meaningful sense

¹¹⁷ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 65.

of consciousness and the symbols under consideration to the non-totalizable *origin* of their production.¹¹⁸ Their mode of opening on the problem of plurivocity charts a regressive course to the *archai* of produced meaning; sense is realized in a backwards movement.

Regarding the project that will later be called the “hermeneutics of recollection,” Ricoeur writes, in *The Symbolism of Evil*: “It is not regret for the sunken Atlantides that animates us, but hope for a re-creation of language. Beyond the desert of criticism, we wish to be called again.”¹¹⁹ This approach to the plurivocity of symbolism recognizes that the intentional fulfillment of signs that refer to phenomena called “sacred” is problematic. However, the phenomenology of religion – Ricoeur’s prime example of the hermeneutics of recollection – recognizes, at least in Ricoeur’s formulation of it, that once this immediacy of belief is lost that meaningfulness is always mediated. Therefore, this hermeneutics looks to the compound intentionality of the symbol as the possibility of an indirect showing of the “sacred” or as a mediated hierophany. The goal of recollection is the achievement of a post-critical ontology through the roundabout method of interpretation of signs and symbols and the creation of new key figurations of ultimate human reality. Ricoeur calls this goal a “second immediacy” or a “second naïveté.”¹²⁰

The archaeological mode is thus supplemented with an alternate mode of showing the intentionality of the symbolic. If the surplus of meaning of the symbol is pre-

¹¹⁸ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 325.

¹¹⁹ Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 349.

¹²⁰ Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 352.

philosophical, that is if the “fullness of language” is the horizon of philosophic reflection, then the symbol, as the object of his transcendental deduction, may also call for speculative thought. “Symbols give, they are the gift of language;” states Ricoeur in the familiar refrain of his thought, “but this gift creates for me the duty to think, to inaugurate philosophic discourse, starting from what is always prior to and the foundation of that discourse.”¹²¹ Therefore even if myths are understood as *muthos* and not as *logos*, they may be interpreted to symbolize, for the hermeneutics of recollection, innovative “existential concepts” of a concrete reflection that touch upon an ontology.¹²² Rather than abandoning rational reconstruction of these concepts of the modes of being of human being, recollection invites us to speculate towards the revived idea of a philosophical totality. Ricoeur argues that new concepts and new cultural figures need to be created in this speculative mode.¹²³ But, again, they will not legitimately give a totality achievable by the ideal immediacy of self-reflection. In this manner, we get the first name for this mode of opening – teleology.

The teleological mode of hermeneutics seems necessary to Ricoeur for the movement of concrete reflection through the hermeneutic method. Reflection remains abstract if it has only dealt with the regressive movement of interpretation and not the progressive element whereby the lessons from the critique are ordered and appropriated. As consciousness is not complete, this teleology is the progressive synthesizing of self

¹²¹ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 38.

¹²² Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 356.

¹²³ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 117.

“in the succession of figures that draw consciousness forward away from itself.”¹²⁴

Ricoeur here draws on the Hegelian phenomenology of Spirit where meaning is gradually revealed as a “becoming conscious” that comes about because of the successive realization of mediation’s role in the production of meaning. In this way, reflection, as a hermeneutic procedure, allows “consciousness [to be] intelligible to itself only if it allows itself to be set off-center.”¹²⁵ Whereas the de-centering accomplished by archaeology moves consciousness towards an uncontrollable origin, the teleological movement pulls a singular consciousness toward universal meaning by making explicit in new concepts the implicit anticipations of meaningfulness in previous events of consciousness. It is as an appropriation of the “instinctual ground” of consciousness that the gradual process of becoming conscious is made possible through the mediation of a “cultural aim.”¹²⁶ In other words, recollection aims at a total fulfillment of the intentionality of symbolic figures wherein the sense of the subject is drawn from their ultimate referent and is not just a reduction of the illusions of the false sense of self-mastery that consciousness originally possessed.

Thus, for Ricoeur, the goal of concrete reflection can occur only when a dialectic is created between the archaeology of the instincts and the teleology of Spirit. Both serve to distance consciousness from itself and its false conceptions of its self-adequacy as a concept through revelation of the mediation necessary for self-consciousness. However,

¹²⁴ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 331.

¹²⁵ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 462.

¹²⁶ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 245.

the dialectic seeks to re-appropriate this self on the other side of its self-illusions through a progressive meditation on its powers and goals towards the universality of meaning. Reflection then takes as its task reflection on the cultural figures found in consciousness, making the implicit intentions explicit and making consciousness, thereby, more fully self-aware. The dialectic allows the creative constitution of a conscious self through the exegesis of its intentional objects.

“Reflection,” Ricoeur states, “is what holds together regression and progression.”¹²⁷ As consciousness is de-centered through the exorcism of immediate certainty of meaning, that sense is recovered through the hermeneutics of the symbols, which reveals the appropriative activity of self-constitution. However, as this teleology draws consciousness toward a total exegesis of its figures, Ricoeur has already placed this complete fulfillment at an insurmountable distance. Symbols themselves, we have said, contain an intentional surplus of meaning such that the finality of mediation is never given or accounted for. Therefore, the Hegelian moment is also insufficient for Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of recollection. It must be supplemented with an eschatological mode, the second mode of recollection, that treats the fulfillment of symbols as “only a *promise*, promised through the symbols of the sacred.”¹²⁸ The deferral of the end of interpretation confirms the opaque nature of the symbol and its plurivocity. This recollection strives for better understanding despite the fact that symbols “are resistant to any reduction to

¹²⁷ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 175.

¹²⁸ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 332.

rational knowledge.”¹²⁹ Just as Husserl’s reduction to the meaning of beings failed, so too does Ricoeur’s excavation of sense always remain incomplete. Yet the hermeneutics of recollection treats this not as a failure but as a confirmation of its central insight concerning the plurivocity of its objects of interpretation. Although rational reconstruction will never be complete, Ricoeur holds the project to be meaningful in explicating the horizon of human belonging and both the acts of reflection and appropriation of that into self-consciousness. Eschatology here functions as the regulative ideal for reflection that remains philosophical and dialectical while fending off reduction and eclecticism. This regulative ideal posits that the symbols reflected upon by both the hermeneutics of suspicion and recollection are the same.

For Ricoeur, only by instituting a dialectic between the archaeological and teleological interpretations of symbolics can reflection onto the belonging of human being be made concrete. This concretization is eschatological insofar as it asserts “ultimately that a phenomenology of the mind [or Spirit] and an archaeology of the unconscious are not speaking about two halves of man but speaking each of them to the whole man.”¹³⁰ Both archaeology and teleology are seen to be working on the same symbols. Only in this way can a philosophical anthropology be creatively appropriated through the process of mediation from the non-transparent nature of human being and its expressions. Ricoeur’s nascent philosophy of language here shows meaning to be bound not to the subject’s consciousness but to objective realizations of that subject’s expressions. Through the interpretation of these expressions, we appropriate more and

¹²⁹ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 332.

¹³⁰ Jervolino, *Cogito and Hermeneutics*, 29.

more of the subject's intentions, both as arising from a primordial origin and as aiming at a goal. However, this appropriation of the fundamental belonging of human being can only approach totalization obliquely and by increments. As Ricoeur affirms that a single horizon of meaning is promised, it must be thought as an eschatological concept and not as an ontological one, as the full totality of it cannot be revealed.¹³¹ Concrete reflection is, then, the process of this appropriation through archeological exegesis and speculative reflection aimed at both the reduction of illusions and the creative promotions of new meanings and cultural figures. Concrete reflection, therefore, is a promised goal of philosophy but is never directly actualized. The disparate discourses concerning human being all touch upon regions of the horizon of meaning and human belonging, without ever fully recapturing it.

Having given the broad outlines of Ricoeur's hermeneutics, we will in the next chapter explore the specific readings of Freud's and Nietzsche's theories of interpretation given by Ricoeur. The goal of that chapter will be twofold: to show how Ricoeur's reading of Freud and Nietzsche attributes to them an explicit archaeology but a need for a complementary teleology; and to begin to draw out Nietzsche's possible reasons for opposing this interpretation of his theory of interpretation. Ricoeur, within the eschatological mode, argues that both have implicit teleological structures; but we will begin to articulate Nietzsche's opposition to eschatological reasoning and the impact that has on his possible teleology.

¹³¹ Theodoor Marius Van Leeuwen, *The Surplus of Meaning: Ontology and Eschatology in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1981), 133.

CHAPTER TWO

ARCHAEOLOGY AND GENEALOGY IN HERMENEUTIC PRACTICE – FREUD AND NIETZSCHE

Ricoeur's route from a reflective phenomenology to a hermeneutic phenomenology reveals the necessity of pairing interpretation with reflection in any investigation of or determination of the sense of beings. If philosophical thinking is to avoid unwittingly falling prey to the transcendental illusion of the immediate certainty of the contents of consciousness, then our understanding of the process by which the meaning of those contents is produced must be critically deduced. Ricoeur attempts to show that a concrete determination of the meaning of beings in experience is produced by an activity of mediation between an intended sense and a particular perspective; and he discovers that any knowledge of the synthesis performed in this activity must be a methodological accomplishment that cannot merely be achieved by a quick reduction to an immediate consciousness of meaning. In order to decipher the concrete meaning of beings, specifically the human being, Ricoeur's hermeneutic method provides a long but productive detour through the whole of human expression, focusing on those expressions which Ricoeur calls "symbols" which provide actual conditions for interpretive activity. Symbols, being overdetermined in their intentional meaning, spur thinking towards the conditions for the actual conflict of interpretations that a concrete determination of sense is intended to alleviate: "The hermeneutic problem therefore is not imposed on reflection

from without, but proposed from within by the very movement of meaning, by the implicit life of symbols taken at their semantic and mythical level.”¹³² The overdetermination of the meaning of symbols itself calls for interpretive activity not because of a perceived lack of meaning but because the mediated nature of the symbol cannot be explained in only one determination. With regard to the methods of deciphering the nature of this overdetermination, Ricoeur identifies two dominant and opposing tendencies of interpretative methods regarding the possibility or reliability of determining an authentic and transcendent meaning to these symbols – suspicion and recovery. And, as we saw in chapter one, he argues that the construction of a dialectic between these two poles is necessary if reflection is to avoid the fallacies of reductive immediacy, on the one hand, and the assumption of a totalized and general mediation, on the other. Therefore, the description of the synthesis of meaning in human consciousness must allow for both of these poles of interpretation, if it is to be genuine for Ricoeur.

In this chapter, my goal will be twofold. The first task will be to elucidate the archaeological pole of a hermeneutics of symbols as Ricoeur sets it out in his studies of Freud’s archaeological psychoanalytic method. For Ricoeur, Freud’s work is most representative of the hermeneutics of suspicion because the psychoanalytic viewpoint attempts to carry universal import regarding the interpretation of texts while denying the possibility of a philosophy that begins from the certainty of the self-understanding of the consciousness of a thinking subject. However, Freud is not alone among the rolls of the practitioners of interpretive demystification; Ricoeur routinely includes Marx and

¹³² Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1970), 39.

Nietzsche as well. The second task will be to introduce another of the practitioners of the hermeneutics of suspicion – Nietzsche. In doing this, I will attempt to piece together Ricoeur’s interpretation of the import of Nietzsche’s philosophy of interpretation from the various indications Ricoeur gives and to show how Ricoeur absorbs Nietzsche’s problematic into Ricoeur’s dialectic of suspicion and recovery. This attempted reconstruction of a Ricoeurian reading of Nietzsche’s texts will then be my starting point for my further investigation into Nietzsche’s hermeneutics in chapter three. I wish to begin to draw from Nietzsche’s texts reasons for a different sort of distinction regarding the hermeneutic poles than the one drawn by Ricoeur. Ricoeur argues that the archaeological and teleological trajectories of the hermeneutics of suspicion and recovery, respectively, need to be reconciled in a dialectical movement directed toward the reinvigoration of meaning and a restored, or second, naïveté of meaning. His readings of Freud’s texts as archaeological investigations and Hegel’s texts as teleological explanations bear this out. It is my contention that, as it is applied to Nietzsche, Ricoeur’s schematic of archaeology and teleology is insufficient and that Nietzsche’s interpretive methodology contains more resources and depth than is attributed to it by the phrase “hermeneutics of suspicion.” While Ricoeur is right in reading Nietzsche as a practitioner of hermeneutics and as someone for whom “the whole of philosophy becomes interpretation,” I will begin here to show a difference between the *archaeological* strategy of Freud’s psychoanalytic practice, as it is described by Ricoeur, and what I will call the *genealogical* strategy that Nietzsche employs in interpretation.¹³³

¹³³ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 25.

Although both point to a new form of ascesis through their critical methodologies and iconoclastic interpretations, I will try to show that the process of the re-codification of meaning that is necessary for Ricoeur's reading of Freud works somewhat differently in the case of Nietzsche. Therefore, it may be premature to posit that both Nietzsche and Freud have the same end of the work of interpretation in mind. Noting the difference in the goals of their interpretive strategies will help to reveal the difference in their methodologies, as well. However, Ricoeur's interpretive strategies in dealing with Nietzsche's texts will still be illustrative in demonstrating how other critics have appropriated, with more or less success, Nietzsche's texts to their own use.

Their encounter in the final section of this chapter will be staged, as Ricoeur would have it, around the interpretation of symbols – in this case the cultural symbols of *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Reaching that point, however, will require several preliminary steps. First will be the demonstration of Freud and Nietzsche as iconoclastic interpreters and of the similarities that cause Ricoeur to consider them together as practitioners of demystification. Then I will look into the manner in which Freud and Nietzsche determine the energetics that underlie their hermeneutics. This will be the location of the core of their differences. Finally, I will consider their interpretations of certain cultural symbols and show how Nietzsche's genealogy separates itself from Freud's archaeological methodology, in Ricoeur's sense, precisely because of Nietzsche's critique of an eschatological vision such as Ricoeur employs, and not because of its lack of a teleological sense. Nietzsche's hermeneutics does not display either an impulse to a supposed naturalism (as Freud could be accused of following) or to a final, as yet

undiscovered and reconciling truth that would exist in common to all interpretations. Genealogy remains a hermeneutic method but does not necessarily fit within the boundaries of hermeneutics as Ricoeur has drawn them. This discussion will set the stage for the fuller working-out of Nietzsche's theory of interpretation as a critical hermeneutics in subsequent chapters.

I. Freudian Suspicion

The task of hermeneutic reflection, for Ricoeur, is “*the appropriation of our effort to exist and our desire to be by means of works which testify to this effort and this desire.*”¹³⁴ The concrete meaning of the being of the human being as existing and as desiring must be interpreted from its various actions and expressions. And to Ricoeur's mind it is the texts of Freud that most clearly and thoroughly interpret the connections and disconnections between the explicit *works* of humanity and the implicit *desires* of humanity.¹³⁵ The role of Freudian psychoanalysis – or Freud's method of interpreting human action in light of desire – is, for Ricoeur, that of an archaeology into the conditions of human desire that cause consciousness to gravitate towards certain expressions of those desires. Freud himself often speaks of psychoanalysis as being akin to archaeological excavation, although we must be careful to the extent to which this metaphor is employed. Freud's account of the ontogenesis of the individual always

¹³⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 329 (emphasis in original).

¹³⁵ With this in mind, I will be more focused in this section on laying out Ricoeur's interpretation of Freud than in either evaluating the accuracy of that interpretation or in reading Freud directly, though I will occasionally refer directly to Freud's own writings.

focuses on the vicissitudes of the drives; and it is the role of psychoanalysis to bring to light the causes of those conflicts as they are expressed in works and actions. However, the act of revealing these conflicts is not the only goal, for the symptoms that psychoanalysis wishes to treat do not dissolve upon having their causes made patent.¹³⁶

Additionally, psychoanalysis must deal with the interaction between our desires and our expressed behavior in an attempt to change our consciousness of ourselves. Jonathan Lear puts it this way: “This new technique [psychoanalysis] is designed to address the problem of *appropriation*: what is involved in people being able to take up their own psychological states in ways that genuinely make them their own.”¹³⁷ The interpretative method of psychoanalysis is designed to facilitate the ability of consciousness to give meaning to itself, instead of having the meaning of its actions be determined by unconscious instincts. This is the sentiment behind Freud’s famous phrase “Where id was, there ego shall be,” which Ricoeur is fond of quoting.¹³⁸ The relationship between our desires and their expressions or representations are at the root of the meaning of consciousness for Freud. However, it is a defining characteristic of psychoanalysis that the causes of psychical conflicts are not merely buried or lost but are *repressed*.

Therefore, the process of appropriation that constitutes the psychoanalytic “cure” requires

¹³⁶Freud makes this claim in “Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through” as an explicit criticism of his earlier hypnotic technique and Breuer’s theory of catharsis. See Sigmund Freud, “Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XII, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1958), 147-148.

¹³⁷ Jonathan Lear, *Freud* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 135 (emphasis in original).

¹³⁸ Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XXII, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1964), 80.

a method to uncover what is actively repressed in the production of consciousness and its meaning.

Repression refers to an activity of the psychical whole wherein it hinders or works to prevent ideas from entering into consciousness internally and also to keep those ideas from being noticed as perceptions or from being acted upon. Regarding the phenomenon of repression, the dynamic description of the psyche postulates an active process whereby mental forces mobilize to oppose the becoming-conscious of some ideas for a variety of reasons, regardless of the internal or external origin of the ideas. The dominant reason for this active repression lies in the conflict of the instincts with each other: “In the course of things it happens again and again that individual instincts turn out to be incompatible in their aims or demands with the remaining ones, which are able to combine into the inclusive unity of the ego. The former are then split off from this unity by the process of repression....”¹³⁹ As instincts exist which have as their goal some endpoint that is repugnant or undesirable to some other, stronger instinct or bundle of instincts, the mechanism of repression excludes these “other” desires and their aims from its construction of the unity of an ego. The principle behind this repression is the principle of the constancy of the quantity of mental energy, which we will elucidate shortly.

The mechanism of repression is a general feature of all mental life for Freud, and the fact of its presence in relationship to our dreams suffices to show its ubiquity. For example, sleep, “the condition of rest free from stimulus,” has not only external threats to

¹³⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1961), 8.

its functioning but internal ones, as well.¹⁴⁰ This internal possibility of disruption is caused by instinctual forces that are not allowed expression during the waking states of consciousness. During sleep, there is, for Freud, a “diminishing of repressions” that allows the unconscious greater reign; however, repression is not abolished even then.¹⁴¹ The phenomenon of dreaming is thus explained as a mechanism for the expression of unconscious desires but in a veiled manner so that sleep will not be interrupted. Dreams are caused by the lessening of repression, which allows the unconscious expression; but dreaming also witnesses the phenomenon of repression in that unconscious desires are not expressed directly but instead are transferred into the symbols that appear in dreams. Thus, for Freud, the manifest contents of dreams are made from the repressed expressions of unconscious desires.

Freud notes that repression in the therapeutic setting often takes the form of forgetting. One form of forgetting is a type of repression applied to external stimuli: “Forgetting impressions, scenes, or experiences nearly always reduces itself to shutting them off.”¹⁴² Again, Freud repeats that the vicissitudes of the instincts are subject to repression by the instincts which have unified into the ego. Psychoanalytic practice reveals that the psyche frequently makes use of this repressive mechanism to avoid the disturbances caused by external stimuli; however, this alone does not account for the radical nature of psychoanalytic suspicion that is involved in the concept of repression.

¹⁴⁰ Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, 17.

¹⁴¹ Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, 17.

¹⁴² Freud, “Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through,” 148.

Repression shows its full force when dealing with those disturbing psychological processes that arise from within the psyche. These processes – “phantasies, processes of reference, emotional impulses, thought-connections” – arise from the workings of the unconscious.¹⁴³ What is telling for the verification of the existence of repression is that through the therapeutic technique, these impulses which have been resisted by the conscious portions of the psyche can be remembered when a repression is undone. Repression, therefore, also occurs unconsciously, on behalf of the ego: “In these processes it particularly often happens that something is ‘remembered’ which could never have been ‘forgotten’ because it was never at any time noticed – was never conscious.”¹⁴⁴

Freud’s archaeology is not just a technique for bringing the repressed to light but also give a “theory of the relationship between the repressed and that which represses.”¹⁴⁵ This theory will also give us the method by which the process of the appropriation of our desires can proceed. In short, psychoanalysis is searching for a method of interpretation for the expressions of human desires as symptoms of the vicissitudes of instincts within the human being. These expressions, or “texts” produced by the psyche, contain more meaning than an individual’s reflective consciousness acting alone can comprehend, because in most cases consciousness actively represses many of these expressions. Therefore, the archaeology of the psyche’s expressions cannot occur without the external diagnostic presence of the analyst. The analyst, the interpreter of the psyche, will attempt

¹⁴³ Freud, “Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through,” 148.

¹⁴⁴ Freud, “Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through,” 148.

¹⁴⁵ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 181.

to make appropriation and recovery of a unified ego possible through the archaeology of the psyche. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud employs an archaeological metaphor to convey the depths of the psyche that he wishes to investigate. He states: “Now let us, by a flight of imagination, suppose that Rome is not a human habitation but a psychical entity with a similarly long and copious past...”¹⁴⁶ In drawing a metaphor of this sort, an archaeological analogy between the excavations of a historical site and the psyche is set.¹⁴⁷

The interpretive suspicion operative in Freud’s accounts of our mental lives is due to the lack of transparency of the meaning of consciousness to itself because of the manner in which Freud deduces that consciousness originates. Freud’s descriptions of the second topography of the human psyche situate the conscious aspects of the ego as arising from the unconscious forces of the psychical whole.¹⁴⁸ However, these unconscious forces cannot be perceived, just as the name would suggest, by the thinking consciousness. Therefore, the archaeology cannot be direct in its grasping of the underlying material of the unconscious. For reasons we will see shortly, Freud is forced to assume that “powerful mental processes or ideas exist... which can produce all the

¹⁴⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1961), 18

¹⁴⁷ Freud does warn against taking the spatial representation of the psyche too far, even as a metaphor. It is not difficult, for example, to see how the metaphor fails to convey the ideas of repression and resistance, which are central to the psychoanalytic project. See *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 19.

¹⁴⁸ In this chapter, I will deal predominantly with Freud’s works published during 1920 and after. This phase of Freud’s work, roughly inaugurated at the time of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, conceives of the psychical apparatus according to the well-known topography of id, ego, and superego, which, to Freud’s mind, is a more successful description of the psyche than the first topography of Unconscious, Preconscious, and Consciousness. Also, and perhaps more importantly from a hermeneutic perspective, this is the era of Freud’s works on the psychoanalytic interpretation of culture and cultural symbols.

effects in mental life that ordinary ideas do (including effects that can in their turn become conscious as ideas), though they themselves do not become conscious.”¹⁴⁹ The archaeological method will attempt to uncover the unconscious forces through the technique of the interpretation of manifest expressions and not through an immediate discovery of something like unconscious ideas. Here, the Rome that Freud describes in *Civilization and Its Discontents* is important for his method beyond its obvious metaphorical value in describing the mental apparatus as having a past that exists prior to the “founding” of an individual’s consciousness. Freud asks about “a visitor” to present-day Rome who wishes to see the wall of Aurelian or the Servian Wall or other such past buildings that are preserved now only in ruins. No guesses can be made, he says, with regard to any archaeological formations that no longer exist or have left us no trace. The archaeology that can progress, however, must begin from what is revealed by the site’s surface. Without these expressions of the buried past making themselves known in a partial, disguised, or mutilated manner, that past remains unknowable to the archaeologist. The archaeology of the psyche is similar in that the analyst must also work from the fleeting expressions of conscious thought, even though Freud postulates that it is possible that nothing psychological – nothing experienced by the mind – is ever lost. Freud’s clinical experience of the childhood “screen memories” of his patients shows for him that “[n]ot only *some* but *all* of what is essential from childhood has been retained in these memories.”¹⁵⁰ Our “mental” Rome may still witness its versions of gladiatorial combat

¹⁴⁹ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, trans. Joan Riviere, revised and ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1960), 5.

¹⁵⁰ Freud, “Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through,” 148 (emphasis in original).

or barbarian invasions, whereas for the physical Rome, those days have long since passed. But Freud “never gives up hope of exhuming Rome” or making conscious the past conflicts that determine the meaning of the psychical whole’s present neuroses.¹⁵¹ Despite the suspicion that must be assumed with regard to consciousness and any attempts it may make to define itself, Freud does not abandon the work of the appropriation of the desires that motivate the conscious ego and also its symptoms of illness. In any case, the meaning of the surface events and structures can be explained by reference to the formations that lie beneath them, spatially in terms of Rome, chronologically in terms of the psyche. This is the main sense of Freud’s archaeology of consciousness. Past events and desires, both contained as memories in the unconscious, will be at the root of present psychological conflicts and must be worked through if appropriation is to be possible.

Regarding the excavation involved in psychoanalysis, Freud stresses that “consciousness is the *surface* of the mental apparatus”¹⁵² and that the psychoanalyst, like the “visitor” mentioned earlier, must be content with “studying whatever is present for the time being on the surface of the patient’s mind, and [employing] the art of interpretation mainly for the purpose of recognizing the resistances that appear there, and making them conscious to the patient.”¹⁵³ This implies that although Freud’s method is an archaeological one – or a “depth psychology” – it is properly a “surface archaeology”

¹⁵¹ Paul-Laurent Assoun, *Freud and Nietzsche*, trans. Richard L. Collier, Jr. (New Brunswick, NJ: The Athlone Press, 2000), 185.

¹⁵² Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 9 (emphasis in original).

¹⁵³ Freud, “Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through,” 147.

that can only begin its diagnoses from what is expressed by the patient.¹⁵⁴ Our latent desires can be brought to consciousness through analysis only if they are expressed in some veiled, although patent, form. Freud makes this aspect of psychoanalysis clear when speaking of the interpretation of dreams: “What has been called the dream we shall describe as the text of the dream or the *manifest* dream, and what we are looking for, what we suspect, so to say, of lying behind the dream, we shall describe as the *latent* dream thoughts.”¹⁵⁵ Just as in any other hermeneutic method, psychoanalysis is an interpretation of a text – in this case the patient’s dream-text or the text of her conscious thoughts. The unconscious, as field of inquiry, is not represented directly and, therefore, can only be reached through this surface archaeology, which uncovers the roots of meaning in the drives of the unconscious through the interpretation of conscious expression. Discovering the precise way in which a patient’s unconscious desires reach a textual actualization is the practical task of the interpretive method of psychoanalysis.¹⁵⁶ Because of this criterion of manifestness, psychoanalytic inquiry is limited to studying the conscious expressions of the psyche and cannot leap directly into the formulation of any knowledge of the unconscious.

However, this does not preclude all inquiry into the workings of the unconscious thanks to a general metapsychological rule that Freud adopts regarding a principle of psychological operations. He asserts that through the findings of the techniques of

¹⁵⁴ Lear, *Freud*, 135.

¹⁵⁵ Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, 9-10 (emphasis in original).

¹⁵⁶ Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, 10.

psychoanalysis that it is given that “the course taken by mental events is automatically regulated by the pleasure principle.”¹⁵⁷ This does not mean that it is consciousness itself that is aware of its seeking pleasure, or that consciousness does seek pleasure, but rather that the drive towards pleasure is a constant feature in all psychical operations. This entails the theoretical assertion that our predominant psychical drive is oriented towards achieving as much pleasure as possible and ridding ourselves of as much negative pleasure as is possible. Pleasure and pain, as they are considered by Freud, refer to any change or alteration in the “quantity of excitation” that is present in the psyche.¹⁵⁸ Unpleasant sensations “impel [the psychical apparatus] towards discharge, and that is why we interpret unpleasure as implying a heightening and pleasure a lowering of energetic cathexis.”¹⁵⁹ Thus we have Freud’s depiction of the pleasure principle as a tendency whose “final outcome coincides with a lowering of [the] tension” caused by its conflict with other, unpleasurable forces.¹⁶⁰ Our patent expressions will display or disguise the conflicts the pleasure principle faces and the syntheses it utilizes to achieve its aims. No specific psychological agency – such as consciousness – is necessarily imputed by the existence of this pleasure principle; nor, however, do we have direct knowledge of it. Rather the ego is now to be interpreted as a product of this economy of pleasure and unpleasure. It is the energetics of desire, seeking pleasure and avoiding unpleasure, that underlies the synthesis of what will be consciousness.

¹⁵⁷ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 3.

¹⁵⁸ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 4.

¹⁵⁹ Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 15.

¹⁶⁰ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 3.

Freud quickly recognizes, as Ricoeur was shown to do earlier, that the subject always finds herself within the fullness of experience wherein the aims of pleasure are already compromised or conflicted regarding their objects. In other words, the observation of patients and their psychical conflicts leads Freud to posit the pleasure principle as the condition for those conflicts' possibility, as "instincts are known to us only in their aims."¹⁶¹ Freud essentially performs the Husserlian *Rücksfrage* in a non-thematized manner by beginning from the synthesis of psychical conflict found in neurotic expressions and working backwards to the motivating principles for the conflict's genesis. Jonathan Lear also emphasizes this specifically analytic character of psychoanalytic inquiry when he states, "Adult neurotics *never* display a pure culture of the pleasure principle or a pure culture of the reality principle. Neurotic behavior and imaginative activity are always conflicted."¹⁶² To state this in more Ricoeurian terms, Freud's method starts from the fullness of neurotic expression, understood as a synthesis of conflicting desires, and traces back to the causes of this conflict in order to resolve the conflict. The etiology of neuroses reveals to Freud an unquestionable desire for pleasure. But, in fact, the pleasure principle is merely a logical by-product of Freud's more fundamental metapsychological principle. This is "the hypothesis that the mental apparatus endeavors to keep the quantity of excitation present in it as low as possible or at least to keep it constant."¹⁶³ This entails a second hypothesis that Freud expresses as a

¹⁶¹ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 123.

¹⁶² Lear, *Freud*, 147 (emphasis in original).

¹⁶³ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 5.

principle of constancy. This “principle of constancy” points to the economic basis of Freud’s method of interpretation.¹⁶⁴ The dynamism of the unconscious regulates itself by the principle of constancy which requires that any excitation of the psyche be balanced economically by ridding the psyche of an equal amount of excitation. The meaning of consciousness and of its conflicts and neuroses will be tied now to this economic problem given in the principle of constancy. What Freud’s archaeology is to discover in the patient is the general way in which this meta-psychological principle is satisfied or unsatisfied from the economic standpoint. With this postulation of the principle of constancy, two fundamentally important things to Freud’s method of interpretation come into view. The first is the general economic principle that will be applied by Freud in all his attempts to clarify the meaning of human expressions. The other is the suspicion toward everyday consciousness’s transparency to itself.

Freud’s analyses of the psyche will begin as diagnoses of everyday consciousness as it is perceived – what he calls “the system Pcpt.-Cs.”¹⁶⁵ Consciousness is here treated only as a perceived consciousness and not as an absolute given but rather as a phenomenon or set of phenomena that we may become aware of alongside other phenomena. Freud says: “This system [Pcpt.-Cs.] is turned toward the external world, it is the medium for the perceptions arising there, and during its functioning the phenomenon of consciousness arises in it.”¹⁶⁶ In other words, the system Pcpt.-Cs. for

¹⁶⁴ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 6.

¹⁶⁵ Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1966), 539.

¹⁶⁶ Freud, *Complete Introductory Lectures*, 539.

