The Transfiguration of Romantic and Dionysian Pessimism: The World of Appearance in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche

Sanders, Karsten

The Transfiguration of Romantic and Dionysian Pessimism
The World of Appearance in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche

Karsten Sanders

Peter Paul Rubens, *De Transfiguratie*, 1604-05

The Transfiguration of Romantic and Dionysian Pessimism
The World of Appearance in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche

Karsten Sanders
MA Thesis Modern European Philosophy
Dr. M. Boven
29/03/2024

Wordcount: 19997

Contents

Abbreviations

References to Nietzsche's work follow English abbreviations, followed by the section reference, and the reference to the German in the *Kritische Studienausgabe* (KSA) by Colli and Montinari. References follow this formula: 'Abbreviation of published book' (BT, etc.) 'section number' 'KSA volume number' '.' 'page number'. Reference to an unpublished note in the KSA *Nachlass* follow the formula: 'number of notebook' '[note number]' 'KSA volume number' '.' 'page number'. English translations are indicated below.

For Schopenhauer's work I use an abbreviation for *The World as Will and Representation* (WWR), followed by volume number (vol.1/ vol. 2), chapter and page number in the English translation. The formula is: 'Abbreviation' (WWR) 'volume number' 'chapter number' '.' 'page number'. English translations are indicated below. For the other referenced works, I only use page numbers.

Abbreviations for Nietzsche's works:

KSA *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Einzelbänden.* Ed. Giogrio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 1988.

DW *The Dionysian Worldview*. Trans. Claudia Crawford. Journal of Nietzsche Studies, no. 13. 1997. 81–97. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20717671.

BT *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. Douglas Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
BT Attempt Attempt at a Self-criticism

PTAG *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks.* Trans. Marianne Cowan. Washington: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1962.

HH *Human All-too-Human*. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale, and Richard Schacht. *Human, All Too Human : A Book for Free Spirits*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

HH2 *Human, All Too Human:* Volume 2. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale, and Richard Schacht. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 206-395
AOM Assorted Opinions and Maxims
WS The Wanderer and his Shadow

GS *The Gay Science.* Trans. Bernard Williams, and Adrian Del Caro. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Z *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Trans. Adrian Del Caro. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
Z Redemption On Redemption

BGE *Beyond Good and Evil*. Trans. Rolf Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

GM *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*, Trans. Douglas Smith. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
GM1 First Essay: 'Good and Evil'. 'Good and Bad'
GM2 Second Essay: 'Guilt', 'Bad Conscience' and Related Matters
GM3 Third Essay: What is the Meaning of Ascetic Ideals?

TI *Twilight of the Idols* in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*. Trans. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
TI Ancients What I Owe to the Ancients
TI "Reason" "Reason" in Philosophy
TI Fable History of an Error
TI Skirmishes Skirmishes of an Untimely Man

EH *Ecce Homo* in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*. Trans. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
EH BT The Birth of Tragedy
EH HH Human all-too-Human
EH Z Zarathustra
EH Wise Why I am so Wise

Abbreviations for Schopenhauer's works:

WWR vol.1 *The World as Will and Representation in two volumes: volume 1,* Trans. E.F.J. Payne. New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1966.

WWR vol.2 *The World as Will and Representation in two volumes: volume 2.* Trans. E.F.J. Payne. Garden City, New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1966.

FR *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason,* Trans. David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann, Ed. Christopher Janaway. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

WN *On Will in Nature*, Trans. David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann, Ed. Christopher Janaway. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Introduction

Pessimism is what this thesis is about, a term that designates an attitude towards something or a mood, a *Stimmung,* or affect induced by pressing circumstances. Another sense of the word is that it is an evaluation. In this sense, it means a proposition about the value, worth, or meaning of something. In the philosophical pessimism of Schopenhauer, it is the whole of existence that comes to be in disrepute, its ultimate worth is negatively evaluated. It is well known that Schopenhauer brought about an age of pessimism in German spirit of the 19th century, called the era of Weltschmerz[1].

But why do I return to this 19th-century discussion about pessimism? It is clear that Schopenhauer's pessimism holds an essential connection to his metaphysics of will and representation. His pessimism is either a result of his metaphysics or, to put it into more Nietzschean terms[2], his pessimistic personality results in a metaphysics of endless suffering, uncovering the will as an at-heart conflictual and senseless will-to-live. Yet, without developing a psychologization of Schopenhauer's ontology, I argue that it is essential to lay bare this connection to adequately understand the pessimism of the thinkers discussed in this thesis: Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Pessimism is not above all a psychological phenomenon, which could be associated with a melancholic mood or a depression, but a sustainable and well-worked-out philosophical position, especially in 19th century Germany. The overarching question is: **on what ontological basis is such an evaluation of the worth of existence made?**

The connection that will be made in this thesis is the connection between pessimism and a common notion I identify in the ontologies of the thinkers discussed. This common notion is what I call a 'world of appearance'. For each thinker, this world of appearance designates something different in their respective ontologies. Yet, both reflect on appearances and their deceptive nature. Both also have doubts and objections against what might be behind this world of appearance, which finds its context in considerations about, for instance, a "true world", reality (*Wirklichheit*) or a Kantian thing-in-itself. I will argue that both of their worlds of appearance holds an important connection to their pessimism, although not in the same way. By explicating this connection and the way these thinkers relate their pessimism to their world of appearance I aim to find out if either 1.) their pessimism animates their ontology of a world of appearance as a pre-philosophical disposition or, on the other hand, 2.) if the world of appearance is cause and object of their pessimism, due to its deceptiveness, for instance.

In this thesis, I will employ a distinction between two different types of pessimism, borrowed from Nietzsche. This will provide me with an interpretative framework which I can use in order to evaluate a thinker's world of appearance and its performativity in relation to pessimism. The distinction is one that Nietzsche makes in *The Gay Science* 370, a distinction between what he calls 'romantic' and 'Dionysian pessimism'. The difference between these kinds of pessimism is to be found in their origin, according to Nietzsche. Whereas romantic pessimism has its origin in an impoverishment of life, Dionysian pessimism has its origin in the fullness of life. As this thesis will make abundantly clear, life is the ultimate value through the lens of which Nietzsche evaluates all philosophical attitudes. I

---

[1] Frederick C. Beiser, *Weltschmerz: Pessimism in German Philosophy, 1860-1900*. (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2016.) 1.

[2] Nietzsche claims: "In the philosopher, on the contrary, there is absolutely nothing impersonal" BGE 6 5.2, which is the result of the differential living impulses and drives that inhabit the philosopher's being characterized by Nietzsche here as '*inspiring genii*'.

aim to compare Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's world of appearance in relation to pessimism based on a the Nietzschean distinction between two types of pessimism as an interpretive framework. This interpretive framework entails the assumption that pessimism has its roots in a 'physiological' dynamic, as I will elaborate on in this thesis. However, I will also account for the way these philosophers think about their own pessimism, which divides this work in two different questions. Firstly, does the thinker itself regard his pessimism either as "pre-philosophical" or as "conclusion"? And secondly, based on the Nietzschean distinction, what is the "pre-philosophical" category their pessimism would fall in; either romantic or Dionysian pessimism? Due to this interpretative framework, this will also enable me to speak about the performativity of each thinker's philosophy and in what way it *enacts* pessimism through their ontology of a world of appearance.

This raises an important question: if we do accept such a distinction, how should we evaluate Schopenhauer's evaluations of his world of appearance? And how does Nietzsche evaluate or perform his own view of the world of appearance, what he comes to characterize as semblance (*Schein* instead of *Erscheinung*, appearance)? In the section referenced above by Nietzsche, he characterizes Schopenhauer's philosophy as an example of romantic pessimism, also claiming that Dionysian pessimism is the pessimism of the future. Because the "Philosophers of the future'' is a prominent theme in *Beyond Good and Evil*, the interpretive framework developed in this thesis can be applied to philosophers after Nietzsche that seem pessimistic to evaluate if they would qualify either as a romantic or Dionysian pessimist[3]. This would let us test the interpretive force of Nietzsche's distinction between two forms of pessimism and see if Dionysian pessimism is the pessimism of the future that Nietzsche anticipated.