Freud, as for Ricoeur, cannot be known but through our intending of it in perception. This intended object is labeled in Freud's second topology as the "ego." The ego is described by Freud as the "part of the id [or unconscious instincts] which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world through the medium of the Pcpt.-Cs.; in a sense it is an extension of the surface-differentiation."¹⁶⁷ This modification is not entirely spontaneous, however, but is performed in response to an economic demand on the part of the principle of constancy. As the primary drive to pleasure encounters objects the difficulties and threats it faces in achieving those objects of its aims causes a redistribution of its aims to pleasure because of economic reasons. The development of the economic demand to avoid displeasure results in the "coherent organization of mental processes" into the ego.¹⁶⁸ The ego's coherence, however, has the purpose of securing more firmly the demands of the pleasure principle through its replacement by the "reality principle."¹⁶⁹ The ego serves no immediate purpose of its own but rather serves the modified purposes of the instincts. This reality principle is a further evolution of the principle of constancy, with self-preservation occupying a more central role than it does in the "pure" pleasure principle. However, the explanation of the consciousness of the ego is still an economic one. Therefore, both the ego and the objects that it considers and aims for are subject to the economics of desires. The distinction between subject and object is nullified at the economic level by the economic vantage point of Freud's method

¹⁶⁷ Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 18-19.

¹⁶⁸ Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 8.

¹⁶⁹ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 7.

of interpretation. Both are explained as being contingent upon the vicissitudes of our instincts and those instincts' distribution according to the principle of constancy. The Freudian topography, therefore, is to be understood as the condition for the possibility of understanding the subject/object distinction.¹⁷⁰ As such, human subjectivity is not an absolute but is only the development of a synthesis that relies on other forces for its efficacy.

In Ricoeur's attempt to render psychoanalysis as a hermeneutics, it is perhaps unsurprising that at this point in his procedure he refers to psychoanalysis as an "anti-phenomenology."¹⁷¹ Earlier, we saw that Ricoeur arrives at the need for a hermeneutic method from the development of a phenomenology; and contemporary hermeneutic theory is often viewed as being derived from the investigations of phenomenologists. However, what Ricoeur has in mind here is the type of suspicion proper to psychoanalysis. This suspicion is based on the deduction of the unconscious from the aforementioned symptoms and the constructed nature of the conscious ego. Psychoanalysis is anti-phenomenological because of the method that arises as a response to the resistance that the psyche displays in its symptoms. Phenomenological investigations create the site for the exposition of meaning by placing the transcendent references of objects in consciousness into the bracketing function of the *epoche*, but Freud hypothesizes that consciousness also must be bracketed if we are to find the origin of meaning past the resistance and repression displayed by everyday consciousness.

¹⁷⁰ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 133.

¹⁷¹ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 117.

Ricoeur states: “Whereas the Husserlian *epoche* is seen as a reduction to consciousness, the Freudian *epoche* is seen as a reduction of consciousness; thus we speak of it as an *epoche* in reverse.”¹⁷² The Freudian *epoche* considers consciousness as a product of other forces which themselves must be diagnosed. This necessitates that consciousness of meaning, so valuable to phenomenology, must also be accounted for as the product of some system other than consciousness. Because Freud treats consciousness only as it appears through perception, the meaning of this particular perception is as problematic as that of any other that we attempt to make sense of through the examination of the contents of consciousness. Ricoeur states, “Freud’s originality consists in shifting the point of coincidence of meaning and force back to the unconscious itself.”¹⁷³ The meaning of consciousness is identical with and as obscure as the meaning of the unconscious in Freud’s account. Both arise from the energetics of unconscious desire.

Therefore, like Ricoeur’s hermeneutical project, Freud’s archaeology starts from the fullness of a specific actualized field of human expressions. However, Freud’s chosen field of analysis regards the conflicts of our psychological realities as they appear as symptoms. The Freudian correlate to the role of the symbol of the sacred in the phenomenology of religion is the symptom of the conflicted consciousness. Starting from the symptom, however, Freud closes off all possible transcendent references of its multiple meaning in favor of an “analytical and regressive movement” of

¹⁷² Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 121-2.

¹⁷³ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 135.

interpretation.¹⁷⁴ Freud says of his own research in the *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* that psychoanalysis's "path [of development] led from symptoms to the unconscious, to the life of the instincts to sexuality...."¹⁷⁵ This is his archaeological path from given surface phenomena – the ill expressions of consciousness – towards those forces unknown to consciousness that condition these diagnosed symptoms. In this archaeology, Freud displaces the source of meaning from consciousness and also places it at a point beyond the reach of immediate self-reflection. Consciousness, or "being conscious," is for Freud only one aspect or expression of the psychological whole of humans: "[P]sychoanalysis cannot situate the essence of the psychological in consciousness, but is obliged to regard consciousness as a quality of the psychological...."¹⁷⁶ Therefore, the phenomenon of consciousness arises from a ground, the whole of the psychological; and this psychological whole cannot be reflected upon totally through self-reflection. Freud postulates this because of the clinical observations of repression and resistance on the part of the analysand. The symptoms of the ill patient arise for reasons unknown to the patient's consciousness and frequently continue regardless of conscious effort to curb their actualization. This necessitates that the reality of the unconscious is a "diagnosed reality" based on a quasi-transcendental deduction from Freud's identified empirical symptoms.¹⁷⁷ As meaning's home is in the unconscious instincts, pure self-reflection will never, for Freud, find a fully transparent determination of meaning.

¹⁷⁴ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 325.

¹⁷⁵ Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, 57.

¹⁷⁶ Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 3.

¹⁷⁷ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 435.

Freud's interpretive archaeology is, therefore, to be understood as a hermeneutic method that reduces consciousness to a product of the aims of our unconscious instincts. However, since these instincts are never encountered directly, Freud must deduce their existence and principles from the expressions of the psyche. The possibility of meaning of human activity must be discovered from our actual expressions. Freud postulates that at the roots of our behavior are desires that we gain knowledge of only through recognition and appropriation of their aims. However, his archaeology reveals the inability of consciousness or the ego to comprehend fully its foundations in these unconscious forces. Ricoeur here summarizes Freud's archaeology as demonstrating the "unsurpassable character of desire" and the "secondary process's inability to establish itself."¹⁷⁸ Viewing consciousness as a "secondary process" establishes the necessity of casting a wary eye on its expressions, which are motivated by the instincts and not necessarily by self-conscious intentions. Nevertheless a sort of appropriation of these underlying desires is possible based on this archaeology. I will describe that more fully when discussing Freud's and Nietzsche's treatment of cultural symbols. At this point, let us turn to Ricoeur's reading of Nietzsche as a practitioner of suspicion.

II. Nietzschean Suspicion

As is the case with Freud's psychoanalytic method, Nietzsche's philosophy of interpretation also argues that the reach of human consciousness is not adequate to the demands of a system of meaning that must be guaranteed by the transparency of the

¹⁷⁸ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 445.

contents of consciousness. Conscious thought, for Nietzsche, is not adequate to its own demands for knowledge, even concerning itself.¹⁷⁹ Ricoeur's reading of what he has termed Nietzsche's archaeological project is based around this point, which Nietzsche articulates in this manner: "We are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge – and with good reason. We have never sought ourselves – how could it happen that we should ever *find* ourselves?"¹⁸⁰ These first lines of the *Genealogy of Morals* announce the project of Nietzsche's most conventionally organized work, as well as his other more aphoristic texts – a diagnosis of the conditions that make morality and truth as they are traditionally conceived of by ourselves and interpreted possible.¹⁸¹ In sorting out the conditions for what we take to be true or moral, Nietzsche will formulate the diagnosis of human consciousness as fundamentally weak. It is this diagnosis that Ricoeur takes to be central to the Nietzschean project of demystification and as his central point of comparison to the interpretive goals of Freudian psychoanalysis. To this end, Ricoeur sets out two interwoven strains of this reductive interpretive method that Freud and Nietzsche purportedly share – a philological movement and a genealogical one:

¹⁷⁹ Thus, I do not think it a reproach to Nietzsche's project that Nietzsche, as philosopher, does not "attain the panoptic standpoint he disallows to other thinkers." See Daniel Conway, *Nietzsche's Dangerous Game*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 248.

¹⁸⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic in On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), Preface, Section 1 (emphasis in original).

¹⁸¹ Christopher Janaway, in his meticulous reading of *Genealogy of Morals*, argues a similar point, saying "the quest for knowledge demands a form of self-ignorance or self-neglect, necessitates our not understanding our own lives." See Christopher Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 17. However, Janaway also reads the importance of this as "not that self-knowledge is impossible as such, rather that a life of dedicated scholarship can be sustained only by leaving oneself unexamined" (Janaway, 17-18).

It is a philology, an exegesis, an interpretation insofar as the text of our consciousness can be compared to a palimpsest, under the surface of which another text has been written. The task of this special exegesis is to decipher this text. But this hermeneutics is at the same time a genealogy, since the distortion of the text emerges from a conflict of forces, of drives and counterdrives, whose origin must be brought to light.¹⁸²

This is the fundamental manner in which Ricoeur links the interpretive work of Nietzsche and Freud as critics of the immanence of self-consciousness to itself, contesting the concept of a transcendental subject.¹⁸³ In his diagnosis of “we men of knowledge,” Nietzsche, for Ricoeur’s reading of his texts, sets out a theory of the origin of our illusions about our morality and philosophy (the genealogical aspect) and also proposes a method for decoding our expressions of these illusions (the philological aspect).¹⁸⁴ This double interpretive movement constitutes for Ricoeur Nietzsche’s archaeology into the foundations of morality and meaningfulness. What is arguably of primary importance for Ricoeur’s reading is that this archaeology is directed to be a criticism of consciousness and its supposed transparency to itself. However, since Ricoeur did not publish a detailed interpretation of this aspect of Nietzsche’s thinking, I will here attempt briefly to reconstruct these elements of what Ricoeur might see as a Nietzschean archaeology to complement the Freudian archaeology that is explicitly drawn out in Ricoeur’s texts. This will provide a foundation to begin to show how Nietzsche’s hermeneutics does

¹⁸² Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 442-3.

¹⁸³ David Owen notes that the primary target of Nietzsche’s critique of epistemology is the “transcendental subject.” See David Owen, *Nietzsche, Politics, and Modernity: A Critique of Liberal Reason*, (London: SAGE Publications, 1995), 27.

¹⁸⁴ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 149.

work, although it might outstrip the characteristics that Ricoeur reads as its essential features.

Concerning the adequacy of consciousness, Nietzsche indicates that he is, in his own way, merely following Kant's critique of the paralogisms: "*Kant* essentially wanted to prove that the subject cannot be proven on the basis of the subject – and neither can the object."¹⁸⁵ What is being identified here, in part, is the failure of self-consciousness to ground adequately the meaning of itself on the fact of its own existence and, subsequently, its failure to adequately account for the meaning of objects, as well. Even if we grant that the expression of the "fact" of the subject is apodictic, its meaning is not thereby given as simple or univocal. In contrast to the apparent simplicity of the Cartesian or phenomenological *cogito*, Nietzsche will advocate that the very "fact" of the manner in which the *cogito* is given might be dubitable. Nietzsche asserts that "people are wondering... whether the reverse [of the *cogito*] might be true; that 'think' is the condition and 'I' is conditioned, in which case 'I' would be a synthesis that only gets *produced* through thought itself."¹⁸⁶ Ricoeur, even as late in his career as *Oneself as Another*, will reiterate this very point in relation to an earlier text of Nietzsche's: "At least in these fragments [of 1882], Nietzsche says nothing other than simply, I doubt better

¹⁸⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. and ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Section 54 (emphasis in original). This quotation and the following show the weakness in Janaway's reading of the Preface of the *Genealogy*. The point is not that a specific type of drive or human cannot perform if it has self-knowledge, it is that self-knowledge is like any other kind of knowledge, that is, synthetic.

¹⁸⁶ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 54 (emphasis in original).

than Descartes.”¹⁸⁷ Nietzsche does not doubt that the *cogito* appears as simple and as a fact, but he does doubt that its meaning is given immediately and that its givenness is original. The method Nietzsche utilizes here is similar to Freud’s: take a phenomenon assumed to be given simply – in this case consciousness – and ask if it is possible if that concept is instead produced as an effect of other activities. The task then becomes archaeological for Ricoeur in the determination of the causes and constituent parts of the synthesis that produce the phenomenon – the transcendental subject – in question. Essentially, Nietzsche, the “old philologist,” treats the meaning of the “text” of consciousness as an expression of the activity of the instincts overwriting themselves.¹⁸⁸ Our understanding of this process, then, is liable to misinterpret the process as an original substance. Just as Freud’s depiction of the psyche likened it to a modern Rome, built upon ruins, Nietzsche’s description of consciousness includes a necessary reference to that which exists before consciousness – the forces of thought itself. The diagnosis of these forces will show that not only is consciousness liable to take itself to be a substance but that it prefers to do this, as well.

However, if we see this as Nietzsche’s version of the Kantian paralogisms, a crucial difference must be noted. As Ricoeur interprets it, the problem of consciousness for Kant was one of how consciousness can represent itself in its entirety to itself. With the Nietzschean turn to interpretation: “It is no longer the Kantian question of how a

¹⁸⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 15. Although the context of Ricoeur’s comments is limited to the distinction between being truthful and lying, Ricoeur still sees here grounds for Nietzsche’s contribution to interpretive suspicion. This passage will also be useful later in seeing where Ricoeur thinks the Nietzschean project is still only partial and dogmatic.

¹⁸⁸ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 22.

subjective representation or idea can have objective validity; this question, central to a critical philosophy, gives way to a more radical one.”¹⁸⁹ The Nietzschean question can be posed as “how does *interpretation* (and not representation) produce not only meaning but also illusion?” If Kant sought the objective ground of subjective perceptions and accomplished this through reference to certain facts of knowledge and the laws of thinking that accompanied them, Nietzsche will attempt to radicalize this solution. This more radical question that Nietzsche poses questions the necessity of these “facts” of knowledge themselves. Nietzsche states it this way: “[T]he time has finally come to replace the Kantian question ‘How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?’ with another question ‘Why is the belief in such judgments *necessary*?’ – to realize, in other words, that such judgments must be *believed* true for the purpose of preserving beings of our type....”¹⁹⁰ In a sense, the fact of knowledge that is to be proven by the Kantian critical project is marked by Nietzsche as an object produced by the critical project, as is the consciousness that guarantees its meaning. The belief in the existence of the synthetic *a priori* judgment is necessary if one wants to preserve a certain set of truths or “facts.” The Kantian critique sought to ground certain truths in the production of “new faculties”; but the Nietzschean project is to ask ‘why these truths and not others?’ and, perhaps more starkly, ‘why truth at all?’¹⁹¹ For example, the purpose of the *Genealogy* is to examine the kind and type of forces and thoughts that require the truths that Kant is

¹⁸⁹ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 25.

¹⁹⁰ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 11 (emphasis in original).

¹⁹¹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 11.

attempting to justify through the mechanism of the synthetic *a priori* judgment. What desires require consciousness to be an original substance? What kinds of thoughts or forces demand the ascetic ideal, or which ones require the coupling of bad conscience and evil? This is meant to be the form of the critical question as far as Nietzsche is concerned – “What force determines that such-and-such is a fact?”¹⁹² For Ricoeur, the critical philological question here asks which forces determine these judgments to be true; and the genealogical question asks the origin of those forces and their quality.¹⁹³ Nietzsche’s project utilizes both questions, as well as an explicit hermeneutics that states that interpretation and not a fixed form of judgment is responsible for the truths produced.

The “philological” aspect of Nietzsche’s project here is to elucidate: 1) the *activities* of thinking that combine to form consciousness and; 2) the relationships between these activities which determine the character of consciousness. Rather than viewing the surface of consciousness’s appearance as a closed text from which authentic

¹⁹² In short, Ricoeur’s reading of Nietzsche on this point is not so far from Gilles Deleuze’s when he states “We are led to essence [in Nietzsche] only by the question: which one?” We will return to this topic later in Chapter 3. See Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 77.

¹⁹³ Throughout this section, I will be using “will,” “affect,” “instinct,” and “force,” more or less interchangeably, as this seems also to be Ricoeur’s practice when dealing with Nietzsche. I will follow this practice in the remainder of this work, as well. Eric Blondel treats instincts (*Instinkte*) and drives (*Triebe*) as synonymous, as does Deleuze. See Eric Blondel, *Nietzsche: The Body and Culture; Philosophy as Philosophical Genealogy*, trans. Sean Hand, (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 206. Daniel Conway argues that drive and instinct are “roughly synonymous” until the works of 1888. See Daniel Conway, *Nietzsche’s Dangerous Game: Philosophy in the Twilight of the Idols*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 30. Conway maintains that both the drives and the instincts are “unconscious,” but that the drives refer to “natural... animal vitality” while the instincts are “any specific organization of the drives... as determined by the dominant mores...” (Conway, *Nietzsche’s Dangerous Game*, 30-31). Given that both must still be diagnosed via their symptoms, and that both are always already complexes of several other drives or instincts when they are encountered, it does not add, in my estimation, an appreciable amount of clarity to maintain this distinction. This will be borne out in my direct analyses of Nietzsche’s genealogies in Chapter 3.

readings can begin, Nietzsche treats the text of consciousness as a palimpsest that is being continually overwritten by other activities of thinking.¹⁹⁴ This can be seen in his various exercises in the etymology of the word “good” performed in the first essay of the *Genealogy*. The benign concept of “good” is shown to have, at the very least, alternate possible meanings based on its derivation from other Indo-European languages. These competing definitions would mark “the good” not as “the useful,” “the pleasant,” or “the lawful” but as “the warrior” (from the Latin “*bonus*”), “the one who has reality” (from the Greek “*esthlos*”), and “the godlike” (from the German “*gut*”).¹⁹⁵ The seeming immediacy that the concept of “good” has in consciousness is not due to the concept alone but to a whole series of historical and instinctive activities. But beside this explicit sort of philology, Nietzsche’s decisive philological step, for Ricoeur, is to identify conscious thought as something produced by many competing instincts: “[T]he greatest part of conscious thought must still be attributed to instinctive activity and this is even the case for philosophical thought.”¹⁹⁶ Consciousness is, then, nothing profound in itself but is rather “a surface.”¹⁹⁷ This move is critical because it would replace traditional philosophical questions with, in Nietzsche’s language, a “psychology” or “physiognomy” of the instincts that make consciousness possible. These instincts can also be interpreted

¹⁹⁴ In *Beyond Good and Evil* Section 22, Nietzsche decries the Kantian “conformity of nature to law” as a bad interpretation and not a fact or a text. This does not, I believe, undermine what I have just presented regarding Nietzsche’s treatment of consciousness as a text for the reason that here Nietzsche is using “text” in a manner that corresponds to what I have been calling a “closed text.” The text of consciousness, admittedly a more Ricoeurian usage, is an open text or something that is given to interpretation; and, thereby, is not the same as the text that Nietzsche here points out.

¹⁹⁵ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay, Section 5.

¹⁹⁶ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 3.

¹⁹⁷ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I Am so Clever,” Section 9.

from the sorts of questions that consciousness or a type of consciousness will attempt to answer. Nietzsche writes: “To grasp psychology as morphology and *the doctrine of the development of the will to power*, which is what I have done – nobody has ever come close to this, not even in thought: this, of course, to the extent that we are permitted to regard what has been written so far as a symptom of what has not been said until now.”¹⁹⁸ Nietzschean “psychology” is an interpretation of the symptoms expressed in order to clarify the wills to power that produce those effects. It is this Nietzschean “psychology” of the instincts that is rendered as “philology” in the Ricoeurian reading. This instinctual model for Nietzsche is more evocative of his depiction of thinking and willing as “complicated” and as activities that are not simple but are synthesizing activities whereby a diverse manifold of instincts are unified and disguised as consciousness. An examination of section 19 of *Beyond Good and Evil* will aid in showing Nietzsche’s reasons for this conclusion as well as the fundamental sort of synthesis that consciousness is.

In the first book of *Beyond Good and Evil*, “On the prejudices of philosophers,” Nietzsche undertakes to reveal one or more dogmatic beliefs that remain for even those critical philosophers who attack the problem of dogmatism in general. As Ricoeur often states, it is the unproblematic status of the subject, that “soul-superstition that still causes trouble as the superstition of the subject or I,” that is a primary target of the Nietzschean critique.¹⁹⁹ A critical philosophy that remains uncritical about the status of the subject as

¹⁹⁸ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 23 (emphasis in original).

¹⁹⁹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Preface.

a guarantor of meaning will only shift the focal point of the dogmatic elements it criticizes and not remove them. Nietzsche's "instinctual" model of consciousness takes pains to avoid this sort of dogmatism. Nietzsche asserts that just as consciousness is not knowable without reference to something outside of consciousness, the instincts of life, which are also frequently referred to as "wills," are not knowable simply in themselves. If we are to trace their morphology as they become conscious thoughts, the problem of deciphering them is compounded as we never encounter a simple or singular will: "Willing strikes me as, above all, something *complicated*, something unified only in a word – and this single word contains the popular prejudice that has overruled whatever minimal precautions philosophers might take. So let us be more cautious, for once – let us be 'unphilosophical.'"²⁰⁰ Philologically, the meaning of consciousness is determined by the interactions of these instincts or "plurality of feelings"; but, in turn, their meaning is not discernable in isolation from one another either.²⁰¹ The illusion of a simple will or consciousness is reflected in grammar, but it is not the grammar or word that is responsible for the illusion – it is the relationships that the instincts assume with respect to one another. The philological for Nietzsche problem is the interpretive untangling of this complicated series of wills.

To this end, Nietzsche stipulates that the syntheses that produce consciousness are effects of a hierarchy of command and obedience among the instincts, affects, or wills.

²⁰⁰ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 19 (emphasis in original). We must become "unphilosophical" precisely because "sick thinkers are in the majority in the history of philosophy." See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans., Josefine Nauckhoff, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Preface, Section 2.

²⁰¹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 19.

This hierarchy is deduced in the genealogical moment of the interpretive process. The affects, which are the component parts of instinctual activity, are not indeterminately synthesized: “[T]he will is not just a complex of feeling and thinking, it is fundamentally an *affect*: and specifically the affect of the command.”²⁰² This affect of command is essentially the same in its function as the one of the Kantian faculties is in what Kant holds to be its legitimate domain – although for Nietzsche, the only criterion of legitimacy is the display of strength. The synthesis of willing is legislated by or under an affect of superiority – or a “commanding thought.” Consciousness, which is identified as a particular type of willing by Nietzsche is a synthesis of various instincts of feeling and thinking which are unified and become meaningful under the sign of the strongest “commandeering” instinct. Nietzsche’s archaeology of consciousness here deduces a complex of competing and subordinating wills or instincts whose various desires are appropriated by a legislating will which coerces obedience. And, in a moment that reveals a difference in Nietzsche’s deduction from Freud’s, this synthesis or legislation follows not the principle of constancy, but what I will refer to as a principle of expenditure. Nietzsche writes: “Every animal – therefore *la bête philosophe*, too – instinctively strives for an optimum of favorable conditions under which it can expend all its strength and achieve its maximal feeling of power...”²⁰³ Instead of seeking a conservation of its instinctual means while achieving pleasure, Nietzsche deduces that the legislative instincts desire only to express their strength, whatever the means or ends. As

²⁰² Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 19 (emphasis in original).

²⁰³ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Essay III, Section 7.

Pierre Klossowski notes: “It is *excess* that makes manifest that which exists....”²⁰⁴

Appropriation, here, has its goal in itself: “Physiologists should think twice before positioning the drive for self-preservation as the cardinal drive of an organic being. Above all, a living being wants to *discharge* its strength....”²⁰⁵ The psychoanalytic principle of constancy, on the other hand, expresses a conservative nature in the psyche. For Nietzsche, consciousness, a result for Freud of the reconciliation of conflicting desires, is not a necessary outcome of the syntheses of the instincts. Nietzsche does not deduce a self-regulating principle at work in the instincts.

To understand why consciousness itself is not necessary, we must see as coupled to this legislating synthesis of wills Nietzsche’s suspicion of all forms of “immediate certainty,” which leads to his perspectivism.²⁰⁶ If, as Nietzsche has stated, the “I” is an effect of various drives, then the certainty of any consciousness of that “I” could only be guaranteed by the interaction of those drives. What appears as consciousness has been argued to be the result of drives; therefore, the certainty of any thought to that consciousness must also be a product of those drives. However, the status of thought is not self-assured, as it (and therefore its certainty) depends upon whichever will is playing the commanding role. If “willing is complicated” then for Nietzsche the products of that will are also necessarily complicated: “There are still harmless self-observers who believe in the existence of ‘immediate certainties,’ such as ‘I think,’ or the ‘I will....’ But

²⁰⁴ Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, trans. Daniel W. Smith, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 84 (emphasis in original).

²⁰⁵ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 13 (emphasis in original).

²⁰⁶ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Sections 16-17.

I will say this a hundred times: ‘immediate certainty,’ like ‘absolute knowledge’ and the ‘thing-in-itself’ contains a *contradictio in adjecto*.²⁰⁷ The contradiction in terms here that Nietzsche is referring to is the contradiction of arriving at non-mediated knowledge from a consciousness of meaning that is explained as synthetic but without a fixed hierarchy of legislation. This raises the question of what it is that wills consciousness or certainty in any form.

The synthesis of the “I” that Nietzsche invokes leads directly to the need from interpretation as the condition for knowledge. It is not the “I “ alone that is to be doubted as bearing a determinate meaning but any meaning, due to the process of synthesis: “In fact, there is already too much packed into the ‘it thinks’: even the ‘it’ contains an interpretation of the process and does not belong to the process itself.”²⁰⁸ In any determination of the meaning of consciousness, interpretation will make that determination possible. And this interpretation must come from a particular perspective: “There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective ‘knowing’....”²⁰⁹ Nietzsche here finds himself in proximity to the aspect of Ricoeur’s phenomenology that was discussed earlier under the rubric of perspective and sense. Each instinctual force seeks to interpret from its perspective; and the sense that a phenomenon bears will depend on which forces are actively determining its meaning. It appears that although Nietzsche is not a phenomenologist (as he lacks a concept of the phenomenological *epoché* and does not

²⁰⁷ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 16 (emphasis in original).

²⁰⁸ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 17.

²⁰⁹ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Essay III, Section 12 (emphasis in original).

seek a fully determined logic of sense) he is treading on ground which Ricoeur will recover in a phenomenological way when he argues that interpretation is necessary for the constitution of sense between competing wills or forces. For Nietzsche, the commanding will is the legislator of sense, the interpreter; but sense is no more fixed than the identity of its interpreter is. There will be no final codification of meaning as an eschatological result or as a strong kind of teleology. Here we can see Nietzsche's description of the "well-turned-out person" as essentially the same as the role of the commanding will in a synthesis of sense: "Instinctively he collects from everything he sees, hears, lives through, *his* sum: he is a principle of selection, he discards much."²¹⁰ The strong, selective instinct is responsible for the synthesis of sense as well as for the determination of worth. And in the field of evaluation, selection is the activity on the part of the instincts that is called "interpretation" in the field of meaning.

The problem of appropriation here is identical to the problem of which will or instinct is legislating. The force that determines the synthesis of meaning, for Nietzsche, is the one that successfully appropriates the action of the other forces under its own meaning. This appropriative synthesis is revealed, for example, in the illusion of free will: "What is called 'freedom of the will' is essentially the affect of superiority with respect to something that must obey."²¹¹ The suspicion of consciousness on Nietzsche's part here is due to this plurality of wills and the dynamics of their syntheses into what appears as a free consciousness and free will. What is concealed, however, is precisely

²¹⁰ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am so Wise," Section 2 (emphasis in original).

²¹¹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 19.

that “[o]n the one hand, we are, under the circumstance, both the one who commands *and* the one who obeys... [o]n the other hand, however, we are in the habit of ignoring and deceiving ourselves about this duality [of command and obedience] by means of the synthetic concept of the ‘I.’”²¹² This concept, being the product of a synthesis, is only the appropriation of certain drives into a central illusion of unity. This appropriation of obeying wills by a commanding one is the hidden text behind every consciousness, revealed by Nietzsche’s philosophical philology. In this way, for Nietzsche, is consciousness produced as a surface effect – “L’effet c’est moi.”

Because the philological approach shows that the origins of expressions are “complicated” and plural, it becomes necessary to add a genealogical element to hermeneutics lest the philological argument fall quickly into another dogmatic position. A hermeneutics without this complement devolves into just a new method of the deciphering of static symbols according to a set of techniques. In other words, that hermeneutics would run the risk of criticizing and then reproducing a dogmatic system based on the self-immanence of what is interpreted and its meaning. For Nietzsche, Ricoeur argues, genealogy finds its purpose as a demystifying procedure exposing the nihilism at the source of religious and ethical value claims. In other words, Nietzsche’s genealogy is mobilized to show that the interpretation of a symbol is always at a distance from the circumstances of the expression of that symbol. As was also the case with Ricoeur’s interpretation of Freud, Nietzsche is shown to interpret ethical prohibitions not as expressions of supra-temporal values or ideas but as an expression of weakness on the

²¹² Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 19 (emphasis in original).

part of the forces that compose the prohibition. As Ricoeur writes, “The genealogical task is to reveal the emptiness of this source.”²¹³ In this way, he argues that Nietzsche’s genealogy is not itself nihilist but rather that the objects of his diagnosis are nihilist, insofar as their origin is nothing. The counterpart of metaphysical dogmatism, which was the target of the philological thrust, is the metaphysical nihilism at the heart of a certain kind of moral judgment.

Central to this account is the interpretation of the forces that compose consciousness as originating as weak forces or desires. Weakness is used by Nietzsche to designate a force or will that does not actively seek determination or synthesis – preferring not to act.²¹⁴ The usual position taken by a weak force is one that has been set down by some other determining agent and then merely followed by the weak. Nietzsche’s discussions of slavery need always to be understood in this light, as ‘slave’ is just another designation for Nietzsche of a force that cannot determine itself. For these weak forces, synthesis is replaced by the phenomenon of belief:

Metaphysics is still needed by some, but so is that impetuous *demand for certainty* that today discharges itself in scientific-positivistic form among great masses – the demand that one *wants* by all means something to be firm (while owing to the fervour of this demand one treats the demonstration of this certainty more lightly and negligently): this is still the demand for foothold, support – in short, the *instinct of weakness* that, to be sure, does not create sundry religions, forms of metaphysics, and convictions but does – preserve them.²¹⁵

²¹³ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 443.

²¹⁴ Here, I am following Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche’s typology as referring primarily to the interactions of wills to power (Deleuze’s *force*) and not to specific agents, entities, or phenomena. This is consonant with my earlier reading of Nietzsche’s theory of the affects that compose consciousness.

²¹⁵ Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, Section 347 (emphasis in original).

As both knowledge and any determination of sense have been discussed as products of synthesis and expression, these weak forces are called such because of their failure or inability to determine their own syntheses. Nietzsche also states that this “slavish” weakness in determination correlates to a demand for a fixed truth. And this demand for an unchanging determination of meaning is tied to those forces’ inability to actively determine meaning for themselves. In this way does belief in a fixed truth or meaning become more important than the act of synthesis to these weak forces. Thus their meaning is always secondarily derived from some other synthesis, determination, or force and then posited as arising from some event other than the synthesis by which it became determinate. The instincts of weak morality that Nietzsche diagnoses, being unable to actively synthesize values or meanings, have no recourse for their desires except to preserve a realm of “ideal being.”²¹⁶ This realm is supposedly the home of all the values and truths that weak forces want to exist in the world but are unable to enact efficaciously. In fact, Nietzsche repeatedly states that the motive behind this invention is one of vengeance or *ressentiment*. The diagnosis of this “realm” however shows it to be “‘nothing.’ It emerges only from the weakness of the slave morality, which projects itself into the heavens.”²¹⁷ In lieu of creation and affirmation (which are generally afforded a positive evaluation from Nietzsche), the slave morality makes an illusory creation of a realm of ideal being from which judgments can proceed. The Nietzschean genealogy here reveals this realm to be merely a representation of specific desires that are unable to

²¹⁶ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 443.