The structure of this thesis is as follows: in **Chapter 1.,** I lay out a Nietzschean interpretive framework of pessimism. A few important aspects are touched upon. I first go into the context of the problem of pessimism. Afterwards, I go into the conceptual development of a distinction between two types of pessimism in Nietzsche's thought, resulting in the later romantic/Dionysian pessimism distinction. I then go into Nietzsche's agonistic style, which informs this distinction. Lastly, I comment on applying this distinction to the thinkers discussed.

In **Chapter 2.,** I develop a reading of *The World as Will and Representation*. I start out with Schopenhauer's claim that his metaphysics is purely immanent, divided by the world as representation and as will. I then try to uncover the relation of this metaphysics to his pessimism, leading me to an interpretation of the *punctum pruriens* of philosophy. I then further develop an interpretation of Schopenhauer's ontology, which ultimately informs his ethics of renunciation. In the last section of this chapter, I discuss Nietzsche's critique of Schopenhauer in the light of Nietzsche's physiology of aesthetics and relate this back to Schopenhauer's *punctum pruriens*.

In the last chapter, **Chapter 3.,** I return to Nietzsche. I introduce the notion of semblance and explain how it can be seen in light of the overcoming of metaphysics. I then relate it explicitly to art and the tragic artist, going into the soothing property of art that makes life bearable. However, semblance is also related to its darker underside: the will to power, as well as to perspectivism. With these notions I explain how Nietzsche's work is supposed to testify to his Dionysian pessimism.

---

[3] An excellent candidate for such an evaluation would be Jean Baudrillard, developing not only a meaningful ontology of a world of appearance (characterized by him as simulacra), but also proclaiming himself to be a nihilist.

Chapter 1. A Nietzschean Interpretive Framework of Pessimism

To compare the world of appearance of these thinkers and its relation to their pessimism, I first have to set out the distinction between two kinds of pessimism which I will wield as the guiding distinction for an interpretive framework of pessimism. The distinction originates in the work of Nietzsche, whose work is rife with seeming contradictions, turns, and transformations of thought. This makes it hard to pin Nietzsche down on this distinction. Another difficulty is that pessimism can also be associated with the term more often used in discussions about Nietzsche, namely nihilism.

In this chapter, I first preliminarily explain the problem of pessimism regarding the worth of existence. Afterward, I expand on the context in which the distinction comes about in Nietzsche's thought. The first distinction Nietzsche makes is between practical and theoretical pessimism. Later, Nietzsche makes a distinction between romantic and Dionysian pessimism, rooted in a physiological dynamic, which will serve as the leading distinction in this thesis. Lastly, I will explicate the status of this distinction in Nietzsche's work in light of his agonistic method concerning pessimism and its later connection to nihilism. In the conclusion I will outline some considerations for the application of the Nietzschean distinction. In the subsequent chapters of this thesis I will then proceed and apply this distinction to the world of appearance of the thinkers discussed: Schopenhauer and Nietzsche himself.

1.1 The Problem of Pessimism and the World of Appearance

In order to come to a clear understanding of the subject matter of this thesis, I will shortly deal with the historical context that informs the distinction Nietzsche makes between two types of pessimism and its relation to a world of appearance. Because what constitutes the problem that pessimism is an answer to? This is not a new problem in any way, nor was it in the 19th century. The problem can be traced back to the ancient Greeks.

The Greek vision of the world was the beginning of Western philosophy as we know it. The vision that mostly informs Nietzsche is that of Heraclitus, who recognized the world as a chaotic flux in a constant state of *becoming*, something that could potentially frighten and sadden human beings due to the impossibility of any stable knowledge and its security. The philosopher is the one who can bring order in this chaotic flux, by means of ideas. In this move, the world is doubled into a world of appearance (chaotic flux) and a world of eternal ideas. Plato was the instigator of this solution and supposedly ontologized this distinction into two separate realms. The realm of ideas or 'Forms' became the true world, from which the world of appearance should be carefully distinguished. The world of appearance is discredited in favor of the true world of ideas, something Nietzsche comes to criticize heavily. The pre-platonic Greeks did not escape the cruel world of chaotic flux through ideas deliberated through dialectics per se, but through the tragedies depicted in their theaters. Plato undermined this tragic-affirmation by placing reason over art, and proclaiming the true world of ideas to be the most worthy of desire.

In its Platonic and Judaic roots, the Christianity that Nietzsche criticizes shows a similar chief trait: the desire for an escape and tranquility in the thought of an afterlife and the condemnation of our existence here and now, a metaphysical burden. In light of this burden, Schopenhauer poses the question in 19th-century Germany and brings it to a whole new light: *what is the worth of existence?*[4] This is a result as Nietzsche argues, of his relentless and unapologetic atheism and his loyalty to philosophical truth. The pessimism that follows is a negative answer to this question[5], further explained in the next chapter about Schopenhauer's pessimism.

What is important for this chapter, is how Nietzsche takes up the question of the worth of existence and how he evaluates the pessimism of the second half of the 19th century. It is well known that Nietzsche wrote in a time characterized by a proliferation of the discussion concerning pessimism in Germany. The objective of this thesis is to demonstrate the relevance and urgency of Nietzsche's work in addressing what could be referred to as the problem of pessimism or, in Schopenhauer's words: the puzzle of existence (das Rätsel des Daseins).

1.2 Nietzsche's Distinction between Two Types of Pessimism

This section first deals with Nietzsche's distinction between theoretical and practical pessimism in *The Birth of Tragedy*, also already going into its connection to Schopenhauer's metaphysics. Afterward, I introduce and explain the later distinction between romantic and Dionysian pessimism that can serve as the interpretive distinction for this thesis. The underlying dynamic informing this distinction also informs Nietzsche's critique of other philosophers.

1.2.1 Pessimism in *The Birth of Tragedy*: Theoretical and Practical Pessimism

His first work *The Birth of Tragedy* was already a treatment of pessimism. In this work, Nietzsche is still heavily inspired by Schopenhauer and develops an artist-metaphysics, that he later disavows. Through this artist-metaphysics, Nietzsche claimed the world could be aesthetically justified, instead of morally (i.e. through a theodicy). Nietzsche during this period was convinced that aesthetics was the ultimate metaphysical activity of man. A distinction between two kinds of pessimism is already present here, yet it had not been adequately thought through during this stage of Nietzsche's writing. In the *Attempt*, Nietzsche calls *The Birth of Tragedy* an impossible book. Employing Schopenhauerian and Kantian language, he tried to formulate things that he later regarded as wholly un-Schopenhauerian and un-Kantian. Nietzsche calls *The Birth of Tragedy* his first attempt at a transvaluation of all values, through which life as the ultimate value could be affirmed.[6] Yet, he tried to develop a strong pessimism building on Schopenhauer's lethargic, world-weary philosophy of renunciation instead of life affirmation.

What is crucial is the distinction that already separates Nietzsche from Schopenhauer: his conception of the 'will'. One could think of the distinction made in *The Birth of Tragedy* between the Apollonian and the Dionysian as a model pasted on the

[4] GS 357 3.600
[5] BT Attempt 6 1.20
[6] TI Ancients, 5 6.160

Schopenhauerian distinction between will and representation. In this case, the Apollonian is the dream world of representation and appearance (Erscheinung)[7], whereas the Dionysian is the ground of existence, the unitary will behind the world of representation as its essence. But this is a connection that would be too hastily made and not very convincing in light of Nietzsche's writing in the *Nachlass*[8], nor in the light of the obscurity of, what he himself calls it in similar words, this youthful and over-confident first work[9]. It is the 'intelligible world' and the metaphysical activity of man that comes to be in disrepute in Nietzsche's thinking[10], already marked, but not yet fully realized by the move towards aesthetics away from moral (practical) judgments in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Instead of developing a philosophy in which life is evaluated on the basis of truth, like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche turns this around and tries to evaluate truth on the basis of life and art in *The Birth of Tragedy*

The will as a desiring and individuated instance of will through the will's objectification is the Schopenhauerian will taken as a *lack* of satisfaction[11]. This leads to inevitable suffering, either as boredom when the individuated will or human person attains their goal or as ceaseless striving when the goal is not attained. This induces pain and suffering, according to Schopenhauer. The ultimate endpoint of all of this is death, redemption out of the senseless suffering of life, and the release out of the will's objectification. There is however the possibility of redemption through art for Schopenhauer, when the observer of art, e.g. the tragedy as the highest form of poetic art[12], becomes a knowing but will-less subject. This is pure aesthetic contemplation, that in its non-willing leads to resignation from the will-to-live[13] (or renunciation of the will, used interchangeably in this thesis).