²¹⁷ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 443.

manifest themselves through action with other forces. As Ricoeur summarizes it:

“Behind the so-called autonomy of the will is hidden the resentment of a particular will, the will of the weak. Because of... this genealogy, the god of morality, to speak in the manner of Nietzsche, reveals himself as the god of accusation and condemnation.”²¹⁸

Therefore, we see that Ricoeur sees and uses Nietzsche’s critical project here primarily as an indictment of any morality that is based on abstract conceptions of duty and punishment. A crucial element to the Ricoeurian reading of the genealogical projects of both Freud and Nietzsche is the concretizing of seemingly *a priori* principles by their reduction into forces that are hidden in their projection. Ricoeur writes of Freud and Nietzsche that “what seemed to be a strict necessity, the formal principle of obligation, now appears as the result of a hidden process, a process that refers back to an original act of accusation rooted in the will.”²¹⁹ Ricoeur here refers obliquely to both the philological hermeneutic of the reduction of an act to a process as well as the genealogical hermeneutic of ascertaining the hidden origin of the act. Central to Ricoeur’s reading is that the Nietzschean critique shows the real cause of ethical prohibition to be rooted in the desires of those who “read” existence as possessing a condemnation of itself. This self-negation of any force of life by itself is criticized as ‘nihilism’ by Nietzsche. The emptiness here is the result of a positive process attempting to negate itself through abstract means – slavish desires which attempt to have determinations of sense without actively determining them. In the positing of an abstract judgment of life, weak forces do

²¹⁸ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 446.

²¹⁹ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 446.

nothing positive in terms of synthesis (or in Nietzsche's terms "creation"). Instead they only accuse life in an empty manner with abstract means, borrowed from other synthetic, interpretive acts. Even the seemingly naturalistic explanation of life as being primarily concerned with the preservation of itself is diagnosed by Nietzsche as arising out of weakness: "To wish to preserve oneself is a sign of distress, of a limitation of the truly basic life-instinct, which aims at the *expansion of power* and in so doing often enough risks and sacrifices self-preservation."²²⁰ With these expressions of weakness, belief and representation take the place of active determination.

For Nietzsche's archaeology of consciousness, then, the problem of consciousness is "*To what end* does consciousness exist at all when it is basically superfluous?"²²¹ This statement of the superfluity of consciousness reveals Nietzsche's deep suspicion that not only is consciousness deceptive in matters of ethics and of truth but that it is also unnecessary and a product of weak forces. The principle of constancy that in Freud makes the conscious ego a necessary outcome in any normal reconciliation of the vicissitudes of the instincts would also fall under Nietzsche's suspicion here. This, again, shows that a different economics of the instincts is active in Nietzsche's work. The appearance of consciousness as an effective agent is made possible by the instinctual life that provides it with its force and direction. But it remains to be seen what sort of instinct it is that commands in the creation of consciousness. How is it that "*the most fragile*

²²⁰ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 349 (emphasis in original).

²²¹ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 354 (emphasis in original).

*organ it [the body] has developed, comes to dominate the body”?*²²² However, this picture does not give the full import of Nietzsche’s interpretation of consciousness from Ricoeur’s standpoint. The synthetic nature of the “I” just described also does not testify to the radicality of Nietzsche’s interpretation. With this basic outline of Nietzsche’s suspicion, let us now turn to the comparison of Ricoeur’s readings of Freud with Nietzsche with the intent of disentangling the two. As was stated before, this will turn on their interpretations of the symbols of the tragedy of *Oedipus Tyrannus*.

III. Two Archaeologies of Tragedy

Ricoeur has argued that the nature of the hermeneutics of suspicion is to eschew a general hermeneutic approach for a regional and critical approach. A genuine hermeneutic strategy is too easily compromised if it turns too early to a universal account of all phenomena. For Ricoeur this general hermeneutics is to be hoped for but is not to be the starting point. Part of the apparent similarity of the approaches of Freud and Nietzsche lies not only in their archaeological accounts of human instincts but also in their preference of symbols from Greek tragedy.

For Freud, this preference can be traced to his proposal that “dreams are the dreamer’s private mythology and myths the waking dreams of peoples, that Sophocles’s *Oedipus* and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* are to be interpreted in the same way as dreams.”²²³ The symbols that are chosen to represent the instincts in both dreams and tragedies are

²²² Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, 27 (emphasis in original).

²²³ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 5.

chosen because of their “sedimented” character.²²⁴ The complex denoted by the tragic figure of *Oedipus* finds its earliest artistic symbolization in the tragedy but derives its universal import from the conflicting desires and instincts that all humans must work through. According to psychoanalytic investigation, the tragedy of Oedipus lies in the desires and emotional ambiguity towards his parents that his character symbolizes. In his actions, Oedipus, in Freud’s interpretation of the tragedy, represents the demands made on consciousness by the often-conflicting sources of civilization and the instincts. This “universal drama” stems from the earliest desires on the part of the (male) child, who develops an identification with his father and also an object-cathexis with his mother.²²⁵ But the complex truly blossoms when this object-choice becomes more intense and the father with whom the child has identified himself becomes an object of hostility, due to his being perceived “as an obstacle” to the child’s desires.²²⁶ Lear notes, however, that Freud gives this formulation only as the most simple example for communicating the theory: “For one gets an impression that the simple Oedipus complex is by no means its commonest form, but rather represents a simplification or schematization which, to be sure, is often enough justified for practical purposes.”²²⁷ The importance, it seems is not in the precise details of the complex but rather in the emotional ambivalence towards the parents and the vicissitudes of the instincts that the myth represents. For this reason, Lear states “[t]his is the familiar structure of the Oedipus complex and *Freud basically admits*

²²⁴ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 505.

²²⁵ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 189.

²²⁶ Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 27.

²²⁷ Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 28.

that it never occurs.”²²⁸ Thus the Oedipus complex arrives as a moment of emotional ambivalence on the part of the child to the demands made by his own instincts, on the one hand, and by the situation of reality, on the other. The character of Oedipus is tragic precisely because he acts out these desires in the killing of his father and the marriage to his mother. The fact that this situation is unknown to Oedipus at the time of his accomplishing of these aims does not deter Freud’s reading on this point precisely because the nature of these desires are repressed by the ego of a “normal” adult. Freud’s point is that our situation would be identical to Oedipus’s if we allowed the desires of childhood full play. The reason for this ascribed identification must be the principle of the constancy of the instincts, which will demand reconciliation from a conflict of this magnitude.

In his actions and pronouncements, the character of Oedipus represents our primitive desires as well as those conflicting desires to avoid pain that attempt to arrest the achievement of the goals of the more primitive instincts. In this way can Freud say that the overcoming of the Oedipus complex is the foundation of the agency of the superego.²²⁹ The conflict that Oedipus undergoes in searching for the murderer of the king forces him to identify with the desires of the community against his own libidinal urges to kill the father and take his place. This symbolizes for Freud the alteration of the energy of the libido which was previously used for its own aims into energy that attempts to inhibit the realization of those goals which are repugnant to society. Oedipus must

²²⁸ Lear, *Freud*, 182 (emphasis in original).

²²⁹ Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, 64.

then be punished for his transgression of the laws of the civilization. The symbols of the tragedy hold such importance for Freud because “repression and culture, intrapsychical and social institution, coincide in this paradigmatic case.”²³⁰ All such symbols, then, in order to be grasped as tragic, must display some universal vicissitude of instincts to which all of us are prey as well as the downfall of a character who fails to integrate or synthesize those instincts in an appropriate manner. Tragedy relates the unity of “ontogenesis, the individual *secret*, with phylogenesis, the universal *destiny*.”²³¹ In this way does the mythic figure of tragic Oedipus carry symbolic weight in the analysis of our own conflicting desires. At this psychic and cultural level, Ricoeur finds that the symbol of Oedipus has a profound importance as a demystifying symbol to reflection.²³² The myth of Oedipus can be said to be one of the primary archaeological symbols regarding the origins of human conflict.

A case could be made that the central symbol of Nietzsche’s philosophical work is tragedy²³³ and his preoccupying concern is the sort of culture that is capable of *creating* tragedy or understanding “*tragic feeling*.”²³⁴ However, here it will be sufficient

²³⁰ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 191.

²³¹ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 190 (emphasis in original).

²³² This is not to say that Ricoeur (or Lear for that matter) agrees with Freud’s extension of the Oedipus complex to a past or historical Oedipal scene. Both agree that here Freud’s naturalism moves from an interpretive strategy to the status of scientific myth. See Lear, *Freud*, 216-7 and Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretation*, 149-150.

²³³ Lawrence Hatab, for example, maintains that *Birth of Tragedy* prefigures the concerns of all of Nietzsche’s subsequent texts through his treatment of tragedy “which expresses the unfolding of a meaningful but finite life limited by a negative fate.” See Lawrence Hatab, *Nietzsche’s Life Sentence: Coming to Terms with Eternal Recurrence*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 24 *passim*.

²³⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Anti-Christ*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 2003), “What I Owe to the Ancients,” Section 5 (emphasis in original).

to show the manner in which these specific tragic symbols that Freud interprets as symbolizing the Oedipal complex appear differently in Nietzsche's analysis of them. This will enable the progressive distancing of the Nietzschean hermeneutics from the Freudian.

For Nietzsche, no special place among tragedies is given to *Oedipus Tyrannus*. While tragedy as a phenomenon holds an elevated rank over other phenomena, and cultures that are capable of creating it are also esteemed more highly, Oedipus's specific origin and destiny in action are not what is essential. In Freud's interpretation, the repetition of the Oedipal event is what is both to be feared as well as appreciated as an essential event in the development of a healthy consciousness. The difference in Nietzsche's interpretation of tragedy in general is twofold: 1) it is not in the specific characters of the drama that the essence of the tragic unfolds; 2) the repetition that is sought in understanding the tragedy is an evaluative one, not necessarily one involving a gain in knowledge. Nietzsche rhetorically asks if the affectivity of the tragedian demonstrates a valuable possibility for evaluation: "Does [the tragic artist] not display precisely the condition of *fearlessness* in the face of the fearsome and questionable?"²³⁵ This fearlessness marks the "tragic" as distinct from the "slavish," as it need not respond to suffering as *ressentiment*. It is, instead, the affective disposition towards affirmation in the face of suffering that is primarily selected as the worth of tragedy: "Affirmation of life even in its strangest and sternest problems... *that* is what I called Dionysian, *that* is

²³⁵ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "Expeditions of an Untimely Man," Section 24 (emphasis in original).

what I recognized as the bridge to the psychology of the *tragic* poet.”²³⁶ In the discussion of any particular tragedy, we should expect this invocation of affirmation or resistance to *ressentiment* through fearlessness. And characteristic of Nietzsche’s references to Oedipus is the mention of Oedipus’s vision and his fearless, nearly reckless questioning:

The problem of the value of truth came before us, - or was it we who came before the problem? Which of us is Oedipus? Which one is the Sphinx? It seems we have a rendezvous of questions and question-marks. – And, believe it or not, it ultimately looks to us as if the problem has never been raised until not, - as if we were the first to ever see it, fix our gaze on it, *risk it*. Because this involves risk and perhaps no risk has ever been greater.²³⁷

This “Oedipal” moment is not found as an archaeological relic of desire but as a progressive, active desire, unrepressed and even encouraged by culture. In this, we can see Nietzsche’s distance from the Freudian deduction of the instincts. There is no presence of a state of equilibrium that is to be maintained in the life of the instincts, but rather a progressive conflict, subordination, or prostration among them. But as is always the case in Nietzsche, the notion of individuation that we normally take for granted is suspended. However, not only does the passage distance us from consciousness, it also multiplies the possible origins of the questioning. Are we, as those who seek the truth, Oedipus or the Sphinx? Are we the tragic hero or the monster of uncertain origin? This question, though, is only pertinent regarding the value of what Nietzsche calls the “will to truth.” The correct answer to the Sphinx’s question causes her/it to take her own life – but the answer to Oedipus’s investigation results in his blindness as well. Both results are meant to show the nihilism operating in the seemingly unconditioned desire for truth and

²³⁶ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “What I Owe to the Ancients,” Section 5 (emphasis in original).

²³⁷ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 1 (emphasis in original).

not necessarily any kind of profound identification with the actions of either character. With the mechanism of identification absent, we are clearly dealing with a different symbolism of Oedipus than there is in Freud's texts. As Assoun states, "there is thus no theory of *identification* [in Nietzsche's works] as an elaboration of the paternal model."²³⁸ Without this mechanism of identification, Nietzsche's archaeology is quite different than Freud's, as well. The past, either psychical or historic, is not in danger of being repeated in Nietzsche's archaeological strategy. With this repetition absent, the appeal to the principle of expenditure is less one of regaining force that has been lost than it is in the expression and affirmation of new syntheses. Said in a negative manner, Nietzsche's archaeology reveals a different emphasis than Ricoeur places on his texts in saying "What Nietzsche wants is to augment man's *power* and restore his *force*...."²³⁹ Ricoeur reads Nietzsche here in a manner that is closer to Freud's more conservative archaeology than to Nietzsche's valorization of expenditure. Another of Nietzsche's references to Oedipus will help clarify this.

In a less ambiguous reference to Oedipus, Nietzsche links him with the hero Odysseus. The basic thrust of the appeal to these heroes, however, is the same as in the previous passage:

To translate humanity back into nature; to gain control of the many vain and fanciful interpretations and incidental meanings that have been scribbled and drawn over that eternal basic text of *homo natura* so far; to make sure that, from now on, the human being, just as he already stands before the *rest* of nature today, hardened by the discipline of science, - with courageous Oedipus eyes and

²³⁸ Assoun, *Freud and Nietzsche*, 176 (emphasis in original).

²³⁹ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 150 (emphasis in original).

sealed up Odysseus ears, deaf to the lures of the old metaphysical bird catchers who have been whistling to him for far too long....²⁴⁰

Oedipus's eyes, blinded after his search for truth, are valorized as are Odysseus's ears, sealed to the calls from speculative metaphysics for an abstract conception of truth.²⁴¹ Again, the genealogical question is raised as to what it is that wills truth. Oedipus, it seems, in this passage has learned to resist this call – the call not just for a particular interpretation of truth but for any truth whatsoever. The particular characters (here Oedipus and Odysseus) symbolize not just their particular actions but in general the affectivity of a tragic conception of life. In summarizing this passage, Jacques Derrida states: “Oedipus, no longer naive, does not assume their [the metaphysical bird catchers'] blinding charge any more than he disclaims it.”²⁴² Oedipus, here the symbol for the tragic, neither assumes nor denies the truth of the metaphysicians' claims. Rather, he and this ‘Odysseus’ aim at something else. The aim here is what, for Nietzsche, is labeled as “noble.” The noble in thought, distinguished from the slavish, is precisely the active determination of the synthesis of sense that was discussed earlier. And, it is nobility that is also at the heart of the principle of expenditure. Nietzsche glosses this nobility as “[being] incapable of taking one's enemies, one's accidents, even one's misdeeds seriously for very long – that is the sign of strong, full natures in whom there is an excess

²⁴⁰ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 230 (emphasis in original).

²⁴¹ It would be naive to think that Nietzsche is unaware that Odysseus did not have his ears sealed when passing by the sirens – his crews' were. I would wager that the turn of the phrase “Oedipus eyes and... Odysseus ears” was too great for Nietzsche to resist. However, this only reinforces the point that the exact actions of the tragedy/myth are not as important as its evaluative character.

²⁴² Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles/Éperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche*, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 103.

of the power to form, to mold, to recuperate and to forget....”²⁴³ It is nobility, as an affect or as a taste, for which Nietzsche the author claims to be aiming.²⁴⁴ His statement of this is remarkable for its proximity to the stance taken by Nietzsche’s Oedipus: “My taste, which may be called the opposite of a tolerant taste, is even here far from uttering a wholesale Yes: in general it dislikes saying Yes, it would rather say No, most of all it prefers to say nothing at all....”²⁴⁵

If any aspect of Oedipus as a character is important for Nietzsche as a symbol, it is not his action of killing his father and marrying his mother. For Freud’s archaeological interest, this aspect is key. Instead the importance of the myth for Nietzsche could be seen to lie in Oedipus’s rule of the kingdom and his demand for truth, which ends up proving Oedipus to be both the legitimate and illegitimate ruler at the same time – while not being the master of his own destiny, either. In blinding himself, it seems that Oedipus transforms into a symbol for the critique of the value of truth for Nietzsche. Oedipus reaches the point described in the *Genealogy of Morals* where he must “*patere legem, quam ipse tulisti*” – submit to the law you yourself proposed.²⁴⁶ From a philological perspective, we can see Oedipus as a Nietzschean symbol for the many forces that coalesce to produce a singular fate. But, from the genealogical perspective, Nietzsche’s diagnosis is startlingly different than that which was Freud’s. The origin of

²⁴³ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Essay I, Section 10.

²⁴⁴ We will return to this theme constantly in Chapter 3. However, see here Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 260.

²⁴⁵ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “What I Owe to the Ancients,” Section 1.

²⁴⁶ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Essay III, Section 27.

these forces, particularly the ones criticized by Nietzsche, lie in the weakness of the will. Nietzsche introduces not just a criticism of the morality of duty but also a criticism of morals, broadly construed. The will to truth and the weakness of the slavish moralities are deduced to spring from the same sources.

The affirmative symbolism of the tragic is what Nietzsche opposes to this weakness. Whereas in Freud's texts, the Oedipal symbol gives us only the goal of acclimating ourselves to the fate it communicates, the goal Nietzsche has in mind is much different. And is on this point precisely where Nietzsche can be seen more clearly to break from the hermeneutic framework that Ricoeur has proposed as belonging to the hermeneutics of suspicion. Throughout, the predominant criticism that Ricoeur has made of the hermeneutics of suspicion is that it needs completion in a progressive hermeneutics of creation. His refrain has been that Nietzsche and Freud remain too archaeological, and while this is a needed corrective to a naive investigation of things as being simple in their meanings, it is insufficient for the task of an affirmative account of human nature. Part of Nietzsche's use of the symbols of tragedy, however, calls for the definite affirmation of a goal – what Nietzsche will call the goal of nobility. In this, it appears that as an archaeological task, Nietzsche's methodology has led to some profound differences from Freud's analytic archaeology. This is reason enough, despite the initial appearances of similarity, to pose the problem that Nietzsche's genealogy, while being a type of hermeneutics, poses significantly different diagnoses of interpretive conditions than Ricoeur's poles of archaeology and teleology allow.²⁴⁷ How can we reconcile the

²⁴⁷ Eric Blondel touches on this briefly with respect to Ricoeur's later philosophical works. However, we can maintain, as he does, that in Nietzsche the requirement for interpretation to ultimately reconcile in a

principle of expenditure and the critique of the will to truth and its moralism with Ricoeur's hope for a dialectical resolution to the problem of the multiplicity of meaning? At least, the route we must take through Nietzsche's texts is markedly distinct from the route we would take through Freud's. In the next chapter, I will attempt to lay out in more positive terms Nietzsche's hermeneutic strategy, building from Ricoeur's insights into his hermeneutic method but incorporating Nietzsche's own criticisms of the polarity that Ricoeur has been working between.

fixed concept only ever results in another metaphor, another interpretation. See Eric Blondel, *Nietzsche: The Body and Culture: Philosophy as Philological Genealogy*, trans., Sean Hand, (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 245 *passim*.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TELEOLOGICAL MOVEMENT IN NIETZSCHE'S GENEALOGICAL METHOD

For Nietzsche, the value of interpretation lies not only in its capacity to provoke suspicion, as Ricoeur has suggested, but also in its ability to enable what Nietzsche refers to in *Twilight of the Idols* as “war.”²⁴⁸ Nietzsche mobilizes this symbol at the beginning of *The Gay Science*, as well, in a poem entitled “Heracliteanism”: “Happiness on earth, friends,/ only stems from war!”²⁴⁹ This symbol of ‘war,’ and its associated other names, plays the part for Nietzsche of a complementary hermeneutical pole to that of “suspicion,” akin to Ricoeur’s description of the “hermeneutics of recovery.” Whereas Ricoeur criticizes Freud for focusing excessively on the archaeology of desire – despite the possible recourse that Freud’s theories have in the mechanism of sublimation – little is said in Ricoeur’s accounts of Nietzsche’s archaeological method of a possible Nietzschean counterpart to sublimation, other than to criticize its absence.²⁵⁰ In this chapter, my goal will be to elucidate this generally neglected or overlooked teleological

²⁴⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 2003), Foreword.

²⁴⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), “Prelude in German Rhymes,” Section 41.

²⁵⁰ Ricoeur briefly mentions the interpretation of Nietzsche as propounding a kind of “biologism” in a catalogue of the differences between Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche; but Ricoeur neither endorses or expands on this being a possible goal of Nietzsche’s. See Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 148.

dimension of Nietzsche's hermeneutic method, which is produced from the activity of conflicting interpretations: "War has always been the grand sagacity of every spirit which has grown too inward and too profound; its curative power lies even in the wounds one receives."²⁵¹ The apparent wisdom that Nietzsche locates in war lies in its expression of the exteriority of interpretive forces and their conflicts. Metaphorically, war arises on a contested field of interpretation over the meaning of concepts; and its activity is the progressive reinterpretation and appropriation of those concepts on that field. In this chapter, I intend to show that the critical force that Nietzsche's method possesses derives its power for appropriative activity from the very concepts that it criticizes. In the place of a dialectical progression toward a concretized final determination of sense, the Nietzschean conflict of interpretations valorizes the activity of the conflict, under the symbol of 'war,' between the exegetical tactics but without renouncing a certain, limited impulse to teleology. In this way, 'war' utilizes the forces at hand in a directed attempt to reinvigorate those which have turned inward, like those of the bad conscience, to a kind of health.²⁵² Far from denying the hermeneutics of appropriation, Nietzsche's texts conceptualize a type of appropriation that resists eschatological impulses and – *contra* Ricoeur and others – engages in a creative process of sense-building and not merely in a critique of meaning. However, the critique of the hope for eschatology that Nietzsche offers alters the kind of appropriation possible to a determination of sense that lies

²⁵¹ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, Foreword.

²⁵² See Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic* in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), Second Essay, Section 16.

beyond the bounds of Ricoeur's sense of recovery. As Nietzsche writes, "Another form of recovery, in certain cases more suited to me [than war], is to *sound out idols*.... There are more idols in the world than there are realities...."²⁵³ The criticism of idols, the idol of God in particular, will lead us to the problem developed in Nietzsche's texts of how appropriation is possible once eschatological hope has been "sounded out" as hollow and disregarded. One aspect of Nietzsche's idea of "recovery" will be this continuing work of suspicion, of iconoclasm.

The task for this chapter will be to construct this interpretive position in Nietzsche's works and begin to show how it operates as a part of his genealogical method. As I am arguing that there is a teleological trajectory in the accounts of Nietzsche's theory of interpretation, it will be necessary to show how this method emerges from Nietzsche's discussions of interpretation, genealogy, and perspective. It is possible that finding this Nietzschean "soil" of interpretation can also reduce a number of the apparent paradoxes that emerge in Nietzsche's texts – and are aided and abetted in the secondary literature surrounding those works.²⁵⁴ It will be argued that Nietzsche's chosen field of battle will be the field of sense and that it is as a critique and appropriation of sense that his genealogy or hermeneutics is best understood. His criticisms of "teleology" and "ends" must be considered with this in mind, as well. I contend that the sense of teleology understood as an eschatological termination of movement or change is the primary target of Nietzsche's criticisms of teleology – and

²⁵³ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, Foreword (emphasis in original).

²⁵⁴ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Preface, Section 2.

also one of the targets in the invocations of the “death” of the concept(s) of god. A second sense of teleology as a “directedness” to sense is retained by Nietzsche’s hermeneutics and can even be considered as “healthy.” If this is successful as a reading of Nietzsche’s texts, then the Nietzschean hermeneutic will avoid the precise categorizations of the Ricoeurian poles of hermeneutics while remaining a hermeneutic method. And Nietzsche’s method would retain a powerful criticism of a hermeneutics of recovery, such as Ricoeur employs, by removing the goal of an interpretive finality from within the hermeneutic method itself.

I. Interpretation and War

For Nietzsche, the process of critique is inseparable from the activity of interpretation. In his genealogies, the interpretive act is the attempt to determine the meaning of certain concepts according to the conditions that have enabled these concepts to become actualized. All interpretive acts, however, proceed from a particular hermeneutic standpoint or perspective. According to what Nietzsche calls his “perspectivism,” however, “all our actions are incomparably and utterly personal, unique, and boundlessly individual... that due to the nature of *animal consciousness*, the world of which we can become conscious is merely a surface- and sign-world, a world turned into generalities and thereby debased to its lowest common denominator....”²⁵⁵ Becoming-conscious of a field of meaningfulness is a result of the application of a certain perspective to the symbols and signs encountered. Thus, each interpretation of the

²⁵⁵ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 354 (emphasis in original).

conscious world is but an interpretation of a sign or symbol and the application of a concept to it. In fact, the constitution of a world at all is the result of the work of interpretation, as Eric Blondel states: “The body is a series of instincts (*Instinke*) or drives (*Triebe*) that constitute reality as they interpret it.”²⁵⁶ Although it is not necessarily important here to develop Blondel’s concept of the body, I agree with the manner in which he situates interpretation as simultaneously working on and working in the world as it is constructed. Nietzsche is not discussing the construction/interpretation of the field of objectivity by a transcendental subject. Instead, following the earlier discussion of the construction of the subject through interpretation, it is important to extend that analysis to objects as well: “As one might guess, it is not the opposition between subject and object which concerns me here [discussing perspective]; I leave that distinction to those epistemologists who have got tangled up in the snares of grammar (of folk metaphysics).”²⁵⁷ Perspectivism and interpretation are the activities by which both subject and object are constituted. Here, I also agree with Christoph Cox’s assessment that “Nietzsche’s theory of interpretation holds that objects are nothing given but that they, too, are only ever constructions of one or another interpretation.”²⁵⁸ And, in a manner similar to that described by Ricoeur, each interpretation of the world must necessarily occur from a particular, finite perspective of a drive. What is distinctive about Nietzsche’s method, however, is that genealogy interprets the causes of these concepts to

²⁵⁶ Eric Blondel, *Nietzsche: The Body and Culture: Philosophy as Philological Genealogy*, trans., Sean Hand, (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 206.

²⁵⁷ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 354.

²⁵⁸ Christoph Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*, (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1999), 140.

be both historically based and contingent – and neither transcendent nor necessary.²⁵⁹ As

Nietzsche states in his exegesis of the meanings of the pair of concepts “good” and “evil”:

Fortunately, I learned early to separate theological prejudice from moral prejudice and ceased to look for the origin of evil *behind* the world... A certain amount of historical and philological schooling... soon transformed my problem into another one: under what conditions did man devise these value judgments good and evil? *and what value do they themselves possess?*²⁶⁰

Thus, a questioning of the meaning of the judgments “good” and “evil” must look into the historical and psychological conditions that make those judgments possible.

Nietzsche’s critique of this sort of moral judgment both shows us the actual conditions for their employment and also that the terms “good” and “evil” mean something different than what the morality which claims them in its domain would have us believe.

Moral judgments, if subject to the historical process with its accidents and developments for their meaningfulness, can neither be justified by transcendent ideals nor judged according to events not actualized. Michel Foucault states regarding this that Nietzsche’s genealogical project “rejects the meta-historical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for ‘origins.’”²⁶¹

The interpretations offered by genealogy criticize the deployment of concepts from a non-transcendent standpoint and look for their actual meaning and value as they have

²⁵⁹ Insofar as the concept of the “body” serves the purpose of elucidating the contingent and conflicting nature of interpretation, I take it to be a valuable addition. However, when taken as the beginning of a new kind of foundationalism, it quickly becomes, as Nietzsche would see, another brand of metaphysics.

²⁶⁰ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Preface, Section 3 (emphasis in original).

²⁶¹ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley and Others (New York: The New Press, 1998), 370.

developed in history. Nietzsche's criticism of final ends comes from the same reasoning as his criticism of any origin that would be characterized as *causa sui* – or as the cause of itself. His late works, with their intertwining yet distinct itineraries, all form part of what Nietzsche proclaims is his “No-doing”: “After the Yes-saying part of my task had been solved [in the works through *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*], the turn had come for the No-saying, *No-doing* part: the revaluation of our values so far, the great war – conjuring up a day of decision.”²⁶² This dense passage of self-interpretation marks a kind of departure in the works from *Beyond Good and Evil* to *Anti-Christ* towards a critical enterprise – a work of suspicion. However, the genealogies articulated in those texts form a sustained project of interpreting how the metaphysical and moral assumptions and concepts of philosophy are made possible through the work of the forces that compose them.

Although these texts develop as distinct works, distinct genealogical trajectories, the similarities in the forces that are expressed accounts for the commonality in the targets that Nietzsche finds in the philosophical tradition. Thus, *Beyond Good and Evil*, with its broad critique of Modernity, reveals the same forces at work that the *Genealogy of Morals* does, although the latter book attempts to focus on a narrower moral field.²⁶³

Nietzsche's No-doing is coextensive with his declaration of war on these metaphysical concepts as both activities offer a critical re-evaluation and, ultimately, re-interpretation

²⁶² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), “Beyond Good and Evil,” Section 1 (emphasis in original).

²⁶³ To complete the list, I read *Twilight of the Idols* broadly as a genealogy of truthfulness, *The Case of Wagner* as a genealogy of “German idealism,” *The Anti-Christ* as a genealogy of European Christianity, and, finally, *Ecce Homo* as a genealogy of the subject “Nietzsche.” I will return to this claim in Chapter 4 as I think it gives us a good insight into how to read *Ecce Homo* as a work of hermeneutic philosophy. See here *Ecce Homo*, and specifically, “Why I write such good books.”

of metaphysics and morality. If, as Ricoeur has said, Nietzsche wants to be able to say ‘I doubt better than Descartes’ then a Nietzschean wish to ‘critique more fully than Kant’ must be seen at work here, as well.²⁶⁴ This desire to fulfill the Kantian attempt at critique leads Nietzsche to his greatest expenditures, but it remains to be seen if those can be viewed as successful ventures from Nietzsche’s own standpoints. As David Farrell Krell writes, “Genealogical critique attacks the *grounds* of the metaphysics of Descartes and Kant, but finds itself compelled to question whether such an attack remains within the Leibnizian metaphysics of *ground*....”²⁶⁵ Is there some thing that remains fundamental in Nietzsche’s critique and, therefore, exempted from critique? The answer to this problem, I think, lies in the extent to which Nietzsche advocates deploying ‘war.’

The reasons for taking Nietzsche’s statements of ‘war’ as a key symbol of his critique lie in Nietzsche’s method of critique. War, as a depiction of a conflict of forces, is not a representative of a critique that arrives from a radically exterior or transcendent source; war derives its power from a source immanent to that which is criticized itself – its “curative power lies in the wounds one receives.”²⁶⁶ In other words, critique cannot operate other than with tools that are already actualized in some manner and on concepts or ideals as they have been actualized. This is the sense of Nietzsche’s conclusion regarding the critique of ascetic ideals:

²⁶⁴ See here Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 89 *passim*.

²⁶⁵ David Farrell Krell, *Infectious Nietzsche*, (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 14 (emphasis in original).

²⁶⁶ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, Foreword.

All great things bring about their own destruction through an act of self-overcoming: thus the law of life will have it, the law of the necessity of “self-overcoming” in the nature of life – the lawgiver himself eventually receives the call: “*patere legem, quam ipse tulisti* [Submit to the law you yourself proposed].”²⁶⁷

In this context, Nietzsche’s criticism of the ascetic ideal and its conditions for possibility is made possible by an unrealized aspect of that very ideal. When a command to know the meaning of all things cannot know the meaning of itself, or has necessarily deceived itself about its meaning, it can no longer stand as it once had because of the very reasons immanent to that initial command. Nietzsche’s texts recognize the aims of the Kantian project but desire to reach Kant’s end of a critique that is immanent to itself without the illusions caused by the morality that Kant assumed uncritically – “that [morality] of a *cunning* Christian...”²⁶⁸ The moral illusions that what Nietzsche terms the “will to truth” has demanded will ultimately be subjected to that same will to truth through its desire for universality. For this reason, Nietzsche likens Kant to “a fox who strays back into his cage. Yet it had been *his* strength and cleverness that had *broken open* the cage!”²⁶⁹ Kant’s critical method inquires into the ground of the same concepts that Nietzsche critiques, but Kant’s work assumes their rightful existence for moral reasons alone. With the critique of morality that we have seen Nietzsche employ, he aims to rid philosophers of the very cage – morality – that continues to dog attempts at completing the Kantian project.

²⁶⁷ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 27 (emphasis in original).

²⁶⁸ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “‘Reason’ in Philosophy,” Section 6 (emphasis in original).

²⁶⁹ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 335 (emphasis in original).

As Nietzsche himself notes, he is “warlike by nature.”²⁷⁰ But this is meant to signify that his practice of critique is different than any criticism that comes about by *ressentiment*. Nietzsche’s genealogies have their origin not in a desire for revenge, if we take him at his word, but in an “*aggressive* pathos [that] belongs just as necessarily to strength as vengefulness and rancor belong to weakness.”²⁷¹ The employment of war in this case is opposed to way in which weakness gives birth to ideals. Forces that Nietzsche characterizes as weak discover a need for a change in evaluation because of an experience with suffering caused by a “hostile external world.”²⁷² These values that are created in response to this suffering, which Nietzsche refers to as products of a “slave morality,” have as their motivation the resentment of those who are unable to act, “that are denied the true reaction, that of deeds, and compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge.”²⁷³ Part of the form of this revenge is the setting-up of ideals from which the weak can (negatively) judge the “external world” and find it lacking in all that it seemingly does to inflict pain upon them. In this way, slave morality, in all of its expressions, approaches problems contemptuously as things to be explained and justified. Nietzsche’s adoption of the symbol of “war” is done for the sake of opposing this resentment but not from the standpoint of a resentment that resents itself. This is why Nietzsche proclaims, “Equality before the enemy: the first presupposition of an *honest*

²⁷⁰ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am so wise,” Section 7. This entire section of “Why I am so wise” lays out the conception of war; and I do not think it can be accounted an accident that it directly follows a section devoted to the logic of *ressentiment*.

²⁷¹ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am so wise,” Section 7 (emphasis in original).

²⁷² Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay, Section 10.

²⁷³ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay, Section 10.

dual. Where one feels contempt, one *cannot* wage war; where one commands, where one sees something beneath oneself, one has no business waging war.”²⁷⁴ In his attempt to raise counter-ideals to those created by slave morality, Nietzsche is operating on “objects of resistance.”²⁷⁵ These “objects” he is concerned with are not objects of hatred on his part but are viewed as “*equals*” which do have a power that can be opposed.²⁷⁶ Even though Nietzsche sees these ideals as products of resentment, as problems Nietzsche must treat them as synthesized products of other forces, even if those forces are diagnosed as weak. And it is Nietzsche’s attempt to distance himself from any reciprocal charges of resentment when he states, “attack is in my case a proof of good will, sometimes even of gratitude.”²⁷⁷ He must treat the products and ideals of slavish morality as legitimate targets for reinterpretation and appropriation and not merely as “evil” objects that ought not even be touched. When qualified in this way, if we take Nietzsche’s texts at their word, the intent of the critique is to offer something other than a slavish resentment towards resentment or “an accusation of accusation.”²⁷⁸

Another of the benefits for Nietzsche’s philosophy of the symbolism of “war” is that its references and participants are never external to the field where it is deployed. War symbolizes an immanent conflict between actual adversaries and not an imposition from a radically exterior or transcendent viewpoint onto a field that it has already

²⁷⁴ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am so wise,” Section 7 (emphasis in original).

²⁷⁵ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am so wise,” Section 7.

²⁷⁶ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am so wise,” Section 7 (emphasis in original).

²⁷⁷ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am so wise,” Section 7.

²⁷⁸ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 466.

overcome. As Deleuze writes, “Transcendental philosophy [Kant’s critique] discovers conditions which still remain external to the conditioned.”²⁷⁹ In Nietzsche’s terms, this reflects the “inversion of the value-positing eye – this *need* to direct one’s view outward instead of back to oneself...”²⁸⁰ Nietzsche, on the other hand, uses genealogy to uncover the hidden internal sources – the contests and conquests between wills – of the genesis of values and truths. If judgment occupies a vertical scheme of “one who judges” and “that which is judged,” with its attending problems, then war works on a horizontal plane as a conflict between actual forces or wills. Nietzsche, in opposing the judgments of slave morality is already “an *incarnate* declaration of war and victory over all ancient conceptions of ‘true’ and ‘untrue’.”²⁸¹ And as it is possible without invoking external transcendental conditions, the primary importance of the symbol of war is that it eludes any description according to law. While there is a conflict or war of interpretations, there can never legitimately be a law of interpretation for Nietzsche. Such a law would mistakenly judge an interpretation or sense from a “heaven” of concepts and never fulfill a project of critique. Indeed, the imposition of a law of interpretation would return interpretation to the condition of a table of judgments and never free interpretation on its own account. Genealogy shows us that interpretation can be internally bound by a will – for example the will to truth – but not externally bound by a law. In order for humans to operate according to laws, “man himself (*sic*) must first of all have become *calculable*,

²⁷⁹ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 91.

²⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay, Section 10 (emphasis in original).

²⁸¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, in *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Anti-Christ*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 2003), Section 13.

regular, necessary, even in his own image of himself....”²⁸² In other words, lawfulness itself is a phenomenon that must be conditioned; and those conditions can be sought through genealogy. Pierre Klossowski asserts that for Nietzsche “[l]aws exist only because of our need to *calculate*.”²⁸³ Also, the need for and feeling of being constrained by a law is a mark of the weak: “The slave worked under the pressure of the feeling that he was doing something contemptible: ‘doing’ was itself contemptible. ‘Nobility and honour (*sic*) are attached solely to *otium* [doing] and *bellum* [war]’ – that was the ancient prejudice!”²⁸⁴ We also see it in one of Nietzsche’s characteristically ambivalent passages regarding the character of Jesus: “Jesus said to his Jews: “The law was for servants, - love God as I do, as his son! Why should we care about morals, we sons of God?....”²⁸⁵ Respect for an external law, for Nietzsche, is always tied to a moral quality displayed by weakness and negation. That forms of judgment continue to arise from an unquestioned moral stance (in accordance with the law) in Kant’s texts is essentially Nietzsche’s criticism of Kant and, potentially, of any form of transcendental idealism.

However, as interpretation’s “law” is replaced as “war” for Nietzsche, this does not entail that Nietzsche abandons any sense of method or prediction in the sense in which we have seen Ricoeur use those terms. The preface to the second edition of *The Gay Science* tells us that that book is full of “goals that are permitted and believed in

²⁸² Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 1 (emphasis in original).

²⁸³ Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 140 (emphasis in original).

²⁸⁴ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 329 (emphasis in original).

²⁸⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. and ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Section 164.

again.”²⁸⁶ One piece of the difficulty in making sense of Nietzsche’s texts is the manner in which they deploy both a critique of systems and maintain a diagnostic stance that Nietzsche seems to believe has traction or explanatory power. As Nietzsche maintains, even the critical effort of *Beyond Good and Evil* contains “pointers to a contrary type that is as little modern as possible – a noble, Yes-saying type.”²⁸⁷ In order to capture this, it is necessary to see a limited teleology at work in Nietzsche’s method – a teleology without an eschatological movement. Such a teleology would presumably be immanent to the wills in the conflict and not an externally conditioning force operating on the conflict from a position beyond it. It would mark an intended or actual end of the wills but not a transcendent end from which one could objectively judge the conflict that has preceded it. In this way can we understand both the Nietzsche of “the will to system is a lack of integrity” and “Formula of my happiness: a Yes, a No, a straight line, a *goal*....”²⁸⁸

Insofar as the literature on Nietzsche has focused only on one or the other of these aspects, it has neglected the resources of the whole of Nietzsche’s hermeneutics. In Ricoeur’s reading of Nietzsche, for example, he focuses primarily on Nietzsche’s critique of consciousness and of a system of knowledge built on that consciousness. Under this interpretation, Nietzsche’s texts become wholly archaeological in their use with their possible “teleological” pole left underdeveloped. For Ricoeur, as for Alexander

²⁸⁶ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Preface to the second edition, Section 1.

²⁸⁷ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Beyond Good and Evil,” Section 2.

²⁸⁸ Respectively, Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “Maxims and Arrows,” Sections 26 and 44.

Nehamas²⁸⁹, the value of Nietzsche's texts is as a critical perspective on the difficulties and task of realizing or recovering an authentic self or authentic knowledge. We can take as emblematic of this approach Ricoeur's discussion of Nietzsche's announcement, specifically in *The Gay Science*, of the "death of God."²⁹⁰ First, it must be noted that Ricoeur's intention here is to discover what, if any, meaning Nietzsche's pronouncement has for religion – if there can be any faith after the acknowledgement of the criticisms by Nietzsche and Freud. He intends to take up the "great hermeneutical conflict... between the priest and the philologist" but in such a way as to recover a kind of meaning to religious faith after the iconoclasm of Nietzsche's and Freud's criticisms of its expressions.²⁹¹ Ricoeur writes: "If we are now to investigate the theological meaning of this atheism, we must first say what sort of atheism is here in question. Everyone is familiar with the famous expression of the madman in *The Gay Science*: 'God is dead.'"²⁹² Presumably, Ricoeur has in mind that the sort of atheism that Nietzsche and Freud advance may leave conceptual space for a Ricoeurian retrieval of a different brand of theism, a theism not dominated by "accusation" and "consolation."²⁹³

Ricoeur frames his exegesis of the proclamation 'God is dead' as a tripartite response: "[T]he true question is to know, first of all, which god is dead; then, who has

²⁸⁹ See Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

²⁹⁰ See Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 125.

²⁹¹ Gary Shapiro, "Nietzsche's Graffito: A Reading of *The Antichrist*" in *Why Nietzsche Now?*, ed. Daniel O'Hara (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 124.

²⁹² Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 445.

²⁹³ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 441.

killed him (if it is true that this death is a murder); and finally, what sort of authority belongs to the announcement of this death.”²⁹⁴ Ricoeur judges the ‘God’ that has died to be the god of metaphysics or of ontotheology. ‘God is dead’ sums up for Ricoeur the result of Nietzsche’s criticism of the concepts of traditional metaphysics – “first cause, necessary being and the prime mover, conceived as the source of values and as the absolute good.”²⁹⁵ In this, Ricoeur follows Heidegger, who interprets Nietzsche in part as the figure who tries to end metaphysics.²⁹⁶

The ethical import of this ‘death’ is that all forms of *a priori* ethical “obligation” can be viewed as constructed value claims and be made subject to a genealogical analysis. For example, Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*, Essay Two analyzes the concept of “original sin” in just this way and finds it to be an expression of weakness and a negative judgment of life from that weak perspective. Ricoeur writes that “Concrete accusation thus appears as the truth of formal obligation.”²⁹⁷ The death of God symbolizes for Ricoeur that metaphysical truths are grounded on a baseless ethical judgment of obligation. The obligation is seen as *a priori* only so long as we value life negatively and construct ethics as accusation. The concept of God, the great accusation of life, has buttressed metaphysical claims regarding truth. With the former gone,

²⁹⁴ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 445.

²⁹⁵ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 445.

²⁹⁶ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 61.

²⁹⁷ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 446.

Ricoeur thinks we are freed from the latter as well and become able to seek truth differently, affirmatively.

Ricoeur's second response can be seen as developing one aspect of the Nietzschean question of "which one?". Who or what is it that has murdered God? Ricoeur's reply is that the "god of morality" has been murdered by metaphysics itself, as it is understood as nihilism. Again we have an iteration that Nietzsche's texts are not necessarily themselves nihilist but only report the nihilism already evident in metaphysics itself. "It is not the atheist [Nietzsche or Freud] but rather the specific nothingness that lies in at the heart of the ideal, the superego's lack of absolute authority."²⁹⁸ Ricoeur's interpretation hinges on the inability of this concept of God to ground itself adequately as a solution to the demands of certainty placed on it by metaphysics, which effectively "kills" the concept because it can no longer be viewed as rigorously true. The ideal cannot maintain the coherence required of truth and falls victim to the "cultural process, the process of nihilism" that is deployed in all such searches for absolute truth.²⁹⁹ As it arises from accusation and weakness, the concept of the god that fills the needs of the weak succumbs to the weakness or nihilism at its origin by failing to deliver on its promise of universal truth and consolation.

Ricoeur's final interpretive question here asks the authority of Nietzsche's interpretation. And Ricoeur is not alone in asking this type of question of hermeneutics and of genealogy in particular: "What sort of authority is invested in the words that

²⁹⁸ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 446.

²⁹⁹ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 446.

proclaim the death of the god of morality? – everything suddenly becomes problematical once again... Everything becomes doubtful when we ask: Who is saying this? The madman? Zarathustra? The madman as Zarathustra? Perhaps.”³⁰⁰ Similarly, Lawrence Hatab reads the pronouncement of the death of God as the madman’s attempt to summon the threat of nihilism for “nonbelievers who are chastised for not facing the consequences of God’s demise.”³⁰¹ In these cases, what is being driven at here is the problem of how we are to take the prospective, appropriative aspect of Nietzsche’s critique if there is no finality that we can hope to recuperate. The Nietzschean genealogist asks “which one?” in revealing the ruses of culture and morality; and here Ricoeur asks precisely this question of Nietzsche’s texts themselves. The texts’ critical force is unquestioned, but Ricoeur finds problematic the sweeping positive claim that Nietzsche’s pronouncements can be proven: “At least we can say in negative terms that this type of thinking does not prove anything conclusively one way or the other. ‘The man with the hammer’ has only the authority of the message that he proclaims, namely, the will to power.”³⁰²

The question of the authority of Nietzsche’s interpretations and statements lies at the heart of two great questions that often confront Nietzsche’s philosophy: 1) How can Nietzsche claim that all is interpretation and claim *that* interpretation to be true?; 2) Do the resources found in Nietzsche’s texts provide any positive status that would justify the critiques of other philosophical concepts? These questions are related, as I see it; and to

³⁰⁰ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 446.

³⁰¹ Lawrence Hatab, *Nietzsche’s Life Sentence: Coming to Terms with Eternal Recurrence*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 15-16. David Owen shares roughly this same concern, calling it the “problem of *not inferring*.” See David Owen, *Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morality*, (Stocksfield GB: Acumen, 2007), 28.

³⁰² Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 446.

satisfy the first and more frequent question, the second must also be answered. For his part, Ricoeur also would link these questions under the rubric of the hermeneutic poles of suspicion and recovery. Of a possible hermeneutics of appropriation in Nietzsche's texts, Ricoeur writes, "This positive Nietzschean philosophy, which alone is capable of conferring authority on his negative hermeneutics, remains buried under the ruins that Nietzsche has accumulated around him."³⁰³ As we saw in the last chapter, Ricoeur believes that Nietzsche has not developed a hermeneutics of recovery which Ricoeur thinks is necessary for a positive philosophy. In the text under consideration, Ricoeur elaborates this, saying, "Nietzsche's major work remains an accusation of accusation and hence falls short of a pure affirmation of life."³⁰⁴ Ricoeur reads Nietzsche as developing a powerful archaeological critique of morality and metaphysics but as lacking an affirmative account of the goal to be reached after the critical moment. In brief, then, this passage demonstrates how Ricoeur's reading of Nietzsche's genealogy sees the text as specifically neglecting a teleological trajectory to thought on the other side of critique. With this development it remains for Ricoeur's reading that Nietzsche's hermeneutics is valuable as critical archaeology but ultimately inadequate outside of the narrow parameters Nietzsche has seemingly set for himself. In *Freud and Philosophy*, Ricoeur frames the illusion that undoes Nietzsche's project as a "transcendental illusion" that confuses "idols" in need of destruction with "symbols" that call for both critique and

³⁰³ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 446-7.

³⁰⁴ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 447.

positive thought.³⁰⁵ Ricoeur takes Nietzsche's proclamation of "God is dead" strictly as having iconoclastic import and, therefore, still in need of some teleological justification that Nietzsche is read as not providing.

At this point, Ricoeur's hermeneutic exegesis of Nietzsche's method meets up with the difficulty of the seeming relativism that Nietzsche's texts expound. This problem serves as the central jumping-off point for many commentaries on Nietzsche's work; and the particular attempt at its solution reveals much about the ultimate use to which the commentator will put Nietzsche's philosophy. To be sure, Ricoeur does not attempt a solution, for the need for this discussion to his project is only to show the partial and incomplete nature of a strictly archaeological approach. But the crediting of Nietzsche with a hermeneutic method and the general structure of Ricoeur's problematic will both figure into my attempt at a solution to the difficulties raised here concerning Nietzsche's project.

A standard way of presenting these difficulties is found in Nehamas's *Nietzsche:*

Life as Literature:

An interpretation, simply by virtue of being offered, is inevitably offered in the conviction that it is true. But then, despite any assurances to the contrary, it is presented as a view which everybody must accept on account of its being true. When we show that some other enterprise is partial, even as we assert that ours is partial as well, we implicitly and perhaps against our will commend what we do to universal attention. Every effort to present a view, no matter how explicitly its interpretive nature is admitted, makes an inescapable dogmatic commitment. The point is not that the faith in truth is not questioned enough but that a view cannot be questioned at all while it is being offered. Even a view that denies that there is such a thing as truth must be presented as true.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1970), 529.

The concern raised here is that the claim ‘there are only interpretations’ implies that positive statements of truth are possible, if only attributable to that particular claim.

Laurence Lampert phrases this concern in this way: “Does the perspectivity condemn the perspectival knower to insurmountable skepticism about the truth of any perspective?”³⁰⁷

Added to this is the compounding claim of Nietzsche’s that certain interpretations are better (in some sense) than others. For example, Nietzsche’s argument against the value of the ascetic ideal is that the ideal looks “for error precisely where the instinct of life most unconditionally posits truth.”³⁰⁸ Nietzsche seems to enter into an epistemological paradox wherein, on the one hand, there can only be interpretations of states of affairs and, on the other, that some interpretations – most notably the one that there are only interpretations never are statements of fact true – are better than others. Brian Leiter has characterized this as the “Received View” of interpretation regarding Nietzsche’s perspectivism. He claims that this (erroneously) attributes the following four claims to Nietzsche:

- (i) the world has no determinate nature or structure;
- (ii) our concepts and theories do not “describe” or “correspond” to this world because it has no determinate character;
- (iii) our concepts and theories are “mere” interpretations or “mere” perspectives (reflecting our pragmatic needs, at least on some accounts);
- (iv) no perspective can enjoy an *epistemic* privilege over any other, because there is no epistemically privileged mode of access to this characterless world.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁶ Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, 131.

³⁰⁷ Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Task: An Interpretation of Beyond Good and Evil*, (New Haven CN: Yale University Press, 2001), 12.

³⁰⁸ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 12.

³⁰⁹ Brian Leiter, “Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*,” in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1994), 334.

Nehamas and Leiter share the concern that an epistemology spelled out in this manner would be self-undermining and risk nonsensicality. The concern that this raises for Nietzsche's interpretive project is in line with the apprehension that Ricoeur points to with regard to the authority of the interpreter: what entitles Nietzsche to seemingly claim the truth regarding the interpretations and concepts that he mobilizes? I will discuss three approaches to the resolution of this paradox, as I think the secondary literature tends to loosely divide itself and coalesce into these three camps, which I will refer to as the "aesthetic," the "holistic," and the "naturalistic." Some of the methods of these three styles will overlap; but I will refer to them in this manner based on their way of resolving the origin of the authority conferred to Nietzsche's critical endeavors.

II. The Aesthetic Resolution

The first attempt at a resolution of the paradox that I will present is the aesthetic or stylistic resolution.³¹⁰ The preeminent text propounding this interpretation of Nietzsche's works is Nehamas's *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*. Nehamas argues that Nietzsche, perhaps knowingly, falls short of achieving a full critique of the will to truth because of the paradox generated by Nietzsche's genealogy of the ascetic ideal. To Nehamas, Nietzsche's genealogy reveals asceticism to be a mode of life that denies itself as a product of life and desire while enabling life to continue. The ascetic life negates itself in order that it may continue to exist, and *Genealogy of Morals* clearly demonstrates

³¹⁰ I am following Christoph Cox, here, in characterizing this approach as "aesthetic." See Christoph Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1999), 63-70.

the role of the ascetic priest in this conservation of life. The priest articulates an interpretation that the suffering of the many is the result of their own sins. Suffering, therefore, is interpreted as a punishment that “will necessarily continue” because it is coextensive with life itself.³¹¹ Nietzsche’s genealogy shows that “[a]sceticism can never eliminate suffering, but it succeeds in creating an interpretation that explains why it is inevitable.”³¹²

Key to Nehamas’s account is the assertion that part of the critique of asceticism is Nietzsche’s fear of the spread of the ascetic ideal beyond those who “create” it: “The ascetic ideal does not rest content with ordering the lives of those who may actually need it.”³¹³ It also seeks to impose a code of morality that anyone can follow and “thus necessarily addresses itself to the lowest common denominator among the people whose conduct it guides. This is its ‘leveling effect,’ which Nietzsche so despises.”³¹⁴ The will to truth that lies behind the ascetic ideal projects not only its solution to suffering but also necessitates the evangelization of its message as the *only* truth to any and all populations, even those who are not distinctly in need of it. It is this promulgation of the ideal that allows the “belief that *the strong man is free* to be weak and the bird of prey to be a lamb – for thus [the ascetic priests or the weak] gain the right to make the bird of prey *accountable* for being a bird of prey.”³¹⁵ Genealogy here shows a double deception in the

³¹¹ Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, 122.

³¹² Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, 122.

³¹³ Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, 125.

³¹⁴ Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, 214.

³¹⁵ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay, Section 13.

mode of life that holds deception to be sinful: 1) It hides its own manifestation of the will to power as chosen from a free will despite the fact that it is merely the expression of the will's powerlessness; 2) It denies that its interpretation of the world is interpretation at all and presents it as *fact*. However, despite this double ruse, asceticism remains, for Nehamas's interpretation of Nietzsche, an affirmation of life, albeit only of the particular weak form. He writes, "Instead of attacking negative judgments of life directly, [Nietzsche] treats them as hints or signs of the types of people who make them and who are enabled to live by them. But he also treats positive judgments in just the same way."³¹⁶ This entails that, given Nietzsche's insistence on perspectivism, there can be no reproach for any moral evaluation, on Nehamas's account, from Nietzsche's perspective without risking the fall into the same dogmatism that is criticized. What, then, can be the accusation against asceticism? For Nehamas, Nietzsche's point must center on the expansionist tendencies of asceticism and not on its particular perspective. If all perspectives are ultimately affirmations of that perspective, then Nietzsche must "give up the very idea of trying to determine in general terms the value of life and the world."³¹⁷ The paradox of perspectivism, following this reading of genealogy, will be resolved in favor of a withdrawal from the critique of the content of asceticism. This entails that the general tenor of Nietzsche's texts are not directed against a general or wholesale repudiation of asceticism. Nehamas argues that "Nietzsche... does not advocate and does not even foresee a radical change in the lives of most people. The last thing he is a

³¹⁶ Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, 135.

³¹⁷ Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, 136.

social reformer or revolutionary.”³¹⁸ If all moral judgments are false on Nehamas’s reading of Nietzsche, then Nietzsche’s own philosophy must avoid direct confrontations with that tradition, since “an explicit attack would perpetuate that tradition.”³¹⁹

This leaves Nietzsche’s works with the problem of moving from an implicit rejection of the dogmatism of the philosophical tradition to generating the possibility of raising a general affirmative perspective without his texts becoming dogmatic themselves. To Nehamas, this paradox can be resolved gotten past only in the aestheticization of one’s self. The purpose of genealogy, then, is to give us a stylistic project whose goal is the creation of one’s own subjective perspective distinct from the ascetic ideal that is our birthright.³²⁰ Nietzsche’s “unparalleled solution to this problem is to try consciously to fashion a literary character out of himself and a literary work out of his life.”³²¹ This stylistic resolution sees the paradox generated by Nietzsche’s claims regarding perspectivism to be avoided in Nietzsche’s attempted escape from the articulation of a philosophical stance towards one of an aesthetic stance: “The very notion

³¹⁸ Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, 225.

³¹⁹ Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, 137.

³²⁰ From this perspective, it’s possible to locate Daniel Conway’s *Nietzsche Dangerous Game* as a kind of “anti-aesthetic” reading of Nietzsche’s work. Conway attaches the utmost importance to the subject Nietzsche, as does Nehamas; but Conway concludes that, because of the decadence of that subject, the authority of Nietzsche’s texts is suspect. See Daniel Conway, *Nietzsche’s Dangerous Game: Philosophy in the Twilight of the Idols*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 240 n19. Conway argues that despite Nietzsche’s own attempts to breed a readership that his texts could master, “he trained his successors to probe the self-referential blind spot that vitiates his critical enterprise” (Conway, *Nietzsche’s Dangerous Game*, 250). Therefore, what there is of Nietzsche’s success comes not from his own appropriative work, but that of his readership that takes the step beyond what he was capable of. As I have been arguing, however, Nietzsche is not attempting and actively opposes a view that anyone can “attain the final, self-referential insight that would [complete] his critique of modernity,” (Conway, *Nietzsche’s Dangerous Game*, 258). Nietzsche’s own (declared) decadence is, ultimately, another perspective incorporated and appropriated into the subject Nietzsche, as I will show.

³²¹ Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, 137.

of the individual makes it impossible to say in informative terms how one can ever become that.”³²² Briefly, epistemological paradoxes are resolved by leaving epistemology behind in an aesthetics of subjectivity, where any such methodological discipline as epistemology would be fruitless in its labors regardless. Nietzsche’s theories, on this interpretation, have their ultimate aim in a construction and project of the self and subjectivity and not in an epistemology or cosmology. If we think of the materials of Nietzsche’s art as being a philosophical subject, then Nehamas’s project is similar to the one Nietzsche attributes to *The Birth of Tragedy* in his second preface to the work: “to look at science through the prism of the artist, but also to look at art through the prism of life.”³²³

III. The Holistic Resolution

If what I have called the aesthetic approach wishes to deflate any epistemological or ontological readings of Nietzsche’s texts, the holistic exegesis offers an opposing sort of resolution to the dilemma of perspective and truth.³²⁴ This approach interprets

³²² Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, 225.

³²³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, eds. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), “An Attempt at Self-Criticism,” Section 2 (emphasis in original).

³²⁴ Gilles Deleuze’s *Nietzsche and Philosophy* is the nearest to a systematic exposition of this view as is perhaps possible – and possibly overly so from the perspective of his later essay “Nomad Thought.” Michel Foucault’s essays “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” and “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx” are also important articulations of this view. Although sometimes referred to as the “French Nietzsche,” this interpretation also has some important non-French advocates. See particularly: David Allison, *Reading the New Nietzsche: The Birth of Tragedy, The Gay Science, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, and On the Genealogy of Morals* (Lanham MA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001); Alan Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 1990); and Cox’s *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*.

Nietzsche's critique of the "will to truth" as a more successful endeavor and argues that, with the death of god and the negation of the will to truth, the paradox of the truth of Nietzsche's pronouncement and his epistemology fades. It also leaves room for epistemic and ontological claims, as long as they are understood as non-metaphysical claims as well. In this way, Nietzsche's philosophy is seen not just as a critique but also as having profound positive implications. As Gilles Deleuze writes:

Genealogy signifies the differential element of values from which their value itself derives. Genealogy thus means origin or birth, but also difference or distance in the origin... But, understood in this way, critique at its most positive. The differential element is both a critique of the value of values and the positive element of a creation.³²⁵

Deleuze's influential account of Nietzsche's philosophy reads genealogy as a critique, in the Kantian sense, of both sense and values. This allows Deleuze to read Nietzsche's works as not only completing the Kantian project but also as overturning the Platonic project. The emphasis here is on the drives that Nietzsche conceives of as ontologically positive and plural forces; Deleuze's Nietzsche is a holist because there are, for him, only these forces, which are responsible for both the interpretation of sense and the evaluation of values. The anti-Platonism Deleuze credits Nietzsche with is a result of the valorization of the constant becoming of these forces from an original "differential element," the will to power.³²⁶ Rather than look for the becoming of Being, as Plato's texts do, Deleuze reads Nietzsche as offering a pluralist ontology of the being of becoming. Through this, Nietzsche's genealogies diagnose the reactive forces that seek

³²⁵ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 2.

³²⁶ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 197.

to deny becoming through the kind of values and senses they create – *ressentiment*, bad conscience, and the priestly incarnation of the ascetic ideal. It is through these reactive forces that a weak or slavish consciousness conceives of change and becoming as a negative process and attempts to preserve itself, instead of understanding that “multiplicity, becoming, and chance are adequate objects of joy and that only joy returns.”³²⁷ Deleuze posits that only through the active destruction of ideals and creation of new ideals can critique, understood as the critique of sense and values, be accomplished.

As was seen with the aesthetic interpretation, this method draws much of its impetus from a reading of Nietzsche’s critique of ascetic ideals. In the third essay of the *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche argues that science is not a radical departure from metaphysics but only its latest, “most unconscious, involuntary, hidden, and subterranean ally!”³²⁸ The reason for this is what Nietzsche sees as science’s ultimate faith in the will to truth as being supremely valuable. For this reason, Nietzsche claims that science springs from the same ground or soil as metaphysics and is traceable to an attempt to represent a denial of suffering and a negation of life: “science today is a *hiding place* for every kind of discontent... – it is the unrest of the *lack* of ideals, the suffering from the *lack* of any great love, the discontent in the face of involuntary contentment.”³²⁹ The only way we can speak of the “progress” from metaphysics to science is that science

³²⁷ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 190.

³²⁸ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 25.

³²⁹ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 23 (emphasis in original).

would jettison all the faiths of metaphysics, save the faith in the will to truth. However, science still suffers from the absence of ideals that characterizes a weak reaction to life. Thus, Nietzsche argues that science cannot create except with the same goals in mind that it has inherited from Christian morality. With science we reach the “kernel and esoteric form of the ascetic ideal” – the will to truth.³³⁰ Science reveals, in other words, most starkly to Nietzsche what is at stake in the belief in the ascetic ideal. In leaving the ideal of truth uncriticized, Nietzsche views science as inheriting and endorsing the key metaphysical concept of truth because science still emanates from the reactive morality that places truth as the highest good.³³¹

What I term the holistic approach to the exegesis of Nietzsche’s texts takes seriously Nietzsche’s injunction that there can be no creation without destruction and also argues that the creative act is just as important an element in Nietzsche’s texts as the critical. This methodology is holistic insofar as it interprets the will to power as constitutive of a Nietzschean naturalized ontology.³³² This creative act, beyond the critical aspect, cannot be constructed with the same ideals or subject to the same ideals as what was criticized. So although perspective is raised as a counter to dogmatic truth, the holistic interpretation must invent a new standpoint from which interpretations can be

³³⁰ Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*, 26.