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche figures that the will should not only be seen as a lack, and therefore suffering, but also as a joy-bringer. In section 17, he starts: "Dionysian art too wants to convince us of the eternal joy of existence; only we should seek this joy not in phenomena, but behind phenomena."[14] He continues a few lines further:

> "For a few short moments we really are the original essence itself and feel its unbridled craving for existence and joy in existence; the struggle, the agony, the annihilation of phenomena now seem necessary to us, in the context of the excess of countless forms of existence which crowd and push their way into life, of the overwhelming fertility of the world-will; we are pierced by the raging thorn of these agonies in the same moment as we have become one as it were with the immeasurable original joy in existence and as we sense the indestructibility and eternity of this pleasure in Dionysian rapture. In spite of fear and compassion, we are the fortunate living beings, not as individuals, but as a single living being, with whose joy in creation we are fused."[15]

---

[7] In actuality this duality is already being undermined in BT with a shift from appearance or 'Erscheinung' to semblance or 'Schein', elaborated upon in Chapter 3.
[8] Robert Rethy, 'The Tragic Affirmation of the Birth of Tragedy', 13. See also Hassan, *Nietzsche's Struggle*. 73. where he describes Nietzsche's "critical doubts" of Schopenhauer, already from the year 1868.
[9] BT Attempt, 3 1.14
[10] EH Human, 6.328
[11] WWR vol.1 57.315; 36.196
[12] WWR vol.1 51.252
[13] WWR vol.1 41.209; 51.253
[14] BT 17 1.109
[15] Ibid.

A whole other image of the will confronts us in comparison with the lack of the will's ability to satisfy itself, propounded by Schopenhauer. In contrast to the Schopenhauerian account of the will as a senseless striving and the inevitable passing away of appearances, we are confronted with the joy that is involved with the creation of appearances of how the tragic myth as Dionysian art shows itself to us and gives us a double perspective on life. On the one hand, we rejoice in the tragic myth that unfolds before our eyes and can affirm the tragic hero's quest and his thirst for life and victory. On the other hand, we also affirm his tragic downfall and realize the inevitability of it in the reality of our own life, the fact that the will essentially and eternally plays out this circularity of bringing to life and destroying out of the fullness of its being[16]. The will is taken as *excess,* instead of *lack*.

The difference of this description with Schopenhauer's conception is as follows: instead of a will-less subject and knower of art as in Schopenhauer, one is an affirmer of the will and becomes a will-full knower of art. A joyous wisdom (alluding to the later *Gay Science*) comes over the observer of tragic art and music. To tie this back into a discussion about pessimism we get a distinction between theoretical and practical pessimism. Theoretical pessimism is defined by Nietzsche in *The Dionysian Worldview*, a preliminary study for *The Birth of Tragedy*, as this insight into the absurdity and atrocities of existence[17]. Practical pessimism is a consequent pessimistic ethics. Schopenhauer does not choose an ethics of suicide, which he argues against in *The World as Will and Representation*[18]. As mentioned earlier, Schopenhauer's ethics is an ethics of resignation, it is a negation of one's individuated will, also negating the will as the thing-in-itself through the aesthetic contemplation of art.

The difficulty I describe that Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* has with these two kinds of pessimism lies in the tension between theoretical pessimism, the wisdom of Silenus[19], and the Schopenhauerian practical pessimism and ethics of resignation. On the one hand, Dionysian art and tragedy have as their task the redemption of 'the eye' of the will through the redemptive semblance that it confronts us with[20], which phrasing reminds us of Schopenhauer's ethics of resignation. On the other hand, as I have shown, it confronts us thoroughly with the reality of our own life and its inherent suffering and contradictions. For Nietzsche, this last feature of aesthetic contemplation does not offer us an ethical demand. The way art shows us this reality of existence cannot be translated into ethics, because for him, art can only be interpreted from the realm of aesthetics[21].

Furthermore, Nietzsche's notes at the start of the year 1870 speak of the contradiction at the heart of any pessimist ethics. He writes: "Only in striving towards a happier life is suicide possible. Non-being is not thinkable."[22] (my translation) A few notes further the theme of pessimism is more explicit when he argues: "Non-being cannot be a goal. Pessimism is only possible in the realm of *concepts*."[23] (my translation). Although the

[16] BT 24 1.152f.
[17] DW 3 1.566
[18] WWR vol.1 68.378ff.
[19] BT 3 1.35
[20] BT 19 1.126
[21] BT 24 1.151f.
[22] 3[91] 7.84
[23] 3[95] 7.85

primary object of criticism here is a pessimistic ethics of suicide or *Vernichtung*[24], the conviction that life should not have been or that is better not to be is only possible in the realm of concepts. It cannot be an ethical object, because the reality of non-being or non-willing is not thinkable. This therefore also pertains to a non-willing in the realm of aesthetic contemplation. The redemptive resignation that proceeds from it is fiction. Nietzsche argues here that through belief in the necessity of the will as a 'world process' and the circularity of creation and destruction, life becomes *bearable*.

It is clear that Nietzsche's aesthetic justification (based on the former a contradictory way of speaking; viz. confusing aesthetic with moral judgments[25]) of existence in the form of a life affirmation stands in opposition to the Schopenhauerian ethics of resignation. The pessimism it subscribes to is at most theoretical as a tragic insight into reality. Yet, it stays faithful to Nietzsche's philosophical impetus throughout all of his works: how can we affirm life in the face of the burden of previous metaphysics?

1.2.2 The Later Distinction: Dionysian and Romantic Pessimism

As I have shown, *The Birth of Tragedy*'s connection with Schopenhauer's metaphysics and his ethics of resignation is still too confused in Nietzsche's first book, due to the mentioned impossibility of his first work[26]. This problem is addressed later in his work with a sharper distinction between romantic and Dionysian pessimism. Nietzsche reflected on pessimism again heavily in the year 1886, in which he wrote prefaces to his earlier works and the fifth book of *The Gay Science*. Explicit reflections on pessimism are to be found in these texts.

The later philosophical perspective through which Nietzsche analyses pessimism is more his own, instead of the confused Schopenhauerian formulas. Out of a recognition of life as will to power, Nietzsche returns to the question of pessimism from the perspective of its historical development and the psychological conditions that underlie any philosophy, especially pessimism. In the preface to *The Gay Science*, he claims that any philosophy borne out of a metaphysical need[27] might have been a *misunderstanding of the body*[28]. In Nietzsche's human all-too-human analysis of philosophy itself, it can be interpreted based on the underlying lack, a need, or a want of the body.[29] On the other hand, in contrast to this, one could recognize it as an overflowing vitality, a luxury, or an addition to a person full of life. The philosophy is then not borne out of a lack, but out of the fullness of one's being. We can see this described most clearly in *The Gay Science* section 370 in which Nietzsche gives us this radical distinction.

---

[24] The distinction made between a constructive *Wettkampf* and a destructive *Vernichtungskampf* is a distinction from Homer's Contest 1.787, in which Nietzsche explicates the Greek *agon*. Siemens argues that Socrates' and Christianity's devaluation of the passions can be seen in the light of this distinction as a *Vernichtungskampf* waged against the body in favor of the soul's release. Herman W. Siemens, *Agonal Perspectives on Nietzsche's Philosophy of Critical Transvaluation*, (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2022.) note 2 89f.

[25] Justice being a moral category, e.g. 'eternal-justice' is a particularly prominent theme in the fourth book of WWR vol.1 concerning his ethics of renunciation. See WWR vol.1 63.350

[26] BT Attempt 3 1.14

[27] See Chapter 2.2

[28] GS, Preface 2 3.348

[29] GS 370 3.620f.

Based on this distinction, Nietzsche can ask the following question when it comes to aesthetic values: "'Is it hunger or superabundance that have become creative here?'"[30] In this regard, Nietzsche posits himself as an expert in 'backward inference', able to trace values and the consequent philosophical system back to their origin in a psychological or historical condition. If we see this in light of the body, this can have far-going effects, meaning that every bodily condition could have, in theory, a differing and consequent outlook on life, or a more sophisticated philosophical system. In no way will Nietzsche claim that one could deduce this outlook from any bodily condition, but that the underlying dynamic conditioning this state can be traced back to the body in terms of the language of physiology, the science of the body. This language, which is not meant to be taken as vulgar materialism, accounts for the trajectory of a human's life, whether it is degenerating or growing and expanding. The first expresses itself as a increasing lack, the latter expresses itself as an increasing excess. In section 370 of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche claims that one could infer either superabundance or hunger from a philosophical system. He is finetuned to it, or so he claims.