³³¹ Foucault makes this point repeatedly if we understand the modern practice of history as being inspired by scientific practice and method: “The historian’s history finds its support outside of time and claims to base its judgments on an apocalyptic objectivity. This is only possible, however, because of its belief in eternal truth, the immortality of the soul, and the nature of consciousness as always identical with itself.” See Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 379.

³³² Of course, the meaning of this “naturalization” must be taken in its context as not co-extensive with a scientific understanding of the world, as is common in Anglo-American discussions of “naturalism.” We will return to this point below.

judged. It is through perspective that the will to truth calls itself into question for Nietzsche, but if we are to build an interpretation that does not fall prey to the same problem, the adjudication between differing perspectives must have a different standard. The holistic methodology turns here to the standards of the will to power as the ‘far side’ of the critique of the will to truth. Nietzsche attempts to disconnect the metaphysical belief in the identity and banality of goodness and truth: “What is good? – All that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man. What is bad? – All that proceeds from weakness.”³³³ For Deleuze and Foucault, this entails a perspectivism where perspectives are weighed not by their truth value but by their value for life, conceived of as will to power. This has two consequences. The first is that Nietzsche’s axiology must be considered as part of his epistemology, erasing any hard distinction between epistemology and ethics, as both are grounded in the conflicts and expressions of wills to power. The second is a commitment to a thoroughgoing pluralism regarding wills to power. In this way the holistic interpretation of Nietzsche’s will to power as ontology entails a pluralistic ontology as well:

[T]he object itself is force, the expression of a force... There is no object (phenomenon) which is not already possessed since in itself it is not an appearance but the apparition of a force. Every force is thus essentially related to another force. The being of force is plural, it would be absolutely absurd to think about force in the singular.³³⁴

In the creative act, for the holist account, the paradox of the dogmatism/relativism of perspectivism cannot be countenanced as a problem, as this is an issue only for

³³³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ in Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 2003), Section 2.

³³⁴ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 6.

interpretive schemes still driven by the will to truth. The account of the Nietzschean determination of sense must conform instead to the essential pluralism of the wills to power and their conflicts:

Consequently, I do not believe that a “drive for knowledge” is the father of philosophy, but rather than another drive, here as elsewhere, used knowledge (and mis-knowledge!) merely as a tool. But anyone who looks at people’s basic drives, to see how far they may have played their little game right here as *inspiring* geniuses..., will find that they all practiced philosophy at some point, - and that every single one of them would be only too pleased to present *itself* as the ultimate purpose of existence and as rightful *master* of all the other drives. Because every drive craves mastery, and *this* leads it to try philosophizing.³³⁵

Rather than taking Nietzsche as sidestepping the paradox, they encourage the reading of the paradox as a paraloxism that Nietzsche solves in saying that both views are false.

According to the very criteria of the will to truth itself, dogmatic epistemology will always fail in its quests for totality because it cannot, as just as Ricoeur showed, satisfy its desire for a self-grounding of knowledge. Relativism, on the other hand, obviously fails the will to truth’s criterion of a unified account or truth. As truth has never been univocal, Nietzsche suggests that it cannot be and desiring to make it such will remain a self-defeating undertaking. The holists interpret Nietzsche as reading the paraloxism as being motivated by the will to truth; and once the will to truth is suspected, both because of its value for life and for its perpetual failure, this problem dissipates.

The naturalized ontology that the holistic interpretations have in mind is a proliferation of perspectives evaluated by the axiology that Nietzsche presents in his later works. The main target here is the hidden asceticism that all theories of truth and metaphysical systems promulgate. Thus, their problem, and it is no small task, is to

³³⁵ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 6.

replace this ascetic metaphysics with non-ascetic conceptions of epistemology and ethics. We will return to this problem later in the chapter. For now, let us move to the third sort of resolution of the paradox of perspectivism.

IV. The Naturalistic Resolution

Recent studies in Nietzsche's texts, largely following the suggestions of John Wilcox's *Truth and Value in Nietzsche*³³⁶ and Richard Schacht's *Nietzsche*³³⁷, attempt to solve the paradox of interpretation in Nietzsche's works by arguing that Nietzsche's philosophy of truth subscribes to a thoroughgoing philosophical naturalism. This, however, is not intended to be the naturalistic ontology seen by the holistic interpreters. These predominantly Anglo-American exegetes argue of Nietzsche that "he shares with analytic philosophy a strong naturalizing impulse – and effort to see through the mystifications of religion and metaphysics and to treat all aspects of the human with a scientific eye. He intends that genealogical analysis to be a naturalistic or scientific account of human values and prejudices."³³⁸ More specifically, Nietzsche's naturalistic attitude is interpreted to be primarily a *methodological* one: "[Methodological Naturalists], then construct philosophical theories that are continuous with the sciences either in virtue of their dependence upon the actual results of scientific method in different domains or in virtue of their employment and emulation of distinctly scientific

³³⁶ John T. Wilcox, *Truth and Value in Nietzsche: A study of his metaethics and epistemology*, (Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press, 1974).

³³⁷ Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982).

³³⁸ John Richardson, "Introduction," in *Nietzsche*, eds. John Richardson and Brian Leiter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 9.

ways of looking at and explaining things.”³³⁹ On this account, Nietzsche’s genealogical practice is a coherent whole that does not eschew truth entirely but submits metaphysical claims to truth to a naturalistic criticism. From this, the naturalists argue, we can read Nietzsche’s perspectivism and theory of interpretation as putting forward naturalistic criteria for truth that can be cashed out by scientific methods. Thus the paradox of truth and perspective fades when we view truth correctly as non-metaphysical truth or as naturalized truth. As Leiter writes of Nietzsche (and also Freud and Marx): “When one understands conscious life *naturalistically*, in terms of its real causes, one contributes at the same time to a *critique* of the contents of consciousness: that, in short, is the essence of a hermeneutics of suspicion.”³⁴⁰

Justifications for this approach argue that Nietzsche’s rejection of truth is only partial and that the supposed paradox of truth and perspective must ignore several of Nietzsche’s texts to generate its problem. Hales and Welshon point, for example, to *Anti-Christ* Section 50 as the type of passage that has been overlooked: “Truth has had to be fought for every step of the way, almost everything else dear to our hearts, on which our love and our trust in life depend, had had to be sacrificed to it. Greatness of soul is needed for it: the service of truth is the hardest service.”³⁴¹ This suggests, as do other

³³⁹ Brian Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 5.

³⁴⁰ Brian Leiter, “The Hermeneutics of Suspicion,” in *The Future for Philosophy*, ed. Brian Leiter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 77 (emphasis in original). Needless to say, this is a much different reading of these three figures than we have seen Ricoeur offer. If one were forced to locate the core of their differences, the stock that each places in the Husserlian critique of the naturalistic attitude would probably be the best place to start.

³⁴¹ Quoted from Steven D. Hales and Rex Welshon, *Nietzsche’s Perspectivism* (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 15.

passages,³⁴² that Nietzsche's skepticism towards truth may not be total, that truth and perspective may be compatible, and that Nietzsche may indeed have a "universal sense of truth."³⁴³ The Nietzschean critique is then taken to be focused on properly metaphysical claims of truth but will allow "truth claims about history, philosophy, the ascetic ideal, and the affirmation of life..."³⁴⁴ In the end, Nietzsche will reject metaphysical truths on the grounds that they are nihilist – because they refer to *nothing*. Naturalistic claims of the methodological sciences, for example, can be countenanced as truth claims because they refer to something real.

Two of the most commonly referenced sections of Nietzsche's texts that are cited in support of this interpretation are *Twilight of the Idols* Books Three and Four and *Genealogy of Morals* Third Essay, Section Twelve. The passages from *Twilight of the Idols*, as I take it, support the interpretation of Nietzsche's empiricist epistemology, while the section of *Genealogy of Morals* sketches Nietzsche's idea of "objectivity" as well as its possibility. The holistic view also reads Nietzsche as a kind of empiricist, so for the sake of contrast here I will focus on the "objectivity" passage from *Genealogy of Morals* since that does a specific kind of philosophical work for the naturalist position.³⁴⁵ If the naturalistic interpretation is correct, then truth will appear as a concept or value that

³⁴² Commonly cited passages include: *Anti-Christ* Sections 15, 47, 59; *Twilight of the Idols* Book Three ("How the 'Real World' at last Became a Myth") and Book Four; and *Genealogy Of Morals* Third Essay, Section 12. We will look more in-depth into these latter two in a moment.

³⁴³ Hales and Welshon, *Nietzsche's Perspectivism*, 15.

³⁴⁴ Maudmarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 21.

³⁴⁵ Again, what each camp here would call "empiricism" might not be recognized as such by the other.

Nietzsche has not given up on and may even be advancing as the “key to Nietzsche’s actual epistemological position.”³⁴⁶

For the naturalistic interpretation, Nietzsche advances and articulates his theory of perspectivism most clearly in *Genealogy of Morals* Third Essay, Section Twelve in the context of a criticism of the Kantian theory of the necessity and unknowability of the thing-in-itself.³⁴⁷ In place of the “disinterested” knowledge that for Kant comes from the proper coupling of concept and intuition, Nietzsche would prefer a concept of objectivity that is “understood not as ‘contemplation without interest’ (which is a nonsensical absurdity), but as the ability *to control* one’s Pro and Con and to dispose of them, so that one knows how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge.”³⁴⁸ This passage seems to posit both the desirability of objectivity and knowledge as well as their possibilities rising from perspective. Leiter characterizes this as Nietzsche’s “Doctrine of Epistemic Affectivity” which holds that any real knowledge will always be conditioned by the affects or interests that motivate the potential knower.³⁴⁹ Thus, *contra* Kant, knowledge about the objective world cannot occur – it simply is not possible – without an interest in the intuition or the concept on the part of the knowing subject. This interpretation also finds support in the passage that

³⁴⁶ Leiter, “Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*,” 335.

³⁴⁷ This section is also explicitly dealt with in Peter Poellner, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) and in Hales and Welshon, where it is noted that the passage supports the main argument of Schacht’s *Nietzsche*.

³⁴⁸ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 12. Cited in Leiter, “Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*,” 343 (emphasis in original).

³⁴⁹ Leiter, “Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*,” 343.

follows it, which I will quote here at length, due to its importance for the naturalistic interpretations:

Henceforth, my dear philosophers, let us be on guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction that posited a ‘pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject’; let us guard against the snares of such contradictory concepts as ‘pure reason,’ ‘absolute spirituality,’ ‘knowledge in itself’: these always demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which seeing alone becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking; these always demand of an eye an absurdity and a nonsense. There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective ‘knowing’; and the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our ‘concept’ of this thing, our ‘objectivity’ be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to suspend each and every affect, supposing we were capable of this – what would that mean but to *castrate* the intellect? – ³⁵⁰

This passage reveals, for Leiter, Nietzsche’s “Doctrine of Perspectives” – that knowledge is essentially perspectival in an analogous fashion to the manner in which sight is perspectival.³⁵¹ From this, most naturalistic interpreters of Nietzsche’s works will argue for an interpretive litmus test that would check any attempted interpretation of Nietzsche’s epistemology for its fitness with the optical analogue. The limit of the analogy here is held to be coextensive with Nietzsche’s epistemology; and this will enable this “optics” of perspectives to be viewed as a privileged metaphor in Nietzsche’s texts.

On this interpretation, the paradox of truth as a perspective characterized by Leiter as the “Received View” dissolves as there is no optical equivalent for the paradox’s statement that no one perspective can be privileged over another. For Leiter, this violates

³⁵⁰ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 12. Cited in Leiter, “Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*,” 343 (emphasis in original).

³⁵¹ Leiter, “Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*,” 343.

an epistemic analogue of the optical metaphor. Just as sight of an object can be distorted due to “identifiable distorting factors” so too can knowledge of the object be distorted.³⁵² This entails an epistemic “purity claim” that “[t]here exists a catalogue of identifiable factors that would distort our knowledge of the object: that is, certain interpretive interests and needs will distort the nature of objects....”³⁵³ For the naturalistic interpretation, these optical distortions are akin to the metaphysical targets of Nietzsche’s method of demystification in that both present illusions that from one perspective may be compelling but, when seen from other perspectives, are clearly erroneous. Knowledge may be perspectival; but when these perspectives more closely align with truth or human truths they can and ought to be valued. These ‘truths’ on the naturalistic account must be squared with what Leiter terms are Nietzsche’s remarks on the “terrible truths” that only strong interpretive perspectives can know.

Ultimately, Nietzsche’s texts under this exegetic technique are interpreted as arguing for an epistemology where knowledge can be described as objective, real, and actual. This possibility rests squarely on human perspectives:

It is a condition of knowing objects that we do so from the standpoint of particular interpretive interests and needs, and against the background of the profusion of human interpretive interests. If they are not to distort the real (but nontranscendent) nature of objects, however, these particular interests must be adequate to relevant aspects of the ‘terrible truth’ about reality.³⁵⁴

³⁵² Leiter, “Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*,” 345.

³⁵³ Leiter, “Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*,” 346.

³⁵⁴ Leiter, “Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*,” 351.

Also, these perspectives are not a limit on the desired totality of knowledge, as long as knowledge is understood as human knowledge and not as metaphysical knowledge:

Well if by ‘absolute knowledge’ one means extra-perspectival knowledge, then of course there is no absolute knowledge to be had... However, if ‘absolute knowledge’ refers to the knowledge of absolute truths, where an ‘absolute truth’ is a proposition true of all perspectives, then humans may in fact have absolute knowledge, and nothing in [*Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 12] suggests otherwise.³⁵⁵

In this manner, Nietzsche’s criticisms of truth are interpreted as founding a naturalistic epistemology which avoids the paradox of relativism seemingly caused by the pairing of truth with perspective.

V. The Hermeneutic Resolution

These three attempts at a resolution of this apparent paradox in Nietzsche studies all point to differing ways of solving the problem that results, as Ricoeur articulates it, if Nietzsche’s texts remain only at the level of a negative hermeneutics or a philosophical criticism. Viewed from this hermeneutic perspective, all three agree that Nietzsche’s own archaeology into traditional morality and metaphysics runs the risk, on the surface anyway, of duplicating some of the errors for which he reproaches each. None of these competing interpretations, either, wants to abandon Nietzsche’s thought to the “eclecticism” Ricoeur criticizes in another context that would say that we can do anything we want with Nietzsche’s texts, since Nietzsche contradicts himself, knows this,

³⁵⁵ Hales and Welshon, *Nietzsche’s Perspectivism*, 123-124 *passim*.

and approves of it.³⁵⁶ All three, therefore, can be read as attempting to describe the goals of Nietzsche's writings as somehow distinct from the goals of traditional metaphysics. In other words, in each interpretive schema, the seeming contradictions arising from Nietzsche's archaeology of truth are explained by reference to an aim that is set apart from a metaphysics of being. The aestheticist reading of Nietzsche's works sees the trajectory here as entailing a project that ends in the radical stylization of the self – with no concern for truth, ethics, or epistemology. The holistic interpretation finds a new teleological drive to articulate an ontology of forces, while the naturalistic view discovers a Nietzschean philosophy that abandons metaphysical concerns for the methodology of a naturalized science. Reading these various interpretations through a Ricoeurian framework, it is tempting to say that all three attempt to reconstruct the hidden or absent teleological pole that will fulfill the sense of Nietzsche's texts. The disparity between their reconstructions, however, seems to indicate that "too many ruins" have indeed surrounded Nietzsche's works (of his own doing!) and that such a figuring of a teleological pole is not possible. At this point, I would like to begin my attempt at answering this hermeneutic challenge, while also showing how Nietzsche's texts could be interpreted to avoid the "paradox" ascribed to them as well as some of the superfluous interpretations produced to that same end.

³⁵⁶ For example, Nietzsche writes, "One is *fruitful* only at the cost of being rich in contradictions; one remains *young* only on the condition the soul does not relax, does not long for peace." See *Twilight of the Idols*, "Morality as Anti-Nature," Section 3 (emphasis in original). One would have to ignore all context of this passage and other similar ones, to think that Nietzsche's texts could support such an "eclectic" interpretation.

If, as was said in chapter two, we see Nietzsche's genealogies as instituting a critique of the meaning of the expressions of consciousness, then I believe several answers to these interpretations become clear. Nietzsche, at every turn, criticizes any theory of knowledge that places its faith in the immediacy of that knowledge's meaning. Idealism fails because its claims of immanent truth for its meanings cannot be made actual. In order for its truths to mean anything, concrete ideals must be mediated in consciousness through experience. This contaminates the supposed purity of the ideal and opens the door for Nietzsche's evaluation of ideals as "conceptual mummies" that are produced out of resentment towards life.³⁵⁷ As soon as the genesis of ideals is enquired into, Nietzsche holds that we glimpse a "dark workshop" where "[weakness] is... lied into something *meritorious*...."³⁵⁸ The method of genealogy inquires precisely into the social and historical conditions for the emergence of these ideals. Similarly, realism or positivism fails for Nietzsche because its methods cannot have unmediated access to reality: "Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as science 'without any presuppositions.'"³⁵⁹ Insofar as realism claims to grasp reality itself through the senses, it falls to the illusion of thinking itself perspective-less. However, in claiming the truth of its phenomena, it still demonstrates an unjustified and very perspective-driven belief in truth: "We see that science, too, rests on a faith... The question whether *truth* is necessary must get an answer in advance, the answer 'yes'"³⁶⁰ Thus both positivism and

³⁵⁷ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "'Reason' in Philosophy," Section 1.

³⁵⁸ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay, Section 14.

³⁵⁹ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 24.

³⁶⁰ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 344.

idealism are expressions of a metaphysical demand for truth – either the truth of things or the truth of their meanings. This demand, above all else, is an interpretation of life evaluated as “weak” by Nietzsche in that a concept of truth is felt as needed in order to justify life.

With regards to the aestheticist resolution of the paradox of truth and perspective, I think it can be successfully argued that Nietzsche does condemn asceticism more strongly than Nehamas thinks he does. Importantly, Nietzsche does not interpret every perspective as affirmative in the same manner. The criterion for this condemnation arises in Nietzsche’s description of the ascetic priest. The genealogy of the ascetic priest will also lead into my reconstruction of Nietzsche’s hermeneutics through an investigation of what is at stake in Nietzsche’s question of “What is the meaning of ascetic ideals?”³⁶¹ The text of the third essay of the *Genealogy* is one of Nietzsche’s finest examples of Nietzsche’s interpretive technique; and it yields for us the “first psychology of the priest” as well as illustrates the practice of self-interpretation in the exegesis of the aphorism “On Reading and Writing” from *Zarathustra*.³⁶² However, I want to focus less on the aspect of the ascetic ideal for the moment and look more closely at the question of Nietzsche’s. He does not ask “what is?” the ascetic ideal but rather about what the ascetic ideal means. After several examples of the ascetic ideal and its various meanings as they have been actualized historically, Nietzsche notes:

³⁶¹ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 1.

³⁶² Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Genealogy of Morals.”

that the ascetic ideal has meant so many things to man, however, is an expression of the basic fact of the human will, its *horror vacui* [horror of a vacuum]. *It needs a goal* – and it will rather will *nothingness* than *not* will. – Am I understood?... Have I been understood?... “*Not at all, my dear sir!*” – Then let us start again from the beginning.³⁶³

It is fair to say, then, that the rest of the third essay, in addition to being an exegesis of the aphorism affixed to it, is also an exegesis of this first section. And it is not the truth of the ascetic ideal that is necessarily under question at this point but only its meanings and the actual forces or wills for which those meanings are signs. For Nietzsche, the plurality of meanings that asceticism has borne signifies the human need of a goal. This “basic fact” of the human will reveals a certain nihilistic impulse – but it is one prior to the advent of the ascetic priest.

Nietzsche’s typology of the ascetic priest begins in earnest with section eleven. Here the problematic of the essay is sharpened to the genealogy of the meaning of the ascetic ideal when uttered by the priest. Until this point, the problem has not been “serious” because only with the ascetic priest do we get the “actual representative of seriousness.”³⁶⁴ Whatever the motives of the ascetic priest, with this figure arrives a desire to represent ideals of seriousness as being good, as opposed to a changeable and unconcerned external world. It is this type – the ascetic priest – that brings together asceticism and its practices with the *ressentiment* of the weak towards a threatening world. Thus, the genealogy of the ascetic priest is important to Nietzsche’s overall strategy because the type expresses both a negative evaluation of life as well as a belief in

³⁶³ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 1 (emphasis in original).

³⁶⁴ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 11.

the truth that is generated as a response to that evaluation – a truth that the priest believes can be represented. Artists and philosophers still express ascetic ideals in practice, but the meanings of these ideals are different precisely because they seek different ends than the priest and employ the ascetic ideal only as a mask. The practices of the artists and philosophers do not attempt to represent the ascetic ideal as somehow meaningful in itself. The priest differs in taking the mask seriously and as inherently meaningful. In the presence of this type, Nietzsche writes, “we stand before a discord that *wants* to be discordant, that *enjoys* itself in this suffering and even grows more self-confident and triumphant the more its own presupposition, its physiological capacity for life, *decreases*.”³⁶⁵ Thus asceticism does disingenuously attempt to foist its interpretation on others as truth, but this truth only has the ground of its meaning as a negation of life. The fact that Nietzsche finds something to affirm in asceticism does not, as Nehamas states, mean that asceticism itself is affirmative. The affirmation of a style of life it presents arises only after the negation at the root of its meaning.³⁶⁶ However this conservation of life is not meaningful other than as a type of nihilism.³⁶⁷ And, as a form of the will to truth, asceticism will continually fall short of its own goal, making it a self-defeating “stylization of character.” Without this equivalence between all forms of life as affirmative, we can question Nehamas’s rejection of any ontology or epistemology attributable to Nietzsche’s texts.

³⁶⁵ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 11 (emphasis in original).

³⁶⁶ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 13.

³⁶⁷ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 23.

Nietzsche's criticism of the ascetic ideal, I think, also extends to apply to what I have termed the "Naturalistic reading" of truth and perspective. Nietzsche's attack on the concept of the thing-in-itself applies not only to Kant, but as I have argued, any claim to immediate knowledge. The naturalistic interpretation here claims the complement to immediate knowledge, that is, a fully-mediated knowledge of things through a transparent medium of science or the scientific method. However, as Nietzsche notes, the knowledge of "things" is of secondary importance after an interpretation of their meaning: "This has caused me the greatest trouble and still does always cause me the greatest trouble: to realize that *what things are called* is unspeakably more important than what they are."³⁶⁸ The ability to assert that things or statements can be true is only possible for Nietzsche if they have already been interpreted to be bearers of some kind of meaning. The illusion to which Nietzsche is calling attention here is the one that assumes that this meaning, and perhaps meaningfulness in general, exists prior to its being interpreted. The "Naturalistic reading" ignores this question of meaning entirely in its swift movement to accept the scientific method as a bearer of truthfulness. However, as we have seen for Nietzsche's texts, the assertion that an absolute truth can be a proposition true in all human perspectives postulates an as-yet-unfound full mediation between all perspectives. It interprets the existence of a unified end of meaningful knowledge prior to its actualization, which Nietzsche has explicitly criticized. Therefore, this complete mediation is yet another version of the thing-in-itself which would regulate and justify our knowledge from a standpoint outside of our perspectives, a standpoint that

³⁶⁸ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 58 (emphasis in original).

has not and cannot be actualized. In this way, a totalized scientific mediation appears as another form of the will to truth – this time acknowledging perspective but positing an agreement or harmony between perspectives that pre-exists the actualization of those perspectives.

We do have good reason to extend this criticism of the thing-in-itself to Leiter's and Clark's accounts. Both argue that, while there is a plurality of affects or desires or perspectives that enable knowledge about an object, there is some real nature to the object that serves as a boundary for these interpretations. Clark notes that "perspectivism denies metaphysical truth, [but] it is perfectly compatible with the minimal correspondence account of truth and therefore with granting that many human beliefs are true."³⁶⁹ Thus it is argued that, while Nietzsche denies the knowability of the thing-in-itself and even the possibility of the existence of the thing-in-itself, there can be human perspectival agreement on some truths. However, this idea of truth founded on a weak correspondence does not necessarily bring us truth, only an agreement among certain interpretations. This minimal correspondence theory, however, has as its basis the same agreement at the heart of the more robust, metaphysical truths; and I see no reason why Nietzsche's criticisms of the latter should not also apply to the former. And it is the content of Leiter's "purity claim" that does not fit will with the Nietzschean *corpus*. Leiter writes, "If we are to have the epistemic purity claim then we must be able to make out something like the following thought: certain interpretive needs and interests distort

³⁶⁹ Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 135.

the nature of objects.”³⁷⁰ But if we look more closely at the section of *Gay Science* quoted above, it seems that Nietzsche’s interest is far more devoted to the meaning of interpretations and not focused on the “nature of the objects” interpreted. Thus, while Nietzsche addresses “error,” it is not the error that is like a distortion in sight. Here the optical analogy does not serve our understanding of Nietzsche’s texts very well when applied past a certain point. The analogy works as a metaphor of the perspectivism of the senses and interpretation. It may also be useful in a discussion of Nietzsche’s views on what phenomenologists call “intentionality.” However, there is no textual reason to extend the analogy as broadly as Leiter does. The reason for this is that such an overextension places the optical metaphor in serious contradiction with several of Nietzsche’s other texts where he states that we should not be misled into taking the distinction between subject and object seriously. For example, in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche states:

[i]t is *this* [metaphysics of language] which sees everywhere deed and doer; this which believes in will as cause in general; this which believes in the ‘ego’, in the ego as being, in the ego as substance, and which *projects* its belief in the ego-substance on to all things – only thus does it *create* the concept ‘thing’³⁷¹

Thus the ascription to Nietzsche of a commonsense naturalistic theory of truth does not go far enough – on Nietzsche’s own criteria – towards eliminating the metaphysical impulse. Questions of truth aside for the moment, it leaves here a weakened but still determining object-in-itself which we interpret from the standpoint of subjecthood. As Ricoeur notes, any theory of interpretation that is analogical at its core will give us a

³⁷⁰ Leiter, “Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*,” 346.

³⁷¹ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “‘Reason’ in Philosophy,” Section 5.

theory that is too narrow in its relation between meanings. This is precisely the result when the optical metaphor is raised beyond its context and place as an aphorism to the status of a general rule. The optical metaphor gives us no real insight into the relationship between the meanings produced by interpretation, which I have been arguing to be of primary interest to Nietzsche's genealogy.

In fact, we need not abandon some ascription of a theory of truth to Nietzsche; but we must be careful not to reproduce the metaphysical errors that he criticizes. In broad terms, I think the holistic approach is closer both to Nietzsche's texts as well as the spirit of those texts. With the holistic epistemology, however, there is also a hermeneutics; and it is the importance of each that ought to be stressed – after demonstrating the full import of Nietzsche's archaeology. Then we can argue that Nietzsche does have an empirical, yet hermeneutic, epistemology that is distinctive not just in its critical method but also in its construction of sense.

VI. Which God is Dead?

Key to Ricoeur's reading of Nietzsche is his interpretation of the famous passage of "God is dead." Ricoeur interprets this as heralding the death of the god of morality, and it is clear that morality in its various guises, especially as metaphysics, is a target of the aesthetic, holistic, and naturalistic readings as well. However it is a misreading to interpret Nietzsche's texts as postulating only one "death of god." This point is crucial for seeing the depths of Nietzsche's criticisms of metaphysics and his archaeology because Nietzsche employs the death of god in many ways that have several different

meanings. With the adoption of a rigorous perspectivism, Deleuze notes, “Existence or non-existence cease to be absolute determinations which derive from the idea of God, but rather life and death become relative determinations which correspond to the forces entering into synthesis with or in the idea of God.”³⁷² As knowledge becomes meaningful only through the mediation between sense and perspective, the concept of absolute truth becomes necessarily meaningless. Thus the manner of its becoming determinate knowledge (or becoming concrete, as Ricoeur would say) is no different than that of any other form of knowledge. Consequently God dies from the synthesis of mediating forces, as well. But if God is a mediated idea, if it is to mean anything, then the meaning of the proposition “God is dead” should be capable of several different determinations. That Nietzsche’s texts give us multiple actual determinations of this idea confirms this reading, I think.

The “event” of the death of God, Nietzsche writes, heralds the passing of a faith and the raising of the question of the event’s meaning.³⁷³ But which meaning are we to take from Nietzsche’s accounts? Which god dies in *Gay Science* 108 with no fanfare? Which one is proclaimed dead by our hands by the madman in *Gay Science* 125? Or is it the case that God sacrificed himself, as in *Anti-Christ* 40 and 41? These separate depictions symbolize more than just a god of morality who is killed by nihilistic metaphysics, although that is one aspect of the symbol that can be drawn from the event. In each case, each death, the unity toward which morality and knowledge were held to be

³⁷² Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 152.

³⁷³ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 343.

directed has vanished and new possibilities open in that event's wake. Nietzsche himself notes that, after this event "[e]ven less may one suppose many to know at all *what* this event really means – and, now that this faith has been undermined, how much must collapse because it was built on this faith, leaned on it, had grown into it – for example, our entire European morality."³⁷⁴ In other words, the dead gods that appear (or fail to appear) in Nietzsche's texts are the gods of morality, metaphysics and also of the univocity of meaning of the "world." It is this object of faith that holds together and makes possible the metaphysical and weakly moral interpretations of the "world." As Nietzsche writes, "Around the hero everything turns into tragedy; around the demigod everything turns into a satyr play; and around God everything turns into – what? Perhaps 'world'?"³⁷⁵ If, perhaps, only the two targets of morality and metaphysics were intended, a single death would have sufficed to symbolize their death quite elegantly. It is one event for the absolute being to die, but if this being guaranteed the univocity of sense, then multiple meanings will appear at the event.³⁷⁶

This result of the death of God explains two of Nietzsche's aphorisms where he insists that that event may or may not have been fully comprehended: "*New Battles*. – After Buddha was dead, they still showed his shadow in a cave for centuries – a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way people are, there may still for millennia be caves in which they show his shadow. – And we – we must still

³⁷⁴ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 343.

³⁷⁵ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 150.

³⁷⁶ See here Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 152-59 on the many possible interpretations of the "death of God."

defeat his shadow as well!”³⁷⁷ “‘Reason’ in language: oh what a deceitful old woman! I fear we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar....”³⁷⁸ In these aphorisms, the voice is undoubtedly Nietzsche’s-as-philosopher, as distinct from the proclamation in *Gay Science* that Ricoeur has criticized for its doubtful authority or source. The former aphorism, I think, symbolizes in part the concern of the latter. Insofar as we understand language to be meaningful on its own, we have failed to vanquish one of the shadows left in God’s absence. With the demise of God and metaphysics also goes our belief in a unified ego and in the possibility of any simplicity of meaning guaranteed by it, as we have shown previously. As our language’s structure reflects that presupposition (about which Nietzsche is explicit in the passages leading up to the one cited from *Twilight of the Idols*), it too needs to be viewed as attempting to represent an error in simplifying meaning as something unified on its own. What Nietzsche is rejecting here is any theory of a transcending univocity of meaning, which would be perhaps the longest shadow of the metaphysical God.