To further elucidate the underlying dynamic of this distinction, I will offer an example in the *Genealogy*, which ultimately boils down to the same underlying dynamic, yet applied to morality, instead of aesthetics. This example is from Nietzsche's genealogy of the slave revolt in morality of which ressentiment is the origin, described in the first essay of the *Genealogy*. There he explains, through a heuristic story:

> "The revolt of the slaves in morals begins in the very principle of ressentiment becoming creative and giving birth to values—a resentment experienced by creatures who, deprived as they are of the proper outlet of action, are forced to find their compensation in an imaginary revenge. While every aristocratic morality springs from a triumphant affirmation of its own demands, the slave morality says "no" from the very outset to what is "outside itself," "different from itself," and "not itself": and this "no" is its creative deed."[31]

The creative act that gives birth to slave morality consists of a 'no-saying', instead of a 'yes-saying'. This no-saying takes shape as an imaginary revenge. This revenge is imaginary because the actual act of revenge, for instance through physical violence, cannot be taken due to powerlessness. It would result in one's destruction, in conflict with the common self-preservation that is characteristic of the will to power[32]. However, to express this will to power, this no-saying as a creative act, concepts are invented to dominate the aristocrats that are more abundant in power in the first instance. The concept here would be ascribing 'evil' to the aristocrats. This invention of concepts conducive to slave morality has a few particular implications of which I will name a few. It ascribes a "doing" subject behind any action as a 'doer'. Because of this, guilt can be ascribed to any subject, to socially diminish their power due to public condemnation, for example. Through this dynamic, the imaginary revenge cunningly transformed into an act of actual revenge in the creation of concepts becomes a mechanism to suppress the power of the initially powerful and heighten the power of the initially and relatively powerless.

---

[30] Ibid.
[31] GM1 10 5.270ff
[32] BGE 13 5.27

This example for the *Genealogy* gives a grasp of the dynamic of the will to power in its manifestation as the creation of concepts and morality. In this way, we get a glimpse of what it means for a philosophical system to either have its origin in a no-saying or a yes-saying, as the negation or affirmation of life. I think that it is in this light that I can interpret *The Gay Science* 370 and the distinction between romantic pessimism and Dionysian pessimism. Pessimism can either be a no-saying to life, borne from hunger and want, or a yes-saying to life, borne from excess and abundance. Romantic pessimism would then be the former, and Dionysian pessimism the latter. Regarding life negation or affirmation, romantic pessimism is the negation of life through philosophical means in a consequent ethics or attitude towards life. This could mean an ethics of suicidal destruction, an ethics of resignation, or a philosophy that has a passive will as its result, a will to nothing. Dionysian pessimism is the affirmation of life through a tragic insight into the reality of life and all that comes with it, be it the ugly, the destructive, the (limited, not destructive) negation of certain aspects according to one's taste, and above all the affirmation of suffering itself as something permissible in light of the raw creative power of the fullness of a strong Dionysian will.

Nietzsche favors this distinction over a distinction between a desire for either *being* or *becoming* because either can be interpreted based on superabundance or hunger. A desire for *becoming* can be interpreted in the light of destruction in favor of a new dawn of creation, which in Nietzsche's terms would be called *Dionysian*. Yet, it can also be interpreted as a negation of life through destruction, because it is in this way negating all of existence, without affirming anything, something Nietzsche associates with the anarchists and their misarchism[33]. In the same way, a desire for *being* has this ambiguity. Nietzsche interprets a desire for *being* in aesthetic values as an apollonian 'eternalizing' (*Verewigen*) or transfiguration[34], manifesting itself out of gratitude or love for life, an affirmation. Then again, this can also be interpreted as an imposing stamp of one's particular suffering on the whole of existence and in this way taking revenge on life. This is what Nietzsche associates with romantic pessimism, and Schopenhauer's philosophy in particular.

1.3 Nietzsche's Agonism: the Redemption of a Grand Enemy

This section deals with an important characteristic of Nietzsche's philosophy: his agonistic style. In order to overcome the negation of life-denying attitudes, these have to be affirmed in some way, in order to not fall back into life-denial and negation. Nietzsche's strategy concerning this problem, I argue, is by redeeming romantic pessimism as a *grand enemy*. This also ties into the relation between romantic pessimism and his notion of nihilism.

At the end of section 370 in the fifth book of *The Gay Science,* Nietzsche puts between brackets that which he deems to be the possibility of a future type of pessimism, i.e. Dionysian pessimism. It would be too naive to think that Nietzsche himself is the ultimate manifestation of a Dionysian pessimist able to exhibit all its traits. This is because Nietzsche was also enmeshed in the romanticism he comes to criticize later, particularly evident in *The Birth of Tragedy*, because of the Schopenhauerian formulas, which he will later criticize based on a physiological interpretation.

[33] E.g. GM2 12 5.315
[34] Which is philosophy itself, see GS Preface 3 3.349

Zooming out of this particular moment in Nietzsche's work, the problem can be phrased more generally as a problem of Nietzsche's critical project of transvaluation in favor of life. One of these problems is what Siemens calls the 'energetic problem'[35]. This problem can be wrested from Nietzsche's critique of ressentiment. "If, as Nietzsche argues, 2,000 years of *ressentiment* [i.e. in its Christian and platonic form] have progressively depleted our volitional resources, how can we do anything about it? Where are we to find sources of energy for tackling ressentiment?"[36] The volitional resources are depleted due to slave morality and its tendency to end up in a position of complacency and passivity, the will to nothing or the will that turns against itself[37]. This is tied up with the problem of a European mixed race, which multiplies our impulses and gives us difficulty in organizing them under a law or maxim, resulting in self-destruction or complacent following of morality[38].

To my mind, it is not only our 'volitional resources' and the energetic deficiency (like a bodily *lack* instead of *excess*) that is in our way towards tackling ressentiment, but also because we are necessarily involved in the fallacies of reason and errors of language and are complicit therein in any discourse[39]. This problem is, however, already addressed in the introduction of *Agonal Perspectives* by Siemens. With the help of Blondel's *Nietzsche: The Body and Culture* and the distinction made between *Saying* and *Unsaying*, he argues that we can omit the discursive closure of theoretical discourse that is inherently life-negating. Siemens invites us to think of Nietzsche's works as an agonal 'play of forces' (*Wettspiel der Kräfte*), also implicating Nietzsche's readers[40]. It seems to me that this is also the key to the energetic problem, which is more of an enigma[41] (whence this energy?) than an actual problem when it comes to Nietzsche himself. In this case, either Nietzsche would be a once-in-a-century exemplar or we should further question Nietzsche's genealogical critique. Because, if there is indeed a dynamic of forces at play in Nietzsche's books, viz. the theoretical discourse guided by a will to truth as well as everything that is heterogeneous to it[42], does this not already attest to a personality invigorated by the vitality that makes possible this play of forces and the tension that comes with? Does this not already imply *excess*?

It is a matter of suspicion that this would be the case, plain and simple. As I already mentioned, Nietzsche was also enmeshed in the romanticism he criticized so heavily. Next to that, he acknowledges the fact that the spirit of revenge preys on a decaying or sick body, which Nietzsche experienced during his lifetime, as he recounts in *Ecce Homo*[43]. Nonetheless, there is no need to be concerned with "Herr Nietzsche"[44]. The question is what task remains for us now and how Nietzsche's texts play into that. The energetic problem then remains a problem for the vast majority of our day and age, if we are to go along with Nietzsche's genealogical critique. However, if there is indeed a play of forces at work in Nietzsche's text, and if we as readers are implied in it, one could potentially mobilize the

---

[35] Siemens. Agonal Perspectives. 222.
[36] Siemens. *Agonal Perspectives*. 222f.
[37] See also Z 42 Redemption 4.177ff.
[38] GM3 17 5.378. Here 'Weltschmerz' is identified with this problem.
[39] GM1 13 5.279
[40] Siemens, *Agonal Perspectives*, 13.
[41] Eric Blondel, *Nietzsche: The Body and Culture: Philosophy as Philological Genealogy,* Translated by Sean Hand, (London: Athlone press, 1991.) 4.
[42] Described by Blondel in the following way, namely "what inside Nietzsche's text remains outside discourse, whatever we call it, be it drives, rhetoric, breaks, incoherences, Versuch, music, comedy, solemnity, art, allusions or language games." Blondel, *Nietzsche*, 7.
[43] EH Wise 6 6.272
[44] GS Preface 2 3.347

energy of any other vital body to participate in the contestation of values communally through opening up this discourse. In light of this, Nietzsche often refers to the free spirits in *Human all-too-Human*, as well as the possibility of future philosophers in *Beyond Good and Evil*. In this way, he can imply his readers, of whom he had not many during his lifetime, and include them in the contestation. He often seems to advise them, stimulating and giving clues through allusions and other rhetorical figures of speech. In this way, Nietzsche tries to make the text perform a transvaluation of values that favors any strong and vital form of life in matters of taste, intellect, and conscience.

This is why, conscious of his genealogical critique, Nietzsche sees it as his task to posit and refine the opposition to the romantic pessimism[45] that he deems the latest great event in European culture's fateful history[46], because it seemed truly triumphant to him. In light of Nietzsche's earlier romanticism, he says that he performs an a-romantic self-therapy in his work, which he discusses in the (1886) preface to the second part of *Human all-too-Human*. The energetic deficiency of the romantic is acknowledged by Nietzsche in this preface, which he phrases in terms of an illness. The play of forces in this preface is between himself as a romantic pessimist, and the self that he sees as his task to cultivate: the strong Dionysian pessimist. Taking the side of Dionysian pessimism, the romantic in Nietzsche becomes a grand enemy[47]. To relate this to the performativity of Nietzsche's text, the question is what strategy he devises to engage in this struggle or 'agon' within him to ultimately articulate it in the text.

The first course of action Nietzsche describes goes under the banner of 'Cave Musicam'[48]. Nietzsche breaks with Wagner, renounces any connection with romanticism out of a deep-rooted suspicion, and forbids himself to listen to any romantic music. However, we should not see this as a personal attack on Wagner per se, or so he claims in *Ecce Homo*[49]. Instead, they are physiological objections, objections to the underlying sickness of romanticism that he associates with it. We should see this as a limited negation, a "looking away", in order to be a yes-sayer[50], instead of a fully destructive negation of romanticism. Having turned away from the triumphant pessimism of the lethargy of life he sees in culture, however, he has to become suspicious of himself. The sickness that is romanticism and the spirit of revenge that is associated with also preys on Nietzsche and is present within him, even in solitude. Nietzsche therefore has to make his inner romantic his enemy. To overcome the opposition within him he has to deny the romantic its pleasures and give the Dionysian within him the burden to complete its task. The process that this entails is a process from the illness of romanticism to the 'great health' associated with strong pessimism, as the affirmation of pain and suffering.

He, therefore, taught himself the 'language of the hermit', i.e. a performance that one can only perform in solitude. "It was then I learned the art of appearing cheerful, objective, inquisitive, above all healthy and malicious [...]."[51] In the process of healing Nietzsche defends life against the conclusions of pain, against the romantic pessimism and its desire for being: the desire to eternalize one's suffering and project it on the world through philosophy. Nietzsche inverts this relation and instead aims for the strong Dionysian

[45] HH2 Preface 7 2.376
[46] GS 370 3.622
[47] HH2 Preface 7 2.377
[48] HH2 Preface 3 2.373
[49] EH Wise 7 6.274
[50] E.g. GS 276 3.521
[51] HH2 Preface 5 2.374

pessimism and a will to tragedy, to turn his romanticism into something healthy, towards a 'great health' and a desire for a constant *becoming*, which can be associated with what he calls *self-overcoming as the law of life*[52].

The problematic logic of self-overcoming is a theme in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. In light of the affirmation of the whole of life, should one not also affirm the life-negating instincts inherent in life, like romanticism? And if so, how does Nietzsche prevent becoming disgusted with himself in light of his genealogical critique? This is why Nietzsche has to affirm the value of having a *grand enemy* and prohibit himself from fully and destructively negating the ugly and poor side of life. From this perspective, romanticism is redeemed because it is a necessary illness that can lead us to health.

An interpretive framework of pessimism with the possibility of being projected on Nietzsche's 'future philosophers' would also have to account for the closely related term, namely nihilism. This is because the grand enemy gets another name later in Nietzsche's working life. Nietzsche not only saw it as his task to refine the opposition to romantic pessimism (viz. Dionysian pessimism), but also to refine all hitherto professed pessimism[53]. The unfinished *Will to Power* is a book in which the grand enemy goes under the name of European nihilism, a term many know and associate with Nietzsche's thought. Nietzsche devises this rubric to capture the 2000-year history of European culture and the resultant pessimism of the 19th century. Yet, the critique of nihilism goes further from the particular romantic pessimism of which he wrote earlier, because nihilism is also the future: "I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: *the advent of nihilism*."[54] Whereas romantic pessimism might have the potential of serving as a useful stimulant and as a grand enemy, ultimately to overcome it, nihilism is a necessary outcome with which future philosophers will have to deal no matter what, *their* grand enemy. The question that we would have to ask then is if this grand enemy can again be a stimulant for a greater health, or if nihilism will ultimately engulf and consume us.

Nietzsche describes the process behind the coming about of this event, namely the logic of the will to truth. The Christian moral demand for truth ultimately undermines itself. This is because this demand ultimately turns against the belief in God. For Nietzsche, the final stage of the will to truth is its sublimation into a scientific conscience that can no longer permit itself the belief in God. To speak more generally, this scientific conscience and the ideal of veracity do not even permit a belief in a dualistic ontology anymore, the "true world" over and against a world of appearance. This true world was supposed to be consoling, and offer meaning in favor of which the suffering of this world would be justified, either through ideas and the security of knowledge (the power of reason and logic) or as a goal (heaven or some other hereafter). The will to truth undermining itself also undermines this escape. The philosopher's task therefore, will be to create new values[55].

Conclusion: Applying the Distinction

This chapter outlined the Nietzschean interpretive framework that will be applied in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. First, I introduced the problem of pessimism. I then traced the conceptual development of two types of pessimism back to Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, which later developed into a distinction between romantic and Dionysian

[52] GM3 27 5.410
[53] HH2 Preface 1 2.370
[54] 11[144] 13.189
[55] Ibid.

pessimism, rooted in a physiological dynamic. Afterwards, I related this to Nietzsche's agonistic style, in which romantic pessimism is redeemed as a *grand enemy.* This also explains the advent of nihilism as the grand enemy of future philosophers. The main thing I will be concerned with for the rest of this thesis is if the development of an ontology with what I call a 'world of appearance' either constitutes an affirmation or a negation of human existence, a no-saying or a yes-saying, also articulated in the romantic and Dionysian pessimism distinction.

Evaluating Schopenhauer's pessimism on the basis of Nietzsche's distinction seems like a straightforward matter, because Nietzsche himself classifies Schopenhauer as a romantic pessimist in the section in which the distinction is made. This classification could potentially be problematized by an in-depth and charitable reading of Schopenhauer (in Chapter 2). What makes this even more problematic is that Nietzsche too seems to be ambivalent towards Schopenhauer's pessimism, sometimes calling him a pessimist, but at other times denying it. What the end of the next chapter will focus on, however, is the way in which Nietzsche explicitly brings to the fore the underlying physiological dynamic of Schopenhauer's pessimism articulated in his philosophy of a world of appearance.

The distinction, as has become evident in this chapter, is thoroughly Nietzsche's and intertwined with his overall philosophical project of life-affirmation. In the third chapter of this thesis I will explain how we should understand this dynamic in Nietzsche's thinking in relation to his notion of semblance. I will then evaluate if Nietzsche is successful in the transfiguration of Dionysian pessimism through his notion of semblance.

Chapter 2. Schopenhauer's Pessimistic Representation of the World

First of all, this chapter will seek out the apparent cause of Schopenhauer's pessimism out of his metaphysics of will and representation, especially focusing on his world of appearance in the form of *Vorstellung*, *Erscheinung,* or the so-called veil of Maya. Afterward, I will, like Nietzsche, invert the relation between his metaphysics and his pessimism and try to evaluate his metaphysics based on his pessimism. This evaluation will be based on the distinction between life affirmation or life negation developed in the first chapter; either as romantic or Dionysian pessimism.