VII. Nietzsche on Ends and Goals

With his criticisms of an independent, real univocity of meaning, Nietzsche removes another possible substitute for a real end of metaphysics or morality. Insofar as philosophers have posited a definite end or boundary to knowledge (or interpretation) they “have seconded the Church: the *lie* of a ‘moral world-order’ permeates the whole

³⁷⁷ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 108.

³⁷⁸ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “‘Reason’ in Philosophy,” Section 5.

evolution of even the most recent philosophy. What does ‘moral world-order’ mean?

That there exists once and for all a will of God as to what man is to do and what he is not to do....”³⁷⁹ If Nietzsche’s critique of the concept “world” is successful, as I think it is, then it follows that Nietzsche’s philosophy can countenance no ideal that posits an eschatological end to human knowledge or to life itself. This concept of an ultimate goal we have seen Nietzsche criticize throughout his genealogies of morality and truth as the product of a weak will that reacts against its own suffering. Any expression of an eschatological end – or its correlate the *causa sui* – relies on a kind of knowledge that is impossible for us perspectively. Both rest on a faith that there can be some kind of immediate, definite object of knowledge either metaphysically or temporally behind or under us or a definitive end awaiting us. But both possible final determinations of meaningfulness for Nietzsche would be, as he says of the *causa sui*: “the best self-contradiction that has ever been conceived... But humanity’s excessive pride has got itself profoundly and horribly entangled with precisely this piece of nonsense.”³⁸⁰ The pride of humanity of which Nietzsche writes is its moral supposition of being good when compared with the life around it which it has posited first as evil.

However, I do not believe that this removes all ability for Nietzsche’s texts to speak of teleology or of ends. Nietzsche, in discussing the concept of the will to power regarding living beings writes:

Above all, a living thing wants to *discharge* its strength – life itself is will to power -: self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent

³⁷⁹ Nietzsche, *Anti-Christ*, Section 26 (emphasis in original).

³⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 21.

consequences of this. – In short, here as elsewhere, watch out for *superfluous* teleological principles! – such as the drive for preservation (which we owe to Spinoza’s inconsistency -). This is demanded by method, which must essentially be the economy of principles.³⁸¹

The problem to which Nietzsche points here can be summarized as the postulation of a fixed end outside of the process of becoming toward which all wills to power tend (in this case, self-preservation). It is my contention that this characterization of “superfluous teleological principles” is essentially Nietzsche’s reproach to any eschatological formulation of ends. But Nietzsche’s method, which seems to want to project as little as possible into the interpretation, still looks for a certain kind of limited teleology from the standpoint of principles. This limited teleology lies in the workings of the will to power to appropriate the conflict of interpretations it finds itself enmeshed in toward some concrete meaning. This production of meaning is at the heart of Nietzsche’s conception of “war.” However, and this is what distinguishes this approach most clearly from Ricoeur’s tactic, each appropriation tends toward the creation of a meaning and not its recovery. Nietzsche can be said to outline what Ricoeur refers to as archaeology in this way:

The reputation, name, and appearance, the worth, the usual measure and weight of a thing – originally almost always something mistaken and arbitrary, thrown over things like a dress and quite foreign to the nature and even their skin – has, through the belief in it and its growth from generation to generation, slowly grown onto and into the thing and has become its very body: what started as appearance in the end nearly always becomes essence and *effectively acts* as its essence!³⁸²

³⁸¹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 13 (emphasis in original).

³⁸² Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, Section 58 (emphasis in original).

This is a concise statement of exactly the “suspicion” for which Nietzsche’s texts are famed. Interpretations are made for historical, social, and even accidental reasons over prior interpretations, which gives a new meaning to practices and become over time and use what are taken to be actual essences of things. Ricoeur and others would be right if this is all that Nietzsche does, but the same passage continues in this way:

What kind of a fool would believe that it is enough to point to this origin and this misty shroud of delusion in order to *destroy* the world that counts as ‘real’, so-called ‘reality’! Only as creators can we destroy! – But let us also not forget that in the long run it is enough to create new names and valuations and appearances of truth in order to create new ‘things’.³⁸³

Here Nietzsche explicitly criticizes taking only half of the genealogical project and making it stand for the whole. Without the appropriative activity of giving things new names and values, by which I understand creating new concepts and evaluations, Nietzsche is stating that old conceptions cannot be gotten rid of through criticism alone.

It is not the case, then, that Nietzsche lacks a hermeneutic pole of appropriation. Instead he configures it in a manner consistent with the scope of his criticism of truth and of ideals. As we have seen, any eschatological impulse to a final end, either in reality or in sense, will be resisted by Nietzsche’s method; and it is for this reason that Nietzsche would reject the characterization of the poles of hermeneutics as Ricoeur describes them. “Suspicion” would be apt, but the pole of appropriation cannot be the recovery of anything lost, but the creation of something different. Specifically, the creation must lie in the realm of sense and meaning; and it is this directedness towards meaning that constitutes the teleological aspect of Nietzsche’s hermeneutics. In the next chapter, I will

³⁸³ Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, Section 58 (emphasis in original).

flesh this out further, following a thread which was laid out earlier. Nietzsche does not only set out the principles for his hermeneutic method but, in many of his works, actively employs them in the cause of “explaining” and interpreting many of his own works. Specifically, *Ecce Homo* is, I contend, a Nietzschean version of the philosophical anthropology that Ricoeur set out to find in a phenomenological manner. If my interpretation of Nietzsche’s method is viable, then the utilization of that method with regards to the exegesis of Nietzsche’s own self-commentary should shed light on the ends that Nietzsche is writing towards.

CHAPTER FOUR

NIETZSCHE'S TEXTUAL SELF-INTERPRETATIONS

Nietzsche's genealogical method lies at the core of his philosophical project. The overlapping iconoclasm of his critique of dominant cultural values and his attempts to create "counter-ideals" to philosophical idealism both find their motivating force in Nietzsche's claim that all knowledge claims are based on interpretations.³⁸⁴ Nietzsche's deployment of genealogy rests on his method of taking different perspectives on concepts that have previously been held to be necessary in order to show their reliance on the activity of interpretation for their meaningfulness. In this way, genealogy fractures a general theory of knowledge or meaning by revealing the contradictory interpretations possible from perspectives that, seemingly, have been synthesized within a general framework of knowledge. Against the "contradictory concepts" of pure objectivity or pure meaning associated with a unified subject of knowledge, he writes:

There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective "knowing"; and the more affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity," be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to suspend each and every affect, supposing we were capable of this – what would that mean but to *castrate* the intellect? –³⁸⁵

³⁸⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How to Become What you Are in The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, eds. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), "Why I write such good books, *The Genealogy of Morality*."

³⁸⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic in On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), Third Essay, Section 12 (emphasis in original).

Knowledge, rather than being a pure object grasped by reason alone, is a conglomerate of the various perspectives of our affects and their interpretations. Here, Nietzsche's "counter-ideals" are not meant to replace entirely idealism with another form of idealism; rather, they are intended to illustrate the contingent character of any teleological ideal:

The "evolution" of a thing, a custom, an organ is thus by no means its *progressus* toward a goal, even less a logical *progressus* by the shortest route and with the smallest expenditure of force – but a succession or more or less profound, more or less mutually independent processes of subduing, plus the resistances they encounter, the attempts at transformation for the purpose of defense and reaction, and the results of successful counteractions.³⁸⁶

This is the case for Nietzsche because his conception of interpretation is always of an expression of an affect or force (the will to power) acting from a particular perspective upon and with the remainder of other forces. Nietzsche dramatizes interpretation as the interaction and conflict of forces with one another. What is "interpreted" from the standpoint of any perspective is the remainder of the other forces that any particular perspective can subdue and synthesize with itself as dominant. Insofar as it is possible to speak of only one of these forces, we can say that a particular force's interpretation of its perspectives will be "regional" in Ricoeur's sense of the term. A more general or "more complete" concept of any thing or text can only be available through the summation of various perspectival forces on the thing. However, total interpretive completion, or univocity of meaning, is not possible because any individual force cannot perfectly reflect on its own interpretative activity. The self-interpretation of any text will, therefore, never be complete. Eric Blondel states this in this manner: "[A] text is not controlled by a code which it contains and dominates, but by one or several possible

³⁸⁶ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 12 (emphasis in original).

codes which lie outside it. This implies that the text should be ‘interpreted’ rather than ‘explained.’”³⁸⁷ As an example, the method of genealogy investigates states and events – the states of ‘asceticism’ or ‘bad conscience,’ for example – from the differing interpretive perspectives of the various forces involved in the syntheses of their meanings. In other words, a state like ‘asceticism’ has more possible meanings than a normal discourse would attribute to it, as Nietzsche demonstrates in the Third Essay of *Genealogy of Morals*. Genealogy aims to untangle those forces that compose these states from their normal interpretations and evaluations and show how other perspectives within those states are suppressed or forgotten. This activity demonstrates how interpretation provides the possibility for the meanings of these phenomena as well as the possibility for different meanings.

To this end, Nietzsche’s major concepts of “will to power” and “perspective” are explicated as principles of how the interpretation and evaluation of concepts ought to be performed in a genealogical investigation. I have argued thus far that it is right for Nietzsche to be counted as a hermeneutic philosopher – a reading of his texts that Ricoeur’s interpretation wholly endorses; but also I have attempted to demonstrate that Ricoeur’s casting of the limits of hermeneutics is called into question by Nietzsche’s hermeneutic method as it is presented as genealogy. What is often seen as a shortcoming of Nietzsche’s approach, the seeming absence of a determinate goal or end to the task of genealogy, is actually the result of a more rigorous critique of meaning undertaken in Nietzsche’s texts than is often appreciated. Nietzsche’s texts emphasize the continual

³⁸⁷ Eric Blondel, *Nietzsche: The Body and Culture; Philosophy as a Philological Genealogy*, trans. Sean Hand (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 22.

process of becoming that characterizes each interpretive force or desire, against the traditional philosophers' "lack of historical sense for one thing, their hatred of the very idea of becoming, their Egypticity."³⁸⁸ "Becoming" alone is not the most important criterion of "aesthetic" nobility or health for Nietzsche – it must be coupled with the principle of expenditure – but it is a necessary aspect of the hermeneutic method.³⁸⁹ Because of the constant change of forces, any determination of the meaning of an event according to the conflict of these forces will always be subject to reinterpretation as that meaning comes into contact with other competing forces that may necessitate a reinterpretation. In Nietzsche's explication of interpretation, it is always possible for the synthesis of forces that determines any meaning to be subject to a re-synthesizing or reinterpretation that alters the meaning of an event in accordance with a new force that seizes control of that process of determination. This implies that interpretation and reinterpretation will never cease, that a final determinate meaning will never arrive if it has not already done so, that every interpretation is always already a reinterpretation. Interpretations are given in a field that is already mediated and will continue to be. This is what Foucault means when he says in the context of a discussion of the postulates of hermeneutics: "[I]f interpretation can never be completed, this is quite simply because there is nothing to interpret. There is nothing absolutely primary to interpret, for after all everything is already interpretation, each sign is in itself not the thing that offers itself to

³⁸⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols: or How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, eds. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), "'Reason' in Philosophy," Section 1.

³⁸⁹ See Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, Section 370.

interpretation but an interpretation of other signs.”³⁹⁰ The hermeneutic circle is inescapable because every sign it can consider is already a mediated interpretation of some other sign.

With this in mind, it is possible to see that there are two kinds of “castration” that the intellect may suffer against which Nietzsche is advising us in the above quote from *Genealogy of Morals*. The first is easily identified as the lure of “knowledge in itself,” a knowledge that can be known independently of any particular interpretation. The second reveals itself as the prospect of a knowledge that is a summation of all perspectives. This view would treat knowledge as already constituted, with each perspective giving a particular adumbrated view on it. Knowledge in this case would simply be the sum totality of all perspectives, with each will giving a particular Leibnizian mirroring of the totality of the world. However this view would relegate Nietzsche’s conception of forces to the status of representative agents of their particular slice of the increasingly realized object of knowledge.³⁹¹ In this case the “active and interpreting forces” that Nietzsche expounds in such detail would be curtailed by a predetermined end in the object.³⁹² This conception of knowledge, then, is eschatologically determined in the speculative goal of a unified object that determines each individual perspective. However, in Nietzsche’s texts what is denied as possible is the prospect of any eschatology in the absence of an already

³⁹⁰ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx,” in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley and others (New York: The New Press, 1998), 275.

³⁹¹ In this interpretation of the passage under consideration, Nietzsche’s scare quotes play a large role in distinguishing the limited conceptualization or objectivity of a thing from the classical philosophical ideal of total objectivity or determinate concept.

³⁹² Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 12.

actualized end. This is demonstrated in Nietzsche's rebuke of Spinoza's theory of the superiority of the drive for "self-preservation" in the will as a "*superfluous*" teleological principle.³⁹³ While Nietzsche rarely makes use of the term 'eschatology,' this characterization of the "superfluous teleological principle" fits squarely with Nietzsche's criticism of the concept of a final end. Thus it is "castration" to assume both the existence of a unified subject or object prior to its determinate realization. But this does not rule out the more limited concept of a teleology of sense as determined by whichever force happens to be dominant in the synthesis of meaning at a given moment. Thus, the "shortcoming" of Nietzsche's method of interpretation is only apparent if the goals of eschatology and teleology are confounded. If these are clarified such that teleology is understood as the particular aim of the "dominating instinct" in a synthesis and eschatology as the general aim of a system towards a final end or meaning, then I think it is arguable that Nietzsche's genealogy can operate under the conditions of the former while explicitly critiquing the latter.³⁹⁴

In this chapter, I want to consolidate the reading of Nietzsche's method as containing both a critical and an appropriative moment. The exegetical tactics that Nietzsche employs in genealogical investigations demonstrate the actual conditions under which concepts have acquired their meaning; and Nietzsche accounts for this production of meaning by describing it as a synthesis of forces which can only be deciphered from their symptoms, symptoms that appear as expressed meanings and never in their "own

³⁹³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. and ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Section 13.

³⁹⁴ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 3.

dynamism” as forces.³⁹⁵ The second intention of this chapter is to confirm this reading through two avenues given by Nietzsche which have yet to be considered: his self-interpretation of his works and his account of the production of his own subjectivity or perspectives in *Ecce Homo*. It is possible to view Nietzsche’s methods of interpretation not only in his genealogies of morality and criticisms of other philosophical texts but also through a study of Nietzsche’s self-interpretations published along with the second editions of some of his earlier works, as well as in *Ecce Homo*. As Nietzsche was composing and publishing what are considered the works of the start of his “mature phase” – *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morals* – in 1886 and 1887, he was also writing prefaces (or postscripts³⁹⁶) to his early works *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Human, All too Human*, and *Daybreak*. He also composes during this time a new preface for *The Gay Science* as well as adding a fifth book to that text. These prefaces and additions show Nietzsche actively engaged in the process of coming to terms with the development of his own concepts while demonstrating the techniques of interpretation he has developed in determining what is of value in his earlier work. In this series of texts, Nietzsche recasts these works in terms of their conceptual relationship to his mature works, selects what he finds of value from their investigations, assumptions and conclusions, and often submits them to a more penetrating analysis that they have received elsewhere. In brief, we can see Nietzsche’s process of critique and

³⁹⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1970), 136.

³⁹⁶ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, eds. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), “An Attempt at Self-Criticism,” Section 1.

appropriation at work regarding even his own texts in these prefaces. The same can be said to be true of the sections of *Ecce Homo* under the heading “Why I write such good books.” This task will primarily be approached through a reading of Nietzsche’s recasting of *The Birth of Tragedy* in its second preface and in the reading he offers of it in *Ecce Homo*.

The final part of this chapter will be an examination of a possible Nietzschean resolution to Ricoeur’s motivating problem as it was developed in Chapters One and Two. As we saw in Chapter One, Ricoeur takes up hermeneutics as a way of recapturing a philosophical anthropology that could not be cashed out through the methodology of phenomenology alone. In order to fill in the genetic accounts of meaning that purely eidetic phenomenology could only assume or gesture towards, Ricoeur is forced to undertake a series of regional hermeneutics of the various fields of human inquiry. Any general hermeneutics could only be constructed from these regional investigations, lest it begin under the sway of its own preconditions regarding the unity of meaning and, then, fall short for similar reasons as eidetic phenomenology does.

In a similar vein, Nietzsche’s genealogies also constitute regional hermeneutic approaches that, taken together, can indicate what a human subject is. The studies of the bad conscience, *ressentiment*, modernity, and philosophical idealism all show the subterranean aspects of what it is to be human. However, these are predominantly the products of the critical or archaeological moments of the genealogical method. In terms of the appropriation of a human subjectivity, Nietzsche’s account of his own subjectivity in *Ecce Homo* is as alien a result of philosophical anthropology as can be expected, given

both the traditional concerns of philosophical anthropology as well as Nietzsche's own starting-point in philological research. Nothing in *Ecce Homo* gives us any reason to hope for a unified concept of the human subject. "I am not a human being," Nietzsche declares in the last part of *Ecce Homo*, "I am dynamite."³⁹⁷ However, I wish to show that it is precisely Nietzsche's hermeneutic method that leads to this result – a much different end than the one envisioned by Ricoeur in his attempt to reconstruct a philosophical anthropology through a phenomenological hermeneutics. The Nietzschean poles of critique and appropriation become concretized in *Ecce Homo* in the subject of Nietzsche himself; and this appropriative pole is what is at stake in the subtitle "How One Becomes What One Is."³⁹⁸ In spelling this out, I hope also to show that the "positive" Nietzschean philosophy cannot be adequately forecast before it is enacted as an event – an event Nietzsche attempts to describe in *Ecce Homo*.

I. Nietzsche's Genealogical Method

The essence of Nietzsche's hermeneutics lies in the dynamics of his conception of the will to power. The idea of the will to power is conceptualized by Nietzsche as approachable in thinking only as already entangled and related to other wills. That is, there are only multiple manifestations of willing; there are always already many wills to power in any synthesis of meaning. A singular will to power cannot be known simply as

³⁹⁷ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am a Destiny," Section 1.

³⁹⁸ The recent translation of *Ecce Homo* into English by Judith Norman, from the Colli and Montinari critical edition, states the subtitle as "How to Become What you Are." Although I will use this translation primarily in this chapter, I have left the subtitle in its more traditional translation for ease of recognition, not because I think there any great difference in the meanings intended by either translation. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, Preface, Section 1.

it is for at least two reasons: a will to power is never encountered in actuality alone but always as part of a complex of wills, thus it is a theoretical construction that does not necessarily have an individual existence;³⁹⁹ and, also, as this complex of wills is always in constant change due to the nature of its relations and conflicts, any attempt to pick out only one aspect of it will mislead us as to the activity of the remainder of wills. Any particular interpretation of a will to power, therefore, is approachable only as a heuristic device and only through the work and interpretation of symbols, to use Ricoeur's vocabulary. For these reasons, Nietzsche argues that a singular will to power cannot be fully determined, for only that which has no history or only one appearance is ever definable in its totality. But, as Deleuze rightly attributes to Nietzsche, "Even perception... is the expression of forces which appropriate nature. That is to say that nature itself has a history."⁴⁰⁰ All phenomena can be treated as symbols which give to those forces capable of appropriating them the opportunity for the actualization of differing meanings. As an example of this, Nietzsche points to the meaning of punishment in his (and, arguably, our) culture. For him:

the concept of 'punishment' possesses in fact not *one* meaning but a whole synthesis of 'meanings': the previous history of punishment in general, the history of its employment for the most various purposes, finally crystallizes into a kind of unity that is hard to disentangle, hard to analyze and, as must be emphasized especially totally *indefinable*.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁹ See here Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. and ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Section 19.

⁴⁰⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 3.

⁴⁰¹ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 13 (emphasis in original).

The apparent unity of the concept of punishment is undermined as soon as the many actualizations of the act of punishment and their varying meanings are observed. The various events of punishment may appear similarly, but each historical instance of punishment is determined as meaning something different in each context. When examining a concept that appears to be simple (like that of punishment), Nietzsche, without fail, finds it to be overdetermined by a variety of historical and cultural meanings in its various and varying expressions. In this way, even Nietzsche's concept of will to power cannot be fully determined. Any attempt at a description of it must involve its becoming (of which I will speak more of in a moment) and its plurality. By the plurality of the will to power, I mean to convey the same thing as what Ricoeur means when he refers to the problem of the conflict of interpretations. The issue with knowing and determining the will to power as a determinate thing lies not in its scarcity or secrecy but, rather, in its superabundance. Raising the issue of the meaning of a will to power immediately draws into consideration the meanings of all its interactions with other such wills. Thus, a will to power cannot be known determinately in itself but only as it has been actualized in complexes of meaning with other wills. It is possible to say, therefore, that a will to power must be thought as the condition for the possibility of these actualized meanings, although the existence of a will to power cannot be determined absolutely. Just as the abundance of the symbol for Ricoeur demands interpretation, so too does the plurality of the manifestations of meanings demand for Nietzsche the development of an interest in perspectives as well as in the differences produced in interpretation by them.

If a will to power cannot be known simply, then Nietzsche's genealogies must be of the complexes of meanings that have been produced through the interaction and conflict of the various wills to power. Knowledge of these complexes only arises out of inquiries into these already mediated or synthetic relationships: "I sense a *contradictio in adjecto* in even the concept of 'immediate knowledge' that is permitted by theoreticians."⁴⁰² This suspicion of any assertion of immediate knowledge, such as claims buttressed by a supposed immediate relation to the ego or to "reality," gives us reason to question the meaningfulness of any truth built upon those discredited certainties. It is certainly the case for Nietzsche's genealogy that each study will be undertaken from a particular standpoint or perspective. But, with immediacy gone as a guarantor of meaning, the study of any meaning becomes a matter of the interpretation of how that meaning is produced from the perspective that motivates it. Nietzsche's hermeneutics attempts to account for these productions of meaning; but there are always at least two aspects to the syntheses of meaning of which the hermeneutics must account. The first is the archaeology of the various forces that are synthesized in the meaning. The second is the determination of which force is the active agent in the production of that synthesis. The former illuminates the archeological moment of the genealogy, but the latter will give us insight into how teleology is accounted for in the Nietzschean hermeneutics. Interpretation encompasses both movements, decoding the wills to power present in a given meaning and determining which one is dominant in that synthesis. It is the dominant will to power that is said to determine the meaning of the event. Nietzsche

⁴⁰² Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 281. See also Section 16.

refers to this as “the fundamental will of the spirit” in *Beyond Good and Evil* and describes it in this way:

The commanding element (whatever it is) that is generally called “spirit” wants to dominate itself and its surroundings, and to feel its domination: it wills simplicity out of multiplicity, it is a binding, subduing, domineering, and truly masterful will... The power of spirit to appropriate foreign elements manifests itself in a strong tendency to assimilate the new to the old, to simplify the manifold, to disregard or push aside utter inconsistencies....⁴⁰³

Thus the act of interpretation by the dominant will to power selects what suits its purposes from the multiplicity it encounters and appropriates that towards its goal. Nietzsche’s “archaeological” moment uncovers the context surrounding the selection of the multiplicity that the will to power will synthesize, while the “teleological” moment accounts for the type of appropriation that those selected elements are used towards.

In the genealogy of the “bad conscience,” from *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, we see both of these moments at work. The phenomenon that we have taken to calling the “conscience” is reconfigured by Nietzsche as a construction designed to address the problem of how humans have “the right to make promises....”⁴⁰⁴ Nietzsche’s critical project is evident as he examines “by what right” humans are able to promise, or on account of what syntheses of forces is a human “able to stand security for *his* [sic] *own future*, which is what one who promises does!”⁴⁰⁵ The implicit criticism of Kantian moral theory here lies in this exhumation of a ground beneath morality, where how it is that we are able to promise is a more fundamental question than what it is that we are to

⁴⁰³ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 230.

⁴⁰⁴ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 1.

⁴⁰⁵ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 1 (emphasis in original).

promise. Nietzsche finds human action to be only secondarily determined by an adherence to a law of morality. In short, Nietzsche is asking how lawfulness is possible in human actions and answering that it is only possible through the creation of a faculty of memory. What the archaeological moment of the genealogy reveals is that promising and, thereby, lawfulness can only be possible if a memory has already been formed against “the opposing force, that of *forgetfulness*.”⁴⁰⁶ The abstract question of how promising is possible is decoded by Nietzsche as a physiological question of how memory is formed. That memory and, thereby, promising exists is the result of the domination of certain forces over those active forces of forgetfulness: “Forgetting is no mere *vis inertiae* as the superficial imagine; it is rather an active and in the strictest sense positive faculty of repression...”⁴⁰⁷ Of particular importance is the role of active forgetfulness in making possible the experience of the present by “[closing] the doors and windows of consciousness for a time.”⁴⁰⁸ Nietzsche is suggesting that consciousness, without forgetting, would be constantly awash in sensations and reactions to those sensations. As we will see shortly, without this faculty, consciousness becomes sick, and “[p]eople and things become obtrusive, events cut too deep, memory is a festering wound. Sickness is itself a kind of *ressentiment*.”⁴⁰⁹ There would be no space on the surface of consciousness for the development of concepts or forethought without the filtering of sensations by an active forgetting. This entails that there could be no

⁴⁰⁶ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 1 (emphasis in original).

⁴⁰⁷ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 1.

⁴⁰⁸ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 1.

⁴⁰⁹ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am so wise,” Section 6.

promising, no morality as we know it, without forgetting, as there could be no present or the awareness of it without forgetfulness. Memory, as a promise toward the future, is thus dependent on and in conflict with the active forgetfulness necessary for its development. The force by which memory prevails momentarily over forgetfulness is that of the application of pain, either by the forces of consciousness itself or by forces external to consciousness, such as cultural forces. The state of tension in the conflict of opposing forces of memory and forgetfulness allows a phenomenon like promising to be possible as long as the pain associated with forgetting is sufficient to allow memory to dominate. For this reason Nietzsche remarks on the bodily or physiological nature of these forces that oppose forgetfulness in order to accent “the instinct that realized that pain is the most powerful aid to mnemonics.”⁴¹⁰

Thus, the “shameful origin” of promising and morality out of a desire to avoid pain is discovered in the many revealed meanings of punishment. However, Nietzsche’s genealogy makes no explicit ethical judgment on this finding. Instead, Nietzsche uses this conclusion to launch an inquiry into the meaning of the kind of memory created in response to the application of punishment. And this meaning of memory lies both in the forces that produce it and the end toward which these forces are organized. In the case of those forces that Nietzsche will diagnose as “healthy,” the forces derive their efficacy from an active resistance to the forces of repression and forgetting:

an active *desire* not to rid oneself, a desire for the continuance of something desired once, a real *memory of the will*: so that between the original ‘I will,’ ‘I shall do this’ and the actual discharge of the will, its *act*, a world of strange new

⁴¹⁰ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 3.

things, circumstances, even acts of will may be interposed without breaking this long chain of will.⁴¹¹

This active origin of memory arises for the purpose of guaranteeing a future action.

Memory may be of the past, to paraphrase Aristotle, but it exists in this construction as the necessary precondition for a meaningful future. In response to pain, this active memory grounds future actions with the end of “conscience” as its target. The meaning of the construction of the conscience lies in its active resistance to the forces of forgetting and its goal of appropriating desire into the formation of a new dominant instinct counter to the instinct of forgetting: “The proud awareness of the extraordinary privilege of *responsibility*, the consciousness of the this rare freedom, this power over oneself and over fate, has... become instinct, the dominating instinct.”⁴¹² This may result in or come from a being that is “calculable, regular, necessary” but this is no reason for its negative evaluation as a phenomenon. It is only with the construction of conscience that humans “possess the right to also affirm oneself.”⁴¹³ The capacity for affirmation here stands as the seal of the active origin of the conscience and its desirability despite its origins out of pain. In fact, here pain is exactly seen as the type of “stimulus to life” in the conscience’s directedness to the future. The meaning of this sort of memory is an affirmation of life and a self-affirmation of the conscience that is constructed. Here the forces are appropriated toward an end sympathetic with the expression and continuing expression of the wills that form it.

⁴¹¹ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 1 (emphasis in original).

⁴¹² Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 2 (emphasis in original).

⁴¹³ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 3.

This may seem a strange version of the genealogy often remarked upon in the Second Essay of *Genealogy of Morals*; however, it is the second genealogy of the essay that is much more elaborated.⁴¹⁴ This first genealogy that I have presented here is of the less common, affirmative response to the problem of forgetting. This follows, I think, Nietzsche's suggestion regarding *Genealogy of Morals* that each section has "a beginning that *should* be deceptive: cool, scientific, even ironic, intentionally foreground, intentionally evasive."⁴¹⁵ What is "evasive" in the second essay is the affirmative appropriation of the conscience, the possibility of which has largely been undiscovered because of the forces elaborated in the remainder of the essay. Most of the Second Essay offers Nietzsche's genealogy of the more prevalent, more human reaction to the problem of forgetting. After the meaning of the conscience is uncovered, Nietzsche turns to "that other 'somber thing,' the consciousness of guilt, the 'bad conscience.'"⁴¹⁶ This is crucial to the understanding of the *Genealogy* and of the genealogical method as a whole. While the conscience generally appears as a moral underpinning to behavior, built on memory, it can possess, as Nietzsche would say, as many meanings as there are forces that can take

⁴¹⁴ For example, Aaron Ridley finds the genealogy of the bad conscience to be a "tangle" that reveals "a sense of 'conscience,' confusingly described as 'bad,' which is neutral and ubiquitous (i.e., the common quality of noble and slave); a bad version of this 'bad' conscience which is distinctively slavish; and a good version of it... which Nietzsche never directly attributes to the nobles at all, presumably because he'd then have to admit... that they too are characterized by the neutral kind of conscience which Nietzsche, confusingly, calls 'bad.'" See Aaron Ridley, *Nietzsche's Conscience: Six Character Studies from the Genealogy*, (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press), 17-18. The reading I am offering here – separating the conscience from the bad conscience – attempts both to be faithful to the famous suggestion of *Ecce Homo* regarding the *Genealogy* and its intended deceptions and also Nietzsche's generally consistent characterization of nobility. By reading the second essay of the *Genealogy* as concerning only the bad conscience, Nietzsche's discussion of the possibility of a future is diminished and the structural similarities between the three essays is lost.

⁴¹⁵ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, "Why I write such good books, *The Genealogy of Morality*."

⁴¹⁶ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 4.

command of it, can dominate it. In the abbreviated genealogy of the first sections of the Second Essay, it is a generally affirmative, active force that affects the synthesis of forces called ‘conscience.’ In order to more easily differentiate it from the similar synthesis of reactive forces, Nietzsche christens the object of the second, more widely referenced, genealogy as that of the ‘bad conscience.’ But again, this second genealogy demonstrates both the excavation of the forces that compose the bad conscience as well as the differentiation in their goal from the other phenomenon of conscience.

The problems that the concept of the bad conscience addresses are still the problems of how a memory, and thereby a kind of promising, is possible against forgetfulness; but, due to a difference in the origin of the construction of that memory, the meaning of the conscience composed is nearly wholly opposed to the active conscience. Nietzsche focuses on the differing appearances of the phenomenon of guilt to reveal this other meaning. The traditional, moral interpretation of guilt is established as a relation to a past debt that serves to cause pain, the memory of which is intended to act as a corrective to future desires and actions. However, Nietzsche reverses this in two ways in his genealogy of guilt. First, he points to a material or psychical (and not spiritual) origin of the concept of guilt: “Have these genealogists of morals had even the remotest suspicion that, for example, the major moral concept *Schuld* [guilt] has its origin in the very material concept *Schulden* [debts]?”⁴¹⁷ Nietzsche locates this material sense of guilt in a failure to repay a debt, with punishment being the alternate form of repayment in order to settle the debt. The second reversal is that the outcome produced

⁴¹⁷ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 4.

by the spiritual concept of guilt multiplies the pain caused by guilt and does not constitute an avenue around it, despite claims to the contrary on the part of traditional morality.