2.1 Immanent Metaphysics

As I already mentioned, Schopenhauer is regarded as the instigator of what was later called the epoch of 'Weltschmerz'[56], or the inspiration of what is called the 'Pessimusmusstreit'[57]. This is no surprise because anyone familiar with the works of Schopenhauer will readily admit that he has a bleak outlook on the world. A commonplace interpretation is to look at Schopenhauer's metaphysics, and especially the essence of the world for Schopenhauer: the will, and deduce from it *why* Schopenhauer became pessimistic. The question often revolves around the *cause* for Schopenhauer's pessimism, for which the again commonplace answer would be that the essence of the world, the will, senselessly strives, without an ultimate meaning and only causes suffering. While there is certainly some truth to that, this would mean that pessimism is exclusively a philosophical *conclusion*. It is my contention in this chapter that if we are to deal with causes in Schopenhauer's philosophy, we are necessarily appointed to the realm of what he called the *principium individuationis* guided by the principle of sufficient reason, and thus to the realm of Schopenhauer's world of appearance, the world as representation.

Such a commonplace interpretation is further problematized because Schopenhauer aimed at an *immanent* metaphysics. Something for which Nietzsche praised Schopenhauer was his intellectual conscience: his commitment to truthfulness and realism, which resulted in an unapologetic atheism[58]. Schopenhauer aimed to give an adequate account of the reality of our world, which for him was twofold. Schopenhauer adopted this twofoldedness from Kant and his distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal world; the world of appearance and the thing-in-itself. The thing-in-itself, about which Kant claimed nothing can be known, is an a priori condition of possibility for experience. This means that without the thing-in-itself, experience would altogether not be possible. This makes Kant's philosophy transcendental, i.e. denoting conditions of possibility, yet not transcendent per se in this formulation, which would mean knowledge of things that are outside of experience. Schopenhauer contends that we do know what the thing-in-itself is, which is according to him: the will. The question then is how is knowledge of the thing-in-itself possible within the realm of experience? Or how is such a metaphysics still immanent and not transcendent?

For Kant, the thing-in-itself is unknowable. But, as Schopenhauer rightly points out, Kant posits freedom within the thing-in-itself and therefore makes it compatible with the

[56] Beiser, *Weltschmerz,* 1.
[57] Hassan, *Nietzsche's Struggle*, 2.
[58] GS 357 3.599f.

immanent knowledge we have of the world (as physics), which concerns nature. Both kinds of knowledge, either physics as the knowledge of nature, or metaphysics as the knowledge of the thing-in-itself are valid kinds of knowledge for Schopenhauer. The difference between these two types of knowledge is categorical. One is knowledge of outer experience, and the other is knowledge of inner experience. To put it in other words, the world as will is knowledge of the inner essence of the world, whereas the world as representation is knowledge of the world and the causes that inhabit it. Another way Schopenhauer articulates this difference is that the will is the kernel of the phenomenal world and nature, it is the world's inside, whereas how it appears to us is its outside.

We know of the will through our own, individual and particular inner experience. For Schopenhauer, we are immediately and without the mediation of the intellect aware of our own will[59]. Schopenhauer's philosophy, he claims, only extrapolates this a priori awareness of our will to all phenomena in nature[60] to decipher the cryptograph that is the world. The intellect finetuned to this philosophical endeavor of immanent metaphysics will then come to see that the will is "that which appears in the phenomenon, not independently of all phenomenon." This is where Beiser also adds the German, which is illuminating: the will is "das in Ihr (die Erscheinung) Erscheinende"[61]: the will appears in appearance. In paragraph 53, Schopenhauer says that "it is precisely what is still left over after we eliminate the whole of this method of consideration that follows the principle of sufficient reason; thus it is the inner nature of the world, always *appearing* the same in all relations, but itself never amenable to them"[62] (my italics). And the will is "known always only in its relations and references to the phenomenon itself."[63] Because of this, Schopenhauer argues that his metaphysics remains immanent and has no reference to anything transcendent. The world as will and as representation are simply two perspectives we can have of the same world. The will is *what* appears to us in perception and the phenomena (Erscheinung) are *how* it appears to us, in time and space and therefore in causal relations.

2.2 The *punctum pruriens* of Metaphysics

It is interesting to note Schopenhauer's reflections about what leads human beings to philosophize and practice metaphysics, i.e. to try and go beyond our perception, especially its relation to his pessimism. Schopenhauer builds upon the ancient philosophers here, who already identified *wonder* as the impetus to philosophize, which is Aristotle's claim[64], as well as Plato's, who identifies astonishment as a philosophical affect.[65] But what impels this wonder and astonishment?

I already mentioned the puzzle of existence and the question that was opened up by Schopenhauer regarding the *worth of existence*. This is closely related to the impetus of philosophy altogether. Schopenhauer claims that we wonder at things in their everyday occurrences, calling into question the universal nature of the world. What intensifies and urges one to philosophize, according to Schopenhauer, is the knowledge of death, that life

[59] WWR vol.2 17.179
[60] WWR vol.2 17.174
[61] Beiser, *Wetlschmerz*, 29. taken from WWR vol.2 17.183
[62] WWR vol.1 53.274
[63] WWR vol. 2 17.183
[64] WWR vol.2 17.160
[65] WWR vol. 2 17.171

necessarily passes away, and consequently also every individual, including ourselves. Because of this fact, it seems natural to him that any metaphysical explanations that we would deem religious share the trait that they have a dogma of an existence after death. Contra Spinoza, Schopenhauer then argues that what keeps the interest in metaphysics going is "the clear knowledge that this world's non-existence is just as possible as is its existence."[66] This begs the question of an *ought* which only philosophy can answer: *ought* the world to exist or not? Is its existence preferable to its non-existence or vice versa?

The evil and wickedness in the world leads Schopenhauer to answer that question *negatively*. Ultimately to say: "What is more, in fact, we very soon look upon the world as something whose non-existence is not only conceivable, but even preferable to its existence."[67] This is because it is obvious to him that evil and wickedness ought not to exist. Metaphysical attempts to do away with evil are rife, like the invention of the freedom of the will or attributing evil to matter or the devil. Nonetheless, the attempts agree with each other in the fact that they want to do away with evil, and all subscribe to the claim that it ought not to be. Schopenhauer therefore identifies death, wickedness, and evil as the *punctum pruriens*[68] of metaphysics and philosophy. "Not merely that the world exists, but still more that it is such a miserable and melancholy world, is the *punctum pruriens* of metaphysics, the problem awakening in mankind an unrest that cannot be quieted either by scepticism or criticism."[69] It is the insight into the world as a wicked, evil place riddled with death and dying that instigates and impels any metaphysical project. This insight is explicitly pre-philosophical. It is an *a posteriori* observation of the world that instigates the *a priori* theorizing about the reality (as the existence or non-existence) of existence, either as something that ought to be or not. The fact that it is these phenomena that awaken metaphysics means, as Schopenhauer admits, that philosophy starts rather negatively. "Accordingly, philosophical astonishment is at bottom one that is dismayed and distressed; philosophy, like the overture to *Don Juan*, starts with a minor cord."[70]

---

[66] WWR vol.2 17.171

[67] Ibid.

[68] *Punctum pruriens* seems to be a term coined by Schopenhauer. The E.F.J. Payne translation translates this with "Tormenting problem". Nonetheless, this seems to me to be a suggestive and possibly misguiding translation looking at the Latin words and their connotation. *Punctum* could very easily be translated with something like 'point' or 'spot'. *Pruriens*, the present particle of *prurio*, can either mean something like 'to itch', or something relating to a sexual affect: 'to be aroused' or 'having a feeling of lust'. P*unctum pruriens*, which could then be translated as something like "itching point" or "point of sexual arousal"/"arousing point", is a point that invites action. The *punctum pruriens* is a need of the body that anticipates its fulfillment or satisfaction, the metaphysical need itself, here implicitly related to an erotic desire.
The reason the translation "Tormenting problem" was chosen seems to me to be a contextual decision. In the context of the *punctum pruriens* caused by evil, wickedness and death, the torment that can be associated with it is obvious: all of these things cause *suffering*. Nonetheless, my claim is that the suffering that can be associated with *pruriens*, is the suffering that one undergoes when the need associated with it, the fulfillment or satisfaction of the call to action is not met. This is underlined by the fact that Schopenhauer himself identifies it with 'unrest' in the same sentence, as opposed to the rest that follows from its satisfaction. As we will see, the *punctum pruriens* that instigates the carrying out of metaphysics *can* be fulfilled, if we look at Schopenhauer's ethics of renunciation, explained further in this chapter Although Schopenhauer identifies "our greatest sufferings" with "tormenting thoughts" (quälende Gedanken) elsewhere (WWR vol.1 55.298), we should not associate the torment of the *punctum pruriens* with evil, wickedness and death in the world, but with the *observation* of these phenomena in the world, which manifests an itch that can either be scratched or not.

[69] WWR vol.2 17.172

[70]WWR vol.2 17.171

2.3 The Antagonism of the Will and Schopenhauer's Ontology of Conflict

How and why is it then, that the will appears to us in phenomena? And how are we to arrive at an ethics of resignation through this metaphysical insight into reality as will? To answer the second question, we will first have to answer the first question and see how the will appears in phenomena in the form of conflict, which for Schopenhauer is essentially a falsification.

Schopenhauer claims at the outset of his systematic philosophy that his work is the expression of a single thought[71]. This idea is that the world can be seen from two distinct perspectives, either as representation or as will. As the inside of the existence of the world, the will is its essence, that which consequently manifests itself to human beings as representation. In Schopenhauer's words, this is what he calls the objectification of the will through the *principium individuationis*. To adequately understand how this constitutes a falsification of the world as will, what has to be shown is in what way the will initially appears to us as the will-to-live in the phenomena that we perceive in their everydayness. The *principium individiationis* or individuating principle are time and space. Time and space are the categories through which appearances can appear, i.e. making representation possible. The will, however, is what lies outside everything that can be sufficiently explained by the principle of sufficient reason. Only through the *principium individuationis* can any plurality exist, whereas outside of our experience of individual things the will exists without bending to the categories of time and space. Therefore, the will cannot be individuated in its being outside of experience. It is oneness or unitary only in the sense that it is outside of the possibility of plurality[72]. This is what Schopenhauer calls the will that is not yet objectified. In contrast, representation is the objectification of the will.

The means through which the will appears objectified in representation is the *principium individuationis*. But how the objectification of the will appears to us is another question, the answer to which we reach through a kind of Schopenhauerian phenomenology. As I will show, this inevitably leads us back to the *punctum pruriens* of metaphysics discussed above. This is because the world as representation shows itself for Schopenhauer first and foremost as the "antagonism of the will"[73], the contradiction of the will with itself and the conflict that it engenders. This becomes very apparent in his discussion about conflict in nature, where there is a definite distinction laid out that seems to be of significant importance for our understanding of the later elaborated upon human behavior and ethics. For Schopenhauer, conflict can either be productive or unproductive, depending on one's viewpoint.

> "If several of the phenomena of will at the lower grades of its objectification, that is, inorganic nature, come into conflict with one another, because each under the guidance of causality wants to take possession of the existing matter, there arises from this conflict the phenomenon of a higher Idea. This higher idea subdues all the less perfect phenomena previously existing, yet in such a way that it allows their essential nature to continue in a subordinate manner, since it takes up into itself an

[71] WWR vol.1 Preface to the first edition xii
[72] WWR vol.1 23.113
[73] WWR vol.1 28.161

analogue of them. This process is intelligible only from the identity of the will apparent in all the Ideas, and from its striving for higher and higher objectification."[74]

We see here the productivity of conflict in nature described by Schopenhauer in terms of a 'striving' towards a higher objectification of the will. Schopenhauer identifies these grades of the objectification of the will with Plato's Ideas[75]. Higher and lower grades of objectification have to do with a certain perfection, where less perfect phenomena are subdued, yet continue to exist in the productive conflict that produces the higher 'more perfect' objectification. Schopenhauer relates this to inorganic and chemical processes, yet also to the animal-world, where inorganic processes find their objectification in a 'higher' Idea as an animal-being through an "overwhelming assimilation"[76], its functions being subdued lower grade objectifications of the will acting 'blindly', i.e. according to causality[77].

In the realm of human beings, a higher grade of the will's objectification relative to animals, the will shows itself immediately through us as our own individual will. This will, taken as lack[78], manifests itself in terms of motivations, guided by the object of our willing. Schopenhauer is here again greatly influenced by Kant, taking over the distinction between the empirical and intelligible character of human beings, relative to the twofold perspective of the world either as representation or will respectively[79]. Schopenhauer traces conflict in the realm of human beings back to egoism. Egoism can be explained as the adherence to one's own individuated will through the *principium individuationis*. This means that one is committed to the world as representation and not cognizant of the inner side of the world as will, according to Schopenhauer. This is essentially the hinging point around which the whole Schopenhauerian ethics turns and flips over towards an ethics of resignation.

However, not to speed ahead, egoism is something that permeates the whole of the world of appearance, he says that egoism is "essential to everything in nature."[80] Every grade of the will's objectification as individuated forces strive for their own victory over other forces. I have shown that this can be productive for Schopenhauer in terms of assimilation, but this becomes unproductive or destructive for Schopenhauer in the end. The will's productivity lies in the fact that it subdues lower grades of objectification into higher Ideas, attaining the highest Idea in the human being. However, human beings are not exempt from strife, as Schopenhauer readily acknowledges. If egoism is the essential nature of the will taken in its objectification, humans are most definitely prone to it. He writes: "In the consciousness that has reached the highest degree, that is human consciousness, egoism, like knowledge, pain, and pleasure, must also have reached the highest degree, and the conflict of individuals conditioned by it must appear in the most terrible form."[81] Even though human cooperation may safeguard us from a Hobbesian *bellum omnium contra omnes*, this is ultimately not sufficient for saving us from human's tendency to affirm its own will over and against all other willing.[82]

---

[74] Ibid.
[75] WWR vol.1 25.129
[76] WWR vol.1 27.145
[77] WWR vol.1 23.115 and 27.145. For an elaborate discussion: WWR vol.2 20.245ff. or WN 331ff.
[78] See chapter 1.2.1
[79] For an elaborate discussion, see Douglas Berger, *Veil of Maya*, 167ff
[80] WWR vol. 1 61.332
[81] Ibid.
[82] WWR vol.1 61.333, see the next chapter WWR vol.1 62.334ff., where this mode of human behavior is worked out further.

2.4 The Ethics of Renunciation: Transfiguring *Lack*

Schopenhauer does not aim at a normative ethics, or so he says. Nonetheless, in terms of knowledge, Schopenhauer is doubtlessly normative. This has everything to do with his falsification thesis, namely that the world as representation is essentially a falsification of the world as will. When one adheres solely to the world as representation and one's individuality (and all other plurality) made possible through the *principium individuationis*, one is essentially bound by the service of the will, manifesting itself as the will-to-live. Knowledge of the essential nature of the world as will is supposed to set us free from this service, by no longer being deceived by it. "The aesthetic demand for contemplation or the ethical demand for renunciation proceeds from a knowledge independent of the service of the will, and directed to the inner nature of the world in general."[83] This is why Schopenhauer oftentimes refers to this deception by calling it the veil of Maya, a concept appropriated from Indian philosophical thought. This knowledge and the unveiling of the will is formulated either as aesthetic contemplation or ethical renunciation, but both essentially on the same footing. The ethical demand for renunciation is brought about by aesthetic contemplation, made possible by art and, for example, tragedy as the highest form of poetic art. Schopenhauer explains:

> "It then reaches the point where the phenomenon, the veil of Maya, no longer deceives it. It sees through the form of the phenomenon, the principium individuationis; the egoism resting on this expires with it. The motives that were previously so powerful now lose their force, and instead of them, the complete knowledge of the real nature of the world, acting as a quieter of the will, produces resignation, the giving up not merely of life, but of the whole will-to-live itself."[84]

We see here described what essentially happens according to Schopenhauer in the aesthetic contemplation of art: the manifestation of knowledge of the essential nature of the will. Schopenhauer therefore calls the beautiful that which is the highest grade of the will's objectification, namely the whole life of human beings captured in tragic poetry, observed by the pure subject of knowledge that conditions it. Therefore, truth and the beautiful correspond in the contemplation of art, producing a more peaceful frame of mind. This is what leads us to resignation, renunciation or the self-denial of the will, as he argues.