Through the mechanism of punishment, guilt is intended to be instilled as a preventative to the expression of any instinct or force: “Punishment is supposed to possess the value of awakening the *feeling of guilt* in the guilty person; one seeks it in the actual *instrumentium* of that psychical reaction called ‘bad conscience.’”⁴¹⁸ However, the meaning of punishment is by no means secure or indubitable either. As is the case with all phenomena, it possesses for Nietzsche a “relatively enduring” aspect in its action but a “fluid” series of meanings that are correlated to all those actions based on the kind of synthesis that is operating on it.⁴¹⁹ The same is true of the phenomenon of guilt, although here it takes on a meaning useful to the ends to which this kind of memory is directed. Guilt, understood in this perspective, is the feeling of indebtedness; but Nietzsche is arguing that this form of indebtedness is invoked not for any determinate material reason. Instead, the indebtedness is intended to remain unresolved in the psyche to act as an opposing force to any instinct that we possess: “punishment *tames* men, but it does not make them any ‘better.’”⁴²⁰ This guilt bears a different meaning from the memory of the conscience as it is meant to facilitate the development not of a conscience but of a sense of indefinite indebtedness to some other thing – others, a society, a leader, a deity. With the option of an external discharge removed, those instincts are left only with avenue of

⁴¹⁸ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 14 (emphasis in original).

⁴¹⁹ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 13.

⁴²⁰ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 15 (emphasis in original).

internalization. Therefore, the only appropriation of this guilt that is possible is one that would further implicate and reinforce the indebtedness of the instincts. This does not presuppose a soul that is now imbued with this conflict; but, rather, this alteration of the instincts causes them to produce the ‘soul’ as a construction: “All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward* – this is what I call the *internalization* of man: thus it was that man first developed what was later called his ‘soul.’”⁴²¹ In this way, a soul is created as a thing with depth, whereas consciousness is merely a surface; and it is the construction of the soul that is coextensive with the bad conscience: “Hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction – all this turned against the possessors of such instincts: *that* is the origin of the ‘bad conscience.’”⁴²² The archaeology of the forces that produce the feeling of guilt as infinite indebtedness also reveals the phenomenon of the soul to be present with the creation of the bad conscience, as bad conscience consists of a conflict of forces that are forced to discharge their power inwardly upon themselves. The link between the Second Essay and the First and Third Essays of the *Genealogy* becomes clear here when we note that it is with the priest – the artist of guilt and asceticism – that “man first became *an interesting animal*, that only here did the human soul in a higher sense acquire *depth* and become *evil* – and these are the two basic respects in which man has hitherto been superior to other beasts!”⁴²³ The depth of soul, which is normally marked as the element

⁴²¹ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 16 (emphasis in original).

⁴²² Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 16 (emphasis in original).

⁴²³ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay, Section 6 (emphasis in original).

of human exceptionalism, is created in the conflict between memory and forgetting.

Humans are interesting precisely because they are sick in ways other animals are not.

In this way, the meaning of the soul lies in the sense of indebtedness and guilt elicited as responses to the problem of pain. This bad conscience is revealed to be the meaning of the soul – an interiorization of both hostile forces from outside and also desires redirected because of a stronger, commanding desire to avoid pain. The memory of the pain creates a conscience predominantly concerned with avoiding that which causes it pain, which, in turn, causes the internalization of desires, causing even more of the pain that was to be avoided. The figure of Socrates in the Platonic dialogues diagnoses this as well; but, whereas the prescription there is to purify the soul of these vicissitudes of desire, Nietzsche diagnoses the soul as only these vicissitudes turned back upon themselves. And Nietzsche labels this conscience as ‘bad’ precisely because it is a conscience of inaction preoccupied with the past whose appropriative actions only deepen this interpretation of infinite indebtedness. The bad conscience vows to never forget its sufferings and to remember them precisely in order to keep them from recurring. When they do recur, the bad conscience, being inactive, can only vent its *ressentiment* on itself, through guilt. As it cannot prevent its suffering, any release from suffering must be thought as emanating from an external source. We see here the preparation for the genealogy of asceticism. Nietzsche writes, “In a certain sense, the whole of asceticism belongs here: a few ideas are to be rendered inextinguishable, ever-present, unforgettable, ‘fixed,’ with the aim of hypnotizing the entire nervous and

intellectual system with these ‘fixed ideas...’⁴²⁴ This kind of asceticism – that practiced by the bad conscience – has as its goal the conscious ridding of pain from the conscience that suffers from it through the mechanism of the ascription of guilt to some thing, which turns out to be the conscience itself. Thus, the bad conscience is constructed in such a way as to suffer from the past and from the constellation of forces that create it. As all change causes it to suffer, only the unchanging can be thought to bring it relief or salvation.

The result of Nietzsche’s genealogy of the bad conscience reveals not only the forces that compose this phenomenon but also the ends that those forces tend toward. The meaning ascribed to the bad conscience lies at the intersection of its composing forces, which react against suffering, as well as its orientation towards future events. It is not only the archaeological uncovering of its response to pain that is important to Nietzsche’s analysis; of equal weight is the way in which the bad conscience’s future actions are prescribed as a continual recrimination of itself and its past. The end towards which the bad conscience claims to tend is, therefore, rendered impossible by its actual tendency to react to every pain and to interiorize that reaction as guilt. The contrasting phenomenon of the active conscience means something quite different for Nietzsche, as both its composition and orientation are distinct from those of the bad conscience’s. Archaeologically, the conscience is composed as a memory of a promise. This is a reaction to pain as well; but, even at this origin, the memory is directed towards the future. It tends here toward future action and becoming and not to further interiorization

⁴²⁴ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 3.

of pain or guilt, like the symbol of the “agony of the woman in labor” that Nietzsche employs in *Twilight of the Idols*.⁴²⁵ Nietzsche writes:

In the doctrines of the [Dionysian] mysteries, *pain* is pronounced holy: the ‘woes of a woman in labor’ sanctify pain in general, - all becoming and growth, everything that guarantees the future involves pain... There has to be an eternal ‘agony of the woman in labor’ so that there can be an eternal joy of creation, so that the will to life can eternally affirm itself.⁴²⁶

The end of the conscience is active and meaningful only through the expression of the forces that compose it towards the future. In this way the conscience can be affirmative towards the pain that enables it because it makes and continually remakes a future as being possible. For the bad conscience – the conscience of guilt – every future is a future experienced as painful because its composing forces work toward conservation of the past. The events of the conscience and those of the bad conscience are thus also differentiated in Nietzsche’s work by their respective teleological impulses toward becoming and toward conservation. The bad conscience seeks an eternal end in its eventual ascetic incarnation’s devotion to fixed ideas. Its memory is devoted to a prior state without suffering that is held as a fixed point and also on supposedly objective states of reality that hold out redemption from suffering. In both cases, this memory serves to deepen the inability to act on the part of the bad conscience.

This does not, however, entail that that bad conscience is a *terminus* from which nothing can ever be extracted or appropriated. Nietzsche makes this clear, stating: “The bad conscience is an illness, there is no doubt about that, but an illness as pregnancy is an

⁴²⁵ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “What I owe the ancients,” Section 4.

⁴²⁶ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “What I owe the ancients,” Section 4 (emphasis in original).

illness.”⁴²⁷ Just as the Third Essay surprises its interpreters by insisting that life can only deny itself in appearance, so too does the Second Essay turn our own metaphysical presuppositions against us by claiming that even the bad conscience is worthy of affirmation:

For fundamentally it is the same active force that is at work on a grander scale in those artists of violence and organizers who build states, and that here, internally, on a smaller and pettier scale, directed backward... creates for itself a bad conscience.... [E]ventually this entire *active* “bad conscience” – you will have guessed it – as the womb of all ideal and imaginative phenomena, also brought to light an abundance of strange new beauty and affirmation, and perhaps beauty itself. – After all, what would be ‘beautiful’ if the contradiction had not first become conscious of itself, if the ugly had not first said to itself: “I am ugly”?⁴²⁸

As the bad conscience forces more and more energy to be expended inwardly, it enables, should it become active and not engage in further self-pity, a transformation of that bad conscience into a conscience. When the pain of the bad conscience is taken as fuel for creativity and not as fuel for self-recrimination, affirmation and expenditure again become possible as the bad conscience actively reinterprets itself.

II. Nietzsche’s Self-Criticism of *The Birth of Tragedy*

The interpretive character of Nietzsche’s philosophy is further revealed in his readings and commentaries on the import and value of his own texts. Although Nietzsche has very little critical commentary on the texts composed after *Zarathustra*, his new prefaces as well as his commentaries on earlier texts exemplify the dual approach

⁴²⁷ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 19.

⁴²⁸ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, Section 18 (emphasis in original).

that I have argued Nietzsche adopts toward interpretation. In these cases, Nietzsche reads his earlier writings as addressing, even obliquely, the problems toward which his late writings are directed: the critiques of culture, morality, philosophical idealism, and, in the case of *The Birth of Tragedy*, the symbol of Dionysus. Archaeologically, Nietzsche attempts to uncover the forces that lie beneath these texts and also to critique those impulses present in the texts that run counter to his new goals. However, he also intends to gesture towards those concepts and methods that he appropriates from his earlier work and expands upon in his later texts. In this process of interpretive reading of his own texts, Nietzsche demonstrates what he means for a reader or thinker to have “*turned out well*”: “He instinctively gathers *his* totality from everything he sees, hears, experiences: he is a principle of selection, he lets many things fall by the wayside. He is always in his *own* company, whether dealing with books, people, or landscapes: he honors by *choosing*, by *permitting*, by *trusting*.”⁴²⁹ The great health that Nietzsche sets as the goal of interpretation is attempted in these repeated self-interpretations: “a health that one doesn’t only have, but also acquires continually and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up!”⁴³⁰ Its techniques are the selection of the texts or concepts that are relevant to his task, his weighing of their value for life, and his construction of a “totality” that is aware of its contingency.

In the case of his readings of *The Birth of Tragedy*, the contrast between Nietzsche’s perspectives is the most apparent. Because of the “Romanticism” that

⁴²⁹ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am so wise,” Section 2 (emphasis in original).

⁴³⁰ Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, Section 382.

permeates the earlier book in Nietzsche's estimation, his technique of interpretation is allowed the most distance possible in which to operate.⁴³¹ The distancing is apparent as Nietzsche states: "I shall not suppress entirely how unpleasant [the book] now seems to me."⁴³² This unpleasantness stems from a variety of cited factors. Among these, Nietzsche cites prominently that the book is "badly written," that it smacks of enthusiasm for its own positions, and that the "artiste's metaphysics" that it expounds expresses a deep resentment.⁴³³ In other words, Nietzsche diagnoses the work as expressing desires of weakness and intending an aim of a final comfort from the suffering of a lack of meaning. The author of *Birth of Tragedy* is, in Nietzsche's own interpretation, like those sufferers "who suffer from an *impoverishment* of life and seek quiet, stillness, calm seas, redemption from themselves through art and insight, or else intoxication, paroxysm, numbness, madness."⁴³⁴ Romanticism and the impulse to it both arise on Nietzsche's estimation from a deep dissatisfaction with culture; but both hope and claim that relief from that pain is to be found in a return to a fictional past. In the case of *The Birth of Tragedy*, that past is one that offers a reconciled relationship between the impulse to art and the impulse to knowledge. Essentially, Nietzsche is diagnosing the effects of *ressentiment* operating through his text in its devotion to a messianic force that will return the status of the arts, and thereby human existence, to a previously existing state of

⁴³¹ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, "An Attempt at Self-Criticism," Section 7.

⁴³² Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, "An Attempt at Self-Criticism," Section 2.

⁴³³ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, "An Attempt at Self-Criticism," Sections 3 and 7.

⁴³⁴ Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, Section 372 (emphasis in original). Nietzsche here implicates himself along with Schopenhauer and Wagner (both of whom he "misunderstood" at the time) as possessing the longing of typical Romantic artists.

balance. Nietzsche, in *Birth of Tragedy*, is attempting to turn back the clock of artistic and scientific expression – a sure symptom of *ressentiment*. These two illusions, of the possibility of a final comfort (as calmness or madness) and the invention of a past state where it has been actualized, are diagnosed as motivating *Birth of Tragedy*. Taken by itself, the essay could be titled “*The Re-birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*,” and Nietzsche laments it has often been cited as such.⁴³⁵ This (mis)reading of the title and of the book’s project emphasizes what underlies the book, but Nietzsche insists that “this is why people failed to hear what was really valuable in the essay.”⁴³⁶ It can easily be thought that the younger Nietzsche who composed the book could be among those offenders for thinking the return of the Dionysian in art is imminent. Thus, the archaeology of the text and its concepts reveals them to be “politically indifferent,” “offensively Hegelian and only a few formulas are tainted with the cadaverous fragrance of Schopenhauer.”⁴³⁷ The distinction of the Dionysian and Apollonian instinct as opposing and yet reconciling halves of the artistic impulse points, in the text of *Birth of Tragedy*, to a future resolution between the two that re-expresses the harmony between the two that Nietzsche reads in the Attic tragedies. This promised re-birth of the tragic sensibility is, for the younger Nietzsche, a return to a healthier, tragic synthesis of the human instincts to art and knowledge.

⁴³⁵ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I write such good books, *The Birth of Tragedy*,” Section 1.

⁴³⁶ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I write such good books, *The Birth of Tragedy*,” Section 1.

⁴³⁷ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I write such good books, *The Birth of Tragedy*,” Section 1.

However, these shortcomings of the book, along with its Romanticism, can be placed as the results of one misstep on Nietzsche's part. In a sweeping claim about the manner in which it was written, Nietzsche attributes most of the problems of *Birth of Tragedy* to his choice of a grammar and a vocabulary:

I now regret very much that I did not yet have the courage (or immodesty?) at the time to permit myself a *language of my very own* for such personal views and acts of daring, laboring instead to express strange and new evaluations in Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulations, things which fundamentally ran counter to both the spirit and taste of Kant and Schopenhauer.⁴³⁸

The vocabulary that Nietzsche employs in *Birth of Tragedy* is remarked upon as being unsuitable for the type of work that was needed to express what was of value in the text. The positive interpretation of *Birth of Tragedy* that Nietzsche is embarking on here employs two features of the concept of health that Nietzsche has set as desirable: active forgetting and the principle of selection. But to accomplish this, Nietzsche is remarking that an appropriate form of mediation in language for his desired ends had to be invented first. So long as he remained tied to the Kantian or Schopenhauerian vocabulary, Nietzsche could not keep from expressing concepts that approximate theirs regarding art and metaphysics. Precisely what has been diagnosed as troublesome in *Birth of Tragedy* is the desire for art to be a metaphysical comfort – as Nietzsche alleges Schopenhauer to be seeking – as well as a broadly Kantian impulse to see beauty in art as being the expression of a hidden harmony in the observer. The Nietzsche of *Birth of Tragedy* seeks in art the genesis of this harmony (and the comfort it provides) through the creation of artworks that demonstrate the natural harmony in action. But it is the alternate forms of

⁴³⁸ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, "An Attempt at Self-Criticism," Section 6 (emphasis in original).

mediation that Nietzsche develops in his explicitly interpretive approach – before his return to *Birth of Tragedy* in the Second Edition of the work as well as in *Ecce Homo* – that allow him to reinterpret the work in terms of its importance to his later products.

Regarding *Birth of Tragedy* in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche first remarks, “You need to forget about a couple of things if you are going to be fair to *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872).”⁴³⁹ In order for the work to have a new present, in the terms of its interpretation, it is necessary to actively displace the memory of what made the book remarkable on its first appearance – its dedication to Wagner and the Romantic project that it represents to Nietzsche. If the text of *Birth of Tragedy* is to find any sort of new determination of its meaning, these past interpretations need to be suspended or bracketed so as to allow the possibility of other meanings emerging. In other words, despite the use of a kind of Wagnerianism that people “remind [Nietzsche]... is on [his] conscience,” Nietzsche’s interpretation of that text cannot allow the development out of it of a bad conscience on his part.⁴⁴⁰ The invocation of forgetting shows that Nietzsche’s conscience is not inverted in its action by this past work. The existence of one type of interpretation of the work, even if he licensed it as well at one point, does not eliminate other possible readings of the text.

The expression of one of these other meanings is at stake in Nietzsche’s selection of the concepts of value in *Birth of Tragedy*. In both the “Attempt at Self-Criticism” and in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche elaborates the role of *Birth of Tragedy* in the invention of the

⁴³⁹ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I write such good books, *The Birth of Tragedy*,” Section 1.

⁴⁴⁰ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I write such good books, *The Birth of Tragedy*,” Section 1.

symbol “Dionysus” and of the “understanding of Socratism: Socrates recognized for the first time as the instrument of Greek disintegration, as a typical decadent.”⁴⁴¹ Obscured by the many problems of that text are the dual preoccupations of the later works of Nietzsche – the problems of the affirmation of life as well as the various phenomena that demonstrate the forces of life turned against itself – a “[d]isgregation of the instincts.”⁴⁴² In these cases the instincts are degenerated sufficiently that the manners in which they have been synthesized begin to crumble. This later evaluation of the type of Socrates as decadent intends to capture more precisely what is at stake in adopting the strategy of “Socratism” criticized in *Birth of Tragedy*. The issue is the feeling that only reason can bring a relief from suffering and injustice; but this use of reason manifests itself as another self-dissection, another case of forces turned against themselves. The diagnosis of Socratism in *Birth of Tragedy* is the first step towards elaborating the concept of decadence. As the concept of Socratism and its associated evaluation of truth is diagnosed as a creation of a certain type of force as a reaction against specific problems it encounters in life. This evaluation of truth manifests itself in the scientific impulse, as this scientism is, for Nietzsche, one expression of the Socratic type. In short, Nietzsche characterizes the book as the first that dared “to look at science through the prism of the artist, but also to look at art through the prism of life.”⁴⁴³ Nietzsche’s appropriation of

⁴⁴¹ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I write such good books, *The Birth of Tragedy*,” Section 1.

⁴⁴² Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “Expeditions of an Untimely Man,” Section 35. For two further discussions of decadence, see Daniel Conway, *Nietzsche’s Dangerous Game: Philosophy in the Twilight of the Idols*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Chapter 2; and Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, trans. Daniel W. Smith, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), Chapter 4.

⁴⁴³ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, “An Attempt at Self-Criticism,” Section 2 (emphasis in original).

Birth of Tragedy focuses on the meaning of his initial question in that text, “What is Dionysiac?” viewed through the language of forces that he has since adopted. He finds that, although he contrasted the Dionysiac too strongly with the Apollonian instinct, the logical extension of that question serves later to undermine much of the work of *Birth of Tragedy* and provides the force for his criticisms of it. The “prism of life” has come to be the central perspective in Nietzsche’s philosophy; and in his “self-criticism” he asserts that it was this force that stood behind both his concern with the creativity of art as well as the truthfulness of science. If both are viewed as symptoms of the kind of force that creates and needs them (art and science), then Nietzsche has not substantially changed his basic diagnosis of culture and science. However, the criticism reveals that, despite this similarity, Nietzsche’s own text is implicated as yet another failed attempt at self-affirmation. The text identifies the problem of affirmation in its invocation of Dionysus, but the Nietzsche of *Birth of Tragedy*, does not recognize it as such, as he had not yet conceptualized the regulative end that it serves in his later work. But this does not stop the later Nietzsche from retroactively affirming the concepts created as elements in his own becoming: “Everything is announced in advance in this essay...”⁴⁴⁴ Nietzsche means here that the symbolic ends that he will turn toward are present in nascent form in *Birth of Tragedy* as is the basic critical thrust toward decadence and its associated moralities. There is much to be forgotten or destroyed in *Birth of Tragedy* as far as the later Nietzsche is concerned, but its central concepts and his appropriation of them point the way to his interpretive criterion of health.

⁴⁴⁴ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I write such good books, *The Birth of Tragedy*,” Section 4.

Nietzsche regards “health” as a precondition for an affirmation of life, but the affirmation that is the stated goal of Nietzsche’s thought must be regarded as a product of a process that exists only in its becoming. Like the Aristotelian concept of “eudaimonia” Nietzschean health exists as an activity and not as a finished product that, once complete, needs no further actualization to continue. The reason for this is that the criterion of health can only be demonstrated in action – specifically the action of interpretation:

Anyone whose soul thirsts to experience the whole range of previous values and aspiration, to sail around this ‘inland sea’ of ideals, anyone who wants to know from the adventures of his own experience how it feels to be the discoverer or conqueror of an ideal, or to be an artist, a saint, a lawmaker, a sage, a scholar, a pious man, an old-style divine loner – any such person needs one thing above all – *the great health*, a health that one doesn’t only have, but also acquires continually, and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up!...⁴⁴⁵

All of these types, as they have been set out in Nietzsche’s other texts, give a meaning to their interpretations of reality from a perspective and expression of life. The squandering here that Nietzsche associates with health is the ability to endow continually one’s interpretations of the world with a meaning from the synthesis of one’s experience. If the goal is to experience as many of these possibilities as one can, then that health will also require the ability to disassociate from old interpretations and take up new ones. This is not only the principle of expenditure in action, it also demonstrates that, even in sickness, it is possible for the “strengths” of a philosopher to philosophize: “[F]or [this type, philosophy] is only a beautiful luxury, in the best case the voluptuousness of a triumphant gratitude that eventually have to inscribe itself in cosmic capital letters on the heaven of

⁴⁴⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Section 382 (emphasis in original). Also quoted in Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I write such good books, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*,” Section 2.

concepts.”⁴⁴⁶ Nietzsche states that his facility in this has been developed as a result of his illnesses. In giving himself reason here to display gratitude to even a questionable occurrence such as being sick, Nietzsche attempts to demonstrate the freedom from *ressentiment* that he claims is his good fortune. It also helps explain his claim that “[g]ranting that I am a decadent, I am the opposite as well.”⁴⁴⁷ The value of the fluctuations in Nietzsche’s health has been in their enabling of the discovery of multiple perspectives from which to look at life: “I have a hand for switching *perspectives*: the first reason why a ‘revaluation of values’ is even possible, perhaps for me alone.”⁴⁴⁸ The abrupt changes in Nietzsche’s own health have provided him with a distance from everyday concepts. As Klossowski writes, “The observation of his own valetudinary states led Nietzsche to live in a growing perplexity concerning what, in his own experience, would be *valuable* or not – and always in terms of... *health* and *morbidity*.”⁴⁴⁹ The actuality of having occupied different perspectives on health has given Nietzsche the capacity for the perspectival revaluation of phenomena and concepts based upon these new criteria. There is a direct link in the texts between the “giving up” of one’s health and the distancing involved in interpretive acts. To squander such health and certainty implies the continual reapplication of interpretation in the genealogical manner to settled concepts. Nietzsche’s correlation between health, sickness, and distancing is stated this way in *Ecce Homo*: “To be able to look out from

⁴⁴⁶ Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, Preface, Section 2.

⁴⁴⁷ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am so wise,” Section 2.

⁴⁴⁸ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am so wise,” Section 1.

⁴⁴⁹ Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, 75 (emphasis in original).

the optic of sickness towards *healthier* concepts and values, and again the other way around, to look down from the fullness and self-assurance of the *rich* life into the secret work of the instinct of decadence – that was my longest training, my genuine experience, if I became the master of anything, it was this.”⁴⁵⁰ The optics of sickness and health supplement the optics of art and life that were examined previously in this chapter. *The Birth of Tragedy*’s breakthrough was to see science and other inquiries into truth as creative responses to problems motivated by specific types of forms of living. Nietzsche’s expansion of this critique lies in the application of the evaluative criteria of health and sickness to the expressions of life and art and not only to products of the search for truth.

To condense the work of the Second Preface of *Birth of Tragedy* as well as *Ecce Homo*’s reading of that volume to its methodological core, recall the work of Nietzsche’s genealogy. In Nietzsche’s critiques, the genealogical method looks at the disguised forces that form commonplace as well as philosophically considered concepts. The moment of archaeology, I have argued, following Ricoeur, is formed out of a mistrust of the products of consciousness. Even the act of seeing the contents of consciousness as products of something other than consciousness itself is to have already introduced a moment of suspicion to thought. The Nietzsche-author of *Birth of Tragedy* offers the suspicion that Socratism, thought devoted to rationality, might be built on forces that it could not acknowledge or would not acknowledge as rational. Nietzsche’s archaeology reveals a conflict in the meaning of the artistic synthesis between differing types of

⁴⁵⁰ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am so wise,” Section 1 (emphasis in original).

instincts – the Dionysian and the Apollonian – beneath the surface of rational thought. Only by repressing the former instinct could the rational demands of Socratism be formulated as an extension of the latter, denying the Dionysian instinct that made it possible in the first place. However, the Nietzsche-author of *Ecce Homo* and the “Attempt at Self-Criticism” expresses further archaeological concerns about the motivation of the *Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche’s work subsequent to *Birth of Tragedy* discovers that the forces of life can be redirected negatively back upon themselves, however these are still expressions of life, albeit of a declining life. Granting its conceptual contributions, Nietzsche criticizes the attempt at a re-birth of tragedy that the book heralds as motivated by a similar disgust with life and its attending suffering. Therefore, denials of life and its continual becoming need not be “Socratic.” The denial can also make its appearance as the Romantic impulse to return to a state of nature that is supposed to hold a brand of harmony that we lack. This second kind of resentment is detected by Nietzsche in the motivation of the text of *Birth of Tragedy* in its nostalgic evocation of Attic tragedy and its impending return through Wagner’s operas. For this reason, the archaeology offered in *Birth of Tragedy* is incomplete and will lead to unnecessary illusions caused by its failure to see the forces of resentment active in his interpretations of art and Socratism.

However, beyond the archaeological critique, Nietzsche notes a teleological failure in *Birth of Tragedy* and attempts to re-appropriate it through his interpretations of it. Nietzsche’s reading of the introduction of the symbol of “Dionysus” states that the problem raised by it in *Birth of Tragedy* remains unsolved as long as the question “what

is Dionysiac?” is unanswered.⁴⁵¹ While *Birth of Tragedy* offers an answer to this question, Nietzsche laments that he understood the end of the object of his praise, a new German culture, too poorly to estimate its fitness with the symbol of “Dionysus.”⁴⁵² However, “Dionysus” also points Nietzsche to the problem of its affirmation. The “Greek Problem” that he references here is exactly the issue of the formation of a pessimism of strength or – said differently – an affirmation of life, “an art of apotheosis.”⁴⁵³ In addition to developing a more critical eye into the formation of concepts, Nietzsche has also developed a different conception of the goals of his inquiries. This end, I have been arguing, is a concrete affirmation of life and the creation of a type that is capable of it. *The Birth of Tragedy* could not affirm life as it understood goals only in the realm of art and of culture and, then, as bound to a particular German culture. Its Romanticism did not allow the fulfillment of Nietzsche’s demand in *Ecce Homo*: “Nothing in existence should be excluded, nothing is dispensable.... To understand this requires *courage* and, as its condition, a surplus of *force*....”⁴⁵⁴ In viewing Socratism as dispensable, in advocating the return to the pre-Socratic synthesis of tragedy, the Nietzsche-author of *Birth of Tragedy* is not yet able to affirm even the base things. In lacking a vocabulary of concepts adequate to this end, Nietzsche does not yet have the surplus of force necessary to lift his critique to this level. His development

⁴⁵¹ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, “An Attempt at Self-Criticism,” Section 4.

⁴⁵² Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, “An Attempt at Self-Criticism,” Section 6.

⁴⁵³ Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, Section 370.

⁴⁵⁴ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I write such good books, *The Birth of Tragedy*,” Section 2 (emphasis in original).

after *Birth of Tragedy*, with his illness and its “gift” of increased perspective, allows the formulation of a concrete meaning that can begin to approximate the affirmation of the symbol Dionysus: “I do not know any higher symbolism than this *Greek* symbolism of the Dionysian. It gives religious expression to the most profound instinct of life, directed towards the future of life, the eternity of life, - the pathway to life, procreation, as the *holy path*...”⁴⁵⁵ This future of life, affirmation, is only discovered in the symbol of Dionysus after the composition of *Birth of Tragedy*.

III. Concrete Meaning, Great Health, and Philosophical Anthropology: *Ecce Homo*

To begin to tie together these disparate strands of Nietzsche’s thinking, let us turn fully to the text where Nietzsche – or so I will argue – constructs his subjectivity and sketches an outline for a philosophical anthropology. This task is necessary for Nietzsche’s philosophy, as we have seen, because the human being has no *a priori* determinate meaning but only acquires a meaning through interpretation. Part of Nietzsche’s advance in the project of philosophical anthropology is to insist on its regional character and the impossibility of its acquisition of a universal character. By this, I mean that Nietzsche sees the concretization of the meaning of a subject as the outcome of a process of interpretation. There cannot be a determinate general theory of the being of humans because direct intuition into that being is impossible. With the possibility of a direct and general intuition or deduction of human nature ruled out, its

⁴⁵⁵ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “What I owe the ancients,” Section 4.

being can only be explicated through the process of interpreting itself. However, this self-interpretation for Nietzsche ends up constructing the meaning of the “object” of its interpretation. The construction of the subject ‘Nietzsche’ in *Ecce Homo* is Nietzsche’s response to the demand as he feels it to “say who I am.”⁴⁵⁶ It is fair, I think, to read this as a plausible attempt to articulate content adequate to the apodictic judgment of the *Cogito*. In this way Nietzsche can also be read as ensuring that he does not fall under the rebuke he levels in *Genealogy of Morals* that “[w]e are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge – and with good reason.”⁴⁵⁷ If Nietzsche is to become known as a subject, or philosopher, as the precondition of his work, it is in spite of his usual dominant instincts; but if we see a philosopher’s concepts, as Nietzsche does, as the expression of the type of the philosopher, then the only way to ascertain the preconditions for the attainment of Nietzsche’s concepts and goals is to know the type from which they have sprung. In this way, Nietzsche is attempting to account for the phylogenesis of the type ‘Nietzsche’ through the interpretation of ‘Nietzsche’ on the basis of the forces that compose him. In order to demonstrate the grounds adequate for an affirmative appropriation of life, Nietzsche is constructing his own subjectivity and giving it meaning according to both poles of the interpretive strategy that I have laid out. As Ernst Behler writes, “Nietzsche’s practice of ‘active interpretation’ appears to consist in [the] reciprocal interaction of different types of interpretation, the deliberate exchange of

⁴⁵⁶ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Preface,” Section 1.

⁴⁵⁷ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Preface, Section 1.

perspectives.”⁴⁵⁸ This concrete meaning of ‘Nietzsche,’ the Nietzsche composed from an interpretation that gathers the vicissitudes of desire and the appropriation of those forces, vindicates the methodology of genealogy in its capacity to produce an affirmative (or positive) end. The status of *Ecce Homo*, is, according to Sarah Kofman, “as a *test book* which is to put spirits to the test, to gauge whether or not they will be capable of bearing the radical inversion of values, whether or not they will be strong enough to tolerate and thus understand the boldness of the immoralist, this hitherto unheard-of type which Nietzsche the artist invented as his own.”⁴⁵⁹

This end, I will argue, grants us both a look at the concretized meaning of the subject ‘Nietzsche’ but also fulfills Ricoeur’s requirement for a kind of philosophical anthropology. In effect, *Ecce Homo* is an accounting of the proximate forces that are synthesized in the production of the subjectivity of Nietzsche – a subjectivity that is importantly marked by Nietzsche as “healthy.” The text is simultaneously the description of the mediation that the subject is as well as the active productive mediation of the subject ‘Nietzsche’ itself. Nietzsche’s writing is the “test” to which he has put himself and the accounting of the manner in which he has tempered his character. However, since the activity of mediation (like interpretation) is never finished, this philosophical anthropology reveals a subject that is not unified in its meaning but is always “simultaneously decadent and *beginning*.”⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁸ Ernst Behler, *Confrontations: Derrida/Nietzsche/Heidegger*, trans. Steven Taubeneck (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 87.