However, although the aesthetic contemplation of art might produce resignation, what is still unclear is *why* this resignation of the will-to-live is an ethical demand. The problem with this line of questioning is that Schopenhauer too seems to be ambivalent on this point. By not aiming at a normative ethics Schopenhauer resorts to claiming that the knowledge from aesthetic contemplation necessarily produces resignation. However, as Berger points out, Schopenhauer also figures that it is a voluntary act and an act of freedom[85]. This sounds contradictory and seems to be a problem of articulating something that ultimately cannot be articulated outside the bounds of the principle of sufficient reason. However, something not to forget is the fact that in Schopenhauer's loyalty to Kant, necessity and freedom are ultimately compatible with each other as two sides of the same coin. Schopenhauer ascribes freedom to the will purely as a negative concept, i.e., the denial of necessity bound by the principle of sufficient reason[86]. Next to that, Schopenhauer already defined the principle of

---

[83] WWR vol1 60.327f.
[84] WWR vol.1 51.253
[85] Berger, *Veil of Maya*, 213f.
[86] WWR vol.1 55.286f.

sufficient reason as determining the *why* in our representations as the formal laws governing it, i.e. with necessity[87]. Outside of the world as representation regarding the freedom of the will, no sensible answer can therefore be given regarding a *why*.

The problem that then remains is the contradictoriness of such a self-denial of the will through the will's highest objectification in the Idea made apparent by art. What this shows again is a conflict of the will with itself, yet leading to a will-less knower. This is not a knowledge of causes governed by natural laws, but insight into the essential irrationality of the will-to-live and its objectification[88], where it shows itself as a constant conflict with itself. In that case, the veil is properly lifted from the observant's eye and one refuses an adherence to the *principium individuationis* and their service to the will, renouncing life and their selfish motives and instead governing themselves according to an ascetic ideal.

This ascetic ideal of the renunciation of the will, however, is again a conflict of the will with itself, essentially turning the vital force that the will provides through its objectification in order to put a halt to the conflict (and hence suffering) it produces in the world of appearance. This is manifested in virtuous behavior, which is compassion for all other sufferers and acts of kindness in this regard[89]. However, what is more important with regards to the ascetic is the experience that one ultimately ends up with when one denies the will-to-live in oneself and consequently all other willing. Schopenhauer admits:

> "If, therefore, we have recognized the inner nature of the world as will, and have seen in all its phenomena only the objectivity of the will; and if we have followed these from the unconscious impulse of obscure natural forces up to the most conscious action of man, we shall by no means evade the consequence that with the free denial, the surrender, of the will, all those phenomena are now abolished"[90]

And a few lines further he writes more explicitly: "No will: no representation, no world."[91] By denying the will-to-live, one also negates its objectification and therefore all appearances and phenomena. Notably, Schopenhauer's ethics does not end up in vouching for the productivity of conflict, like the ethics of compassion that is supposed to be a conflict of the will with itself, essentially the insight into the will's essential nature turning against the will as thing-in-itself. His ethics of compassion could be seen as the last struggle or conflict towards the full negation of the world in order to reach the "greatest possible peace of mind"[92] as the endpoint of ethics. Compassion essentially prepares the ascetic for a full renunciation in its struggle against the will as thing-in-itself, ultimately to renounce it in its entirety, thereby also renouncing the will's objectification. The ethics of compassion will turn out to produce nothing.

What this looks like or what the experience of the ascetic is, is not something that Schopenhauer can positively articulate, it belongs to the realm of mysticism[93]. What is essential is that the ultimate knowledge that the ascetic has left is the insight into the world as a falsification, an illusion, essentially nothing. This disillusionment leaves open if the nothing that is then experienced is an absolute or relative nothing[94]. Schopenhauer indicates

[87] FR, 29. cf. WWR vol.1 15.80
[88] See for an example of an expression of this: WWR vol.1 35.183
[89] WWR vol.1 67.375f.
[90] WWR vol.1 71.410
[91] WWR vol.1 71.411
[92] WWR vol.1 55.303 cf. WWR vol.2 48.604
[93] WWR vol.2 48.612
[94] Ibid.

that it would be consoling if it were only a relative nothing, yet his metaphysics remains immanent and cannot speak of that which is transcendent[95]. The hope still remains. What is also important is the analogy of the disillusionment associated with renunciation and Schopenhauer's explanation of dreams, where he says: "The only certain criterion for distinguishing dream from reality is in fact none other than the wholly empirical one of waking [...]."[96] If one awakes from the illusion and the dream of the world of appearance and denies the will-to-live, reality is nothing, purposeless and meaningless[97].

2.5 The Evaluation of Schopenhauer's Pessimism and Nietzsche's Critique

Due to Nietzsche's life-long engagement with Schopenhauer's philosophy, the connections are obvious. What is at stake is that two modes of ethics, described by Schopenhauer as either the denial or the affirmation of life (seen by him as the will-to-live), the only event-in-itself[98], are squarely opposed and in conflict in the thinking of these philosophers. As the thinker of affirmation, Nietzsche will also take over descriptions of modes of affirmation from Schopenhauer's descriptive ethics, turning it against him. Considering this, one can already see the seeds of what will eventually be known as the eternal return[99], Nietzsche's perfectionism (in terms of becoming who one is)[100], and the 'amor fati'-phrase in the face of determinism[101]. I will limit myself to one aspect of Nietzsche's complex engagement with Schopenhauer.

That either the denial or affirmation of life is the only event-in-itself becomes more apparent if we reflect on Schopenhauer's *punctum pruriens* and the resultant metaphysics of nothingness. Metaphysics is the possibility for redemption out of the wickedness of the world, in which the latter is already presupposed. Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics, Christianity, and compassionate ethics make sense considering Schopenhauer's equivocations concerning Christianity. As I have tried to show, Schopenhauer's *punctum pruriens* of metaphysics is something pre-philosophical. The essential dynamic of the observation of the world of appearance is only *explicated* through the metaphysical lingo of will and representation. This metaphysics ends up in an ethics of renunciation, renouncing the world ultimately based on the insight into the world as the will that feasts on itself, an irrational, and demonic will[102].

Whereas full renunciation of the will starts with self-denial in the form of the ethics of compassion, the affirmation of life must start with the affirmation of one's own life. Yet, the affirmation of the whole of existence cannot stop at the affirmation of one's own life, but must pass beyond it. For Nietzsche then, based on the "most life-affirming drive—*the will to power*"[103] will all self-proclaimed life-denying and life-affirming attitudes be evaluated. The

---

[95] WWR vol.2 50.640
[96] WWR vol.1 5.17 cf. WWR vol. 1 58.322
[97] WWR vol.1 27.149
[98] WWR vol.1 35.184
[99] WWR vol.1 54.283f. cf. WWR vol.1 59.324 cf. e.g. GS 341 3.570; BGE 56 5.74f.
[100] WWR vol.1 54.284f. cf. e.g. GS 335 3.563 or the subtitle of EH 6.255
[101] WWR vol.1 55.301f. cf. e.g. GS 276 3.521
[102] Van Tongeren, *European Nihilism*, 11ff.
[103] GM3 18 5.383

most elaborate and sustained account of the 'Schopenhauerian case' (generally, under the name of the 'ascetic priest') in Nietzsche's thinking, is the third essay of the *Genealogy*. Nietzsche genealogically criticizes the ascetic ideals utilizing the language of *physiology*. However, one should not be tempted to understand this in terms of a vulgar materialism and a reductionism in favor of bodily processes. Rather, Nietzsche finds in the language of physiology a mode of interpretation that accounts for change and conflict. Every time Nietzsche mentions physiology one should ask oneself in what way he is talking about either health or sickness, degeneration or creation, and what underlying dynamic of forces or drives this presupposes as a process and conflict between those forces. The hypothesis is that this finds a more adequate explication in the *'Bildsprache'* (image-language) of physiology than in moral terms[104].

In light of this physiology, Nietzsche starts the discussion of Schopenhauer in this essay in terms of the *physiology of aesthetics*[105]. This is applied in a discussion about Schopenhauer's inheritance of Kantian aesthetics and its claim that something is not beautiful due to the interest of the spectator, or in Kant's own words: "The liking of taste that determines a judgment of taste is devoid of all interest"[106]. In Schopenhauer's aesthetics, tragic art inspires us with knowledge and frees us from the will and its *interest* into a continued existence; will-to-live. Nietzsche turns this interpretation of Kant's 'disinterest in the beautiful' against Schopenhauer, arguing that the acquired knowledge and the means through which the philosopher acquires knowledge is precisely his interest. Art interests Schopenhauer, Nietzsche claims, in