⁴⁵⁹ Sarah Kofman, “Explosion I: Of Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo*,” trans. Duncan Large, in Daniel W. Conway, ed., *Nietzsche: Critical Assessments, Vol I* (London: Routledge, 1998), 219 (emphasis in original).

⁴⁶⁰ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am so wise,” Section 1 (emphasis in original).

Nietzsche begins *Ecce Homo* with the articulation of the “duty” he feels “to say: *Listen to me! I am the one who I am! Above all, do not mistake me for anyone else!*”⁴⁶¹

At first glance, this is a strange sort of statement for Nietzsche to make – and one that he remarks with which “the pride of [his] instincts rebel.”⁴⁶² Given that one of the hallmarks of decadence is the self-mutilation of the instincts, how is it possible that Nietzsche here avoids self-incrimination in responding to this duty? However, if we remember Nietzsche’s many remarks about the necessity of masks to the becoming of the philosopher, then it is not only possible but probable that we will have misunderstood Nietzsche: “the philosophic spirit always had to use as a mask and cocoon the *previously established* types of the contemplative man – priest, sorcerer, soothsayer, and in any case a religious type – in order to be able to *exist at all*...”⁴⁶³ This is not to say that *Ecce Homo* will reveal the real or authentic ‘Nietzsche’ behind these masks; instead *Ecce Homo* will only heighten the differences between Nietzsche, his contemporaries, and the works of other philosophers. The ‘who’ that is Nietzsche is articulated here according to the duty to make the conditions under which Nietzsche’s texts were composed visible. *Ecce Homo* is, accordingly, a genealogy of the concepts and symbols signed with the name ‘Nietzsche.’ Consequently, what it offers is not the key that will allow Nietzsche’s interpretation to be metaphorically unlocked but, instead, further interpretations of Nietzsche’s works and, therefore, also a meta-hermeneutic commentary on the conditions

⁴⁶¹ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Preface,” Section 1 (emphasis in original).

⁴⁶² Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Preface,” Section 1.

⁴⁶³ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 10 (emphasis in original).

for interpretation in general. These conditions set out what, for Nietzsche, are the conditions for the possibility of any future creation of meaning. The “health” that Nietzsche insists he embodies in his philosophical anthropology signifies the condition for new interpretations. But the concrete philosophical anthropology that *Ecce Homo* offers is that of a human nature that has no unity except through interpretation; and, even then, it is debatable whether this unity that is produced is a sign of health or of decline. The various concepts of “human nature,” far from being bulwarks against the possibility of shifting meaning, are themselves products of various forces which have made them possible. “Human nature” is no more fixed in its meaning than any other object of interpretation. In telling the reader who he is, Nietzsche articulates a theory of human nature that is not unlike the nature of a Ricoeurian symbol: multiple, open to interpretation, and often over-determined in its meaning. “Saying *who* he is means showing how he has become who he is,” Kofman writes regarding Nietzsche’s subjectivity. The self that Nietzsche constructs in *Ecce Homo* as the condition for his works is, to echo Ricoeur’s formulation, a mediation or mediating construction. To grasp its quality for affirmation, it becomes necessary to see how “Nietzsche” has been synthesized.

The development of the conceptualization of the subject will be forced to square with Nietzsche’s insistence that “I am one thing, my writings are another.”⁴⁶⁴ This points us to the problem of the location of the coincidence between the forces of instinct and the expressed meaning of a text. The author, Nietzsche, is signaling that the meaning of his

⁴⁶⁴ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I write such good books,” Section 1.

texts is not to be found through an excavation of his conscious intentions toward the text. Similar admonitions can be found in other of Nietzsche's texts, which raises the dual questions of: how are we to make sense of Nietzsche's writings (what do these writings reference?); and what are we to make of the figure 'Nietzsche' who is presenting himself in *Ecce Homo*? The latter question, Nietzsche himself attempts to answer, saying of the artist "that one does best to separate an artist from his work, not taking him as seriously as his work. He is, after all, only the precondition of his work, the womb, the soil, sometimes the dung and manure, out of which, it grows – and therefore in most cases something one must forget if one is to enjoy the work itself."⁴⁶⁵ The function that the author of a text has is the condition of the composition of the work. The text emerges as an expression of the vicissitudes of the author; but in describing the production of the phenomenon of the text, Nietzsche is in no way claiming to determine entirely the meaning of that text, which appears epiphenomenally. In other words, the text of Nietzsche, in this case *Ecce Homo*, has no meaning without the activity of interpretation upon it. Previously determined interpretations can serve to guide another interpretation, but there is no given text that is recoverable before the advent of interpretation. As Nietzsche has grounds to treat consciousness as another kind of text, this same general principle regarding interpretation will apply to it as well. "Consciousness," Klossowski writes, "is nothing other than a deciphering of the messages transmitted by the impulses."⁴⁶⁶ Subjectivity is constructed much the same way as a text is; and its meaning

⁴⁶⁵ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 4.

⁴⁶⁶ Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, 26.

is determined as part of the same process of interpretation by which any meaning is made adequate to its “object.” Thus far, we have been treating the objects of interpretation largely as symbols; but Nietzsche’s genealogies in general are less directed toward texts and more implicated with events as pieces of lived experience. This subtle difference will help us spell out the further implications of Nietzsche being one thing and his writings another.

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche does not claim to be communicating either his consciousness or a neutral subject’s consciousness to the reader directly. Although the text is reflexive in its tone, it is not a story of an interior of a consciousness in the manner of Husserl’s eidetic phenomenology or Descartes’s *Meditations*, for example. Nietzsche asks a rhetorical question of his technique of appropriation and then remarks on its necessarily mediated nature: “*How could I not be grateful to my whole life? And so I will tell myself the story of my life.*”⁴⁶⁷ In other words, the task of the appropriation of an affirmative mode of existence must pass through the mediation of language if it is to be communicated. The goal of *Ecce Homo* is this concrete appropriation of an affirmative life, but it can only be accomplished through the “telling” of Nietzsche’s life to himself and to his readers. This appropriation of the subject Nietzsche, more than those in any of Nietzsche’s other texts, has the resources to demonstrate the concrete appropriation of the forces beyond the critical thrust of the genealogical method. Nietzsche touches on this elsewhere, most notably in *Zarathustra* and *Genealogy of Morals*, but neither of these texts approaches the philosophical question of the future with

⁴⁶⁷ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, Frontispiece (emphasis in original).

the same clarity. *Zarathustra* ends with the title character able to overcome pity only through his withdrawal from even the “higher men.” Nietzsche notes in the text of the *Genealogy of Morals* that each essay achieves “an ending with absolutely terrible detonations, a *new* truth visible between thick clouds.”⁴⁶⁸ But the visibility of the counter-ideal is not yet the enunciation or concretization of affirmation or health. Although the *Genealogy of Morals* articulates the contingency of the ascetic ideal as a form of life, it does not articulate other ways that one could live, only different previous meanings to asceticism. In this way, Ricoeur’s charge concerning Nietzsche and affirmation, that “Nietzsche’s major work remains caught up in the attitude of resentment; the rebel is not, and cannot be, at the same level as the prophet. Nietzsche’s major work remains an accusation of accusation and hence falls short of a pure affirmation of life,” might be correct but only as applied to works like the *Genealogy*.⁴⁶⁹ But there are two concerns here that can be answered if we consider the text of *Ecce Homo*. The first is the question of how a not-yet-realized future ideal can be articulated meaningfully before the actualization. The provisional answer to this – it cannot – is the reason for Nietzsche’s reluctance to provide it in the *Genealogy*. The second concern however is whether or not a future is at all possible. Nietzsche addresses the latter explicitly in *Ecce Homo*, and his articulation of it allows him to concretize something like a philosophical anthropology, albeit in a manner consistent with his conception of determinacy of meaning and not Ricoeur’s.

⁴⁶⁸ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I write such good books, *Genealogy of Morals*” (emphasis in original).

⁴⁶⁹ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 447.

Nietzsche notes in *Ecce Homo* that the sense of his life is not fully determined. He does this by referring to the futurity of the definition of who he is: “The happiness of my existence, perhaps its uniqueness, lies in its fatefulness; to give it the form of a riddle: as my father I am already dead and as my mother I am still alive and growing old.”⁴⁷⁰ In this case, his own case, who Nietzsche is is as yet not fully determined. If we determine who he is on the basis of the texts he has written, we miss the aspect in which he is like his mother – still alive, or textually, still capable of becoming something different. Nietzsche refers to this eventuality by saying “The time has not come for me either. Some people are born posthumously.”⁴⁷¹ The account that Nietzsche is giving of himself is knowingly incomplete as he is attempting to depict the likelihood of his becoming different or, with respect to his works, our changing interpretations of them: “I am one thing, my writings are another.”⁴⁷² We can never get, and Nietzsche can never give, a full philosophical anthropology of himself or any other human because of the method that must be followed in order to determine meaning. The meaning of ‘Nietzsche’ is multiple at its origin – his “double birth” that is both active and reactive. In the way that the meaning of ‘Nietzsche’ is both partially determined by the signs and masks he inhabits but also is directed away from them and toward the future. This is the route he must take away from “vengeance” and *ressentiment* towards affirmation.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷⁰ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am so wise,” Section 1.

⁴⁷¹ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I write such good books,” Section 1.

⁴⁷² Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I write such good books,” Section 1.

⁴⁷³ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 466.

The ways in which Nietzsche is “dead” and a “decadent” reflect the manner in which – archaeologically – meaning is determined by the signs that are available for use by the forces that compose it. These signs are those that we have seen critiqued in his “Attempt at Self-Criticism” before the reprint of *Birth of Tragedy*. Insofar as no one can completely break from the use of commonplace signs, to that extent they are forced to utilize the types of masks described in the Third Essay of *Genealogy of Morals* in order to be understood. In its application to a philosophical anthropology, this outcome dramatizes that human being must be expressed and find its meaning beginning with the signs and symbols that are already available to it. But, as Nietzsche notes, he is also a “beginning.” By this he means that every interpretation, even of those decadent signs, is a new interpretation that could be carried out as an active task. For Nietzsche, the sign of a successful appropriation is its ability to affirm itself, its health.

CONCLUSION

NIETZSCHE AND A PHILOSOPHY OF THE FUTURE

Nietzsche subtitles *Beyond Good and Evil* a “Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future.” As the first full book composed by Nietzsche after *Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil* appears, according to Nietzsche, as a “critique of modernity, including modern science, modern art – even modern politics –, along with indications of an opposite type who is as un-modern as possible, a noble, affirming type.”⁴⁷⁴ The critique of modernity here takes center stage, but it would be a hasty reading that did not also connect to this the statement that *Beyond Good and Evil* is primarily a prelude to another task – a philosophy of the future. As Nietzsche indicates, this other and more obscure task of assembling an affirmative type capable of affirming the future begins to appear here as well. Just as a musical prelude contains prefigurations of themes that will be repeated and expanded upon in a full score, so too does *Beyond Good and Evil* introduce the concern of Nietzsche’s mature works on the whole. Although the strongest appearance here is of the critical apparatus that Nietzsche has developed, the structure of *Beyond Good and Evil* and Nietzsche’s own interpretation of it also consider the possibility of this other type – the noble. It is this noble, or strong, or healthy, type which, I have argued, functions as the goal for Nietzsche’s hermeneutic genealogical method. The act

⁴⁷⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How to Become What you Are in The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, eds. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), “Why I write such good books, *Beyond Good and Evil*,” Section 2 (emphasis in original).

of the appropriation of sense through interpretation is strongly allied with Nietzsche's goal of affirmation, which I have argued in Chapters Three and Four that he achieves. It is the "noble" or affirmative type that is able to affirm becoming instead of being and, thus, will possess an ability to speak for itself, to signify for itself in the future.⁴⁷⁵ In order to affirm the possibility of a future in philosophical terms, Nietzsche thinks it is necessary to take up the active tasks of interpretation and evaluation. Along with the "noble," Nietzsche's remarks about "culture" and a "great politics" must be read in this light, as they are intended as other products of an affirmative interpretation and evaluation of becoming.⁴⁷⁶

Nietzsche conceives of philosophy as interpretive and evaluative, which is itself an act of criticism towards the philosophical tradition. As Ricoeur states, "[I]n Nietzsche, life itself is interpretation: in this way, philosophy itself becomes the interpretation of interpretations."⁴⁷⁷ The traditional philosophical task of the pure exegesis through description of "truth" and "the good" meets with considerable difficulty when consciousness, which can justify its existence to itself, cannot justify the unity of meaning in the same manner. If description as an enterprise discovers that the ground of its own descriptions is problematic, then it can no longer assume that the thesis of the

⁴⁷⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic in On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), First Essay, Section 1.

⁴⁷⁶ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am a destiny," Section 1. See also Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Section, 382.

⁴⁷⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Ihde, (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 12.

univocity of meaning that it has relied on is certain. In this case, the assumed unity of “truth” and “the good” itself must be questioned. But, Nietzsche does not practice interpretation and evaluation solely as reductive enterprises, to show the groundlessness of traditional philosophical and moral concepts, as those who assert that his philosophy is incapable of appropriation often state. As the moment of Nietzsche’s self-interpretation of *Beyond Good and Evil* in *Ecce Homo* shows, his critique of modernity not only exposes the conditions for the possibility of that modernity (including a belief in the univocity of meaning) but can also express the possibilities that may yet be actualized from the synthesized forces whose effects appear as modern science, modern art, and modern philosophy. Each essay of the *Genealogy of Morals* presents a similar diagnosis of those forces in *ressentiment*, bad conscience, or asceticism that could yet become active and be capable of affirming life, as was shown in Chapter Four. The appropriative aspect of genealogy includes the necessity of affirming this plurality of possible meanings and indicates that the loss of univocity gives philosophy an orientation towards future constructions of meaning. Prior (and subsequent) attempts to interpret existence as univocal are, for Nietzsche, efforts “to strip [existence] of its *ambiguous* character.”⁴⁷⁸

As a way of concluding this study, I would like to revisit several themes here that have earlier been mentioned but from this outlook towards a philosophy of the future. If Nietzsche is correct in his formula that all philosophical concepts are interpretations of the drives, then this leads us to a different understanding of how philosophy can proceed in its future attempts to determine meaning and any prospects for a philosophical

⁴⁷⁸ Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, Section 373.

anthropology. Nietzsche's method, I have argued, is a hermeneutic genealogy – a procedure which treats the conscious expressions of concepts as effects of pre-conscious forces, which Nietzsche has called the wills-to-power: “[M]ost of a philosopher's conscious thought is secretly directed and forced into determinate channels by the instincts.”⁴⁷⁹ As Ricoeur has clearly shown, these instinctual forces cannot be known directly in consciousness but only through a process of mediation that brings them to consciousness. Without the presumption of their immediate appearance in consciousness, these forces are destined to appear only through competing interpretations and the varying methods of mediating between the multiple meanings that these concepts have been able to bear. But whereas Ricoeur characterizes the “symbol” as the unit that reveals this conflict between varying interpretations because of its excessive meaning, Nietzsche effectively considers any concept to be capable of the same surplus of meaning. This entails that genealogy is a method of mediating between the various interpretive and evaluative claimants to a concept's meaning. Genealogy accomplishes this primarily through its progressive attempt to demystify the sources from which these interpretations and evaluations spring. This is the first sense of the way in which Nietzsche's philosophy is a critique of meaning and value. What makes possible any given meaning or morality is a synthesis of the instinctual forces that are in conflict with one another and capable of being synthesized in a different way, that is, with a different dominating will directing the synthesis. The plurivocity of meaning that makes Ricoeur's “symbol” possible is what makes genealogy possible as well.

⁴⁷⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, eds. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Section 3.

This sense of genealogy is identifiable as the moment of archaeology in Nietzsche's method, following Ricoeur's terminology. To the suspicious eye, every event of meaning can be seen as concealing as much as it reveals; every meaning is an apparent univocal meaning that is selected and synthesized from a web of plurivocal possibilities. Therefore Nietzsche feels justified in treating all meanings as sites where interpretation is selecting a particular meaning and disavowing others. In this way, Nietzsche is able to proceed, for example, from the analysis of our everyday sense of "good" and "evil" to the conclusion that an affect of *ressentiment* rumbles underneath it and is expressed in it.⁴⁸⁰ The genealogical unpacking of the senses of "good" and "evil" reveals an intentional structure of meaning that is explicitly denied in those concepts' everyday usage – that those evaluations contain a kernel of hostility toward others and do not emanate from strictly benevolent impulses. Additionally, genealogy shows that this intentional structure is not of a simple or immediate kind. For the work of suspicion, the process of deciphering a concept's meaning begins from a complex nexus of multiple interpretations and proceeds to the conditions under which these interpretations are expressed and the value these interpretations have. Problems arise, however, when we treat these interpretations as bearing a simple or univocal meaning themselves. Nietzsche's archaeological work may reveal a matrix of unconscious or instinctual forces to be involved in the production of meaning, but that does not entail that this is a fully determinate *arche* for meaning. This sort of reading of Nietzsche's texts condemns his

⁴⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay, *passim*.

hermeneutics to the status of a mere exercise in criticism and, more importantly, fails to appreciate the full extent of the critique of univocal meaning that genealogy engenders.

In other words, when commentators treat the will-to-power as a simple concept with a determinable, univocal meaning, it is quickly assimilated into a reading that attempts to characterize it as a determinable archaeological origin for future interpretive activity. In these systems, the will-to-power becomes a kind of determinate univocal concept that shows only what other attempts at univocity have missed. This kind of fixity in the origin of interpretation brings about the same logical effect in the types of “interpretations” possible as would a fixed eschatological destination, which Nietzsche clearly criticizes on a number of occasions. Both would put an end to hermeneutic interpretation, as all elaborations of a concept would be dictated by the fixed starting or end point, which renders interpretation into description. Determination would be immediately identified not only as possible but as already actual, either in the origin or the fixed end. This appearance of interpretation, then, does not work its critique as extensively as Ricoeur or Nietzsche would desire from interpretation, as it merely replaces interpretation with a process of deciphering meaning according to a pre-existing analogy.⁴⁸¹ In this case, an already determined interpretation cannot be immanently critical, cannot find its possibilities within itself, but must refer to an exterior, transcendent point at the beginning or the end, with which to justify its conclusions. Every instance of an indeterminate meaning could simply be regarded as a case of the concept’s not yet being fully articulated in the meaning that it lacks. From this

⁴⁸¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1970), 16-17.

standpoint, it is then relatively simple to generate paradoxes regarding how Nietzsche's philosophy supposedly critiques a concept of "truth" and then merely proposes a different justification for it. The attempts to overly naturalize Nietzsche's "theory of truth," which were discussed in Chapter Three, raise even more questions as to how we should read, for example, Nietzsche's criticism of science as being just another form of the ascetic ideal. Insofar as both science and the ascetic ideal treat "truth" as a non-problematic concept, for Nietzsche, to that extent do they assume that "truth" is univocal in its meaning. This assumption of the univocity of any concept is the primary target of Nietzsche's introduction of the method of genealogy. To interpret genealogy and the will-to-power as a strictly determinable, univocal *arche* of meaning is to misinterpret the bulk of the remainder of Nietzsche's texts. In treating Nietzsche's archaeological moment as a piece of the genealogical method, I mean to avoid the problems associated with a characterization of Nietzsche's philosophy as strictly reductive. However, to fulfill the Ricoeurian insistence on a concretized interpretive method, that moment must be supplemented with what I have called Nietzsche's teleological moment.

Like Freud, Nietzsche tends to utilize his archaeology along two lines, one economic and one topographic. The wills-to-power function along an economic model where their relationships of dominating and being-dominated serve to determine the character of the synthetic meanings that are produced. They exist, as Ricoeur says of Freud's theory of instincts, as a diagnosed reality and not as an absolute reality.⁴⁸² Likewise, Nietzsche's "types" of the bad conscience, priest, noble, etc., are topographic

⁴⁸² Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 436.

interpreted realities that come to exist through the genealogical method.⁴⁸³ Nietzsche, as a physician of culture, diagnoses and synthesizes into meaningfulness the series of concepts that appear to him through his analyses of our cultural symptoms. Ricoeur's general criticism of Nietzsche's archaeological method is that it fails to adequately account for its own meaning by not making explicit the teleological trajectory needed for a concretizing of sense. In other words, the archaeologist may interpret a domain for the critique of consciousness but often fails to be able to justify its methods itself from the standpoint of consciousness. Ricoeur's example here is Freud's "implicit and unthematized teleology" which is involved in the ego's becoming-conscious of its non-mastery over itself.⁴⁸⁴ Ricoeur maintains that the entire methodology of psychoanalysis cannot be generated unless there is a teleology of consciousness already at work in Freud's thinking that serves as a contrast to the analytic.⁴⁸⁵ The ego appears as the topographical feature that will come into existence from the vicissitudes of the unconscious instincts. Freud's failure to account for this in the same interpretive manner in which he accounts for the instincts leads psychoanalysis into two problems. The first is that Freud's insistence on the natural, archaeological origin of religion causes him to posit a mythologized primal scene that goes beyond anything analysis can justify

⁴⁸³ See Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 143-146. Technically, Deleuze refers to "typologies," instead of "topologies" in the final analysis of Nietzsche's work, but this emphasizes the types of structures created by forces in both their relationship to the individual and to society at large. Insofar as I am here referring primarily to the forces contributing to the production of consciousness, I feel reference to Nietzsche's "topology" alone is warranted.

⁴⁸⁴ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 459.

⁴⁸⁵ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 473.

according to its own methods. The second is that Freud's work remains non-concretized from his failure to appreciate his own resources, in the mechanism of sublimation, for an appropriate course for psychoanalytic interpretation. The charge Ricoeur makes against Nietzsche appears similarly. Ricoeur states, regarding Nietzsche's methods: "What Nietzsche wants is the increase of man's power, the restoration of his force; but the meaning of the will to power must be recaptured by meditating on the ciphers 'superman,' 'eternal return,' and 'Dionysus,' without which the power in question would be but worldly violence."⁴⁸⁶ Although it is not explicitly remarked upon in Ricoeur's text, this horizon of "restored power" would have to appear for Ricoeur as the unthematized teleological element of Nietzsche's philosophy. It would be this sense of power that would be recovered, on Ricoeur's reading, but there is no indication given of how this power would act differently given its new knowledge of its conditions. Thus, he can say that Nietzsche remains mired in the accusation of metaphysics and morality that he seeks to critique because this archaeological movement cannot discover the teleological trajectory that would build meaning, instead seeing only idols that must be destroyed. Nietzsche's work, for Ricoeur, remains unable to contemplate a concretized sense of consciousness or fulfill the task of a philosophical anthropology because it cannot treat "symbols," with their multiple interpretive possibilities, as anything more than idols.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁶ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 35

⁴⁸⁷ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 464-467.

As I argued in Chapter Two and Three, although Freud and Nietzsche share much in common, this ascription to Nietzsche of an un- or under-developed teleology is not well-founded in the texts. Two issues are of note here, the first being that Nietzsche's critique of consciousness goes further than Freud's in doubting the necessity of that consciousness. Ricoeur is right to see in Freud an unthematized teleological directedness in the diagnosis of the unconscious: "It is of this quasi-Hegelian operation that Freud speaks in the celebrated saying: *Wo es war, soll ich werden* – 'Where id was, there ego shall be.'"⁴⁸⁸ But this, under a Nietzschean critique, would be no more than the setting up of not a teleological but of an eschatological end toward which the id must tend. The possible meaning of the id or the unconscious desires is already tied to a determinate end – the end of the ego. Therefore, in the case of psychoanalysis, interpretation of the unconscious forces is not bound to a symbol with a double meaning but to a moral ego that is merely yet to be reclaimed from the din of the instincts. This assumed, fixed moral point that Freud assures us the healthy ego must develop acts as an external judge by which a kind of diagnostic law can be handed down to interpretation.

Nietzsche's critique of final ends acts in this case as a criticism of Freud's methodology; and it should be considered that it acts as a critique of Ricoeur's method on this point as well. The Freudian teleology that Ricoeur develops in the last sections of *Freud and Philosophy* is based on Freud's "recovery" of the ego through sublimation. Ultimately, the deciphering of consciousness by Freud only leads to a less ill, more

⁴⁸⁸ Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, 241, citing Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*, Vol. XXII of *Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London, 1964), 80.

realistic reconstruction of the ego that now is totalized into meaning by the psychoanalytic perspective. Consciousness and its possible meanings, in this case, can never become anything other than what the psychoanalytic framework have set out for them to be – either as healthy or as sick. Thus, there is no future possible for consciousness or for its meaning outside of psychoanalysis once psychoanalysis is done with it. Similarly for the Ricoeurian pairing of suspicion and recovery, what is to be recovered is a full and determinate immediacy with meaning, or a fully mediated, and therefore still determinate meaning.⁴⁸⁹ As we saw with Nietzsche’s conception of the will-to-power, even this hope for full mediation must be set aside for the critical project if the criterion of immanence is to be met.

If there is to be a philosophy of the future, for Nietzsche, it is to be one based on the interpretation of our origins, which cannot be fully explicated, for the purpose of building and creating new meanings. But merely showing the origins of our conscious meanings is insufficient for the purposes of creating new meanings, just as Ricoeur maintains. What is often neglected is Nietzsche’s insistence on the goal of reinterpretation through critical genealogical analysis of concepts. Nietzsche writes:

What kind of fool would believe that it is enough to point to this [arbitrary] origin and this misty shroud of delusion in order to *destroy* the world that counts as ‘real’, so-called ‘reality’! Only as creators can we destroy! – But let us also not forget that in the long run it is enough to create new names and valuations and appearances of truth in order to create new ‘things’.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁹ Ricoeur’s later work, as it turns to the problem of *poesis* more explicitly as its thematic, seems to move away from the dominant metaphor of ‘recovery’ and towards ‘creation,’ suggesting some validity to this projected Nietzschean reading.

⁴⁹⁰ Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 58 (emphasis in original).

In this highly suggestive text, Nietzsche lays out his sense of the teleology for which I have been arguing. The ability of philosophy to affirm the future, to affirm interpretation and evaluation themselves, hinges on its ability to synthesize new meanings from what has counted as ‘reality.’ In order to displace any of the unhealthy meanings which have dominated consciousness and culture (or ‘reality’), simple diagnosis is insufficient. A new meaning capable of assembling a new arrangement of those existing forces is necessary. In other words, this Nietzschean teleology cannot be imposed on a synthesis of meaning from outside that synthesis but is brought to it internally by whichever will or force happens to dominate in the synthesis. Meaning is never produced or destroyed from an external critical action – meaning, too, is perspectival. Likewise, it cannot seek a new meaning by introducing never-before-synthesized forces or meanings into these new productions, as he has argued that there are only interpretations, meaning that there always already only other synthesized meanings with which to work.

For these reasons, new creation of meaning can only occur alongside the dissolution of other meanings; and, more importantly, the critical destruction of meanings which are no longer viable must be accompanied by an appropriation of a new construction of meaning. To do otherwise, Nietzsche suggests, is not creation but merely the recovery of our old metaphysical and moral instincts from their idolized/idealized existence. The most remote level of this prejudice, Nietzsche argues, is our reliance on the idol of “truth.” For interpretation and evaluation to be possible, its effects must be critiqued wherever they are found. This is perhaps the most dominant sense of Nietzsche’s proclamation of the ‘death of God.’ He writes: “God is dead; but given the

way people are, there may still for millennia be caves in which they show his shadow. – And we – we must still defeat his shadow as well!”⁴⁹¹ To accomplish this goal, Nietzsche relies both on the archaeological excavation of the illusion of univocal meaning as well as the teleological appropriation of this critique towards the affirmation of the creative use of interpretation and evaluation.

However, “given the way people are,” how is this possible? I have tried to show in Chapter Four that the possibility of realizing Nietzsche’s goal of affirmation can only come about if Nietzsche is able to re-interpret humanity itself. As Nietzsche says in *The Anti-Christ*: “The problem I am posing is not what should replace humanity in the order of being (- the human is an *endpoint* -): but instead what type of human being should be *bred*, should be *willed* as having greater value, as being more deserving of life, as being more certain of a future.”⁴⁹² Nietzsche ties the fate of humanity to its ability to create meanings which are capable of affirming life. The goal of *Ecce Homo* is just that, an interpretation and evaluation of the forces that make it possible to say “Behold, the man” (the decadent Nietzsche) as well as the excesses of that concept that allow for re-interpretation and re-evaluation of its composing forces (the “beginning” Nietzsche). Whereas man suffers from a lack, Nietzsche has “only ever suffered from multitudes.”⁴⁹³ In this manner, Nietzsche is attempting to demonstrate that what he refers to as “Dionysus” is still a possible actualization of human meaning: “it is explicable only as an

⁴⁹¹ Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 108.

⁴⁹² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ: A Curse on Christianity*, in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, eds. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Section 3 (emphasis in original).

⁴⁹³ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am so clever,” Section 10.

excess of energy.”⁴⁹⁴ Nietzsche’s strange philosophical anthropology in *Ecce Homo* is designed to show not the meaning of the human being but the things that a human being has meant and can mean. An identification of any excess remaining in the concept ‘human being’ or ‘man’ will indicate that new meanings for it are still possible; and, therefore, that this gives it a justification for the having of a future. For this reason, Nietzsche attempts to make clear as many of the compositional elements of ‘Nietzsche’ that he can discover, in order to interpret and affirm them all – questions of location, climate, course of study, nutrition, etc. – insofar as they have produced him.⁴⁹⁵ The anthropology of ‘Nietzsche’ exhibits already the excess of meaning that cannot be totalized in the simple designation of ‘man’ or ‘human being’: “One day my name will be connected with the memory of something tremendous, – a crisis such as the earth has never seen, the deepest collision of conscience, a decision made *against* everything that has been believed, demanded, held sacred so far. I am not a human being, I am dynamite.”⁴⁹⁶ The method of genealogy, applied to the man Nietzsche, shows us that the name ‘Nietzsche’ is not irreducibly tied to the man ‘Nietzsche’ but, instead, is associated with an event of meaning. ‘Nietzsche’ is, like all of genealogy’s other analysands, plurivocal and capable of exploding into as many meanings as there are instincts that can become dominant over it. In this way, Nietzsche becomes a subject for us through his interpretation of his own texts while demonstrating the meaning that is able to be created

⁴⁹⁴ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “What I owe to the ancients,” Section 4 (emphasis in original).

⁴⁹⁵ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am so clever,” Section 10.

⁴⁹⁶ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am a destiny,” Section 1 (emphasis in original).

from his own works as well as others'. This particular event of meaning, the meaning of the human being, as of yet, bears no dominant meaning on its own because no one, until *Ecce Homo*, had been able to interpret it actively and evaluate it affirmatively. It is in this manner that genealogy, as a hermeneutic method, is able to give the philosopher Nietzsche the right to a future. This future is indefinite, thanks to his conception of teleology but infinitely determinable through the entire genealogical operation.

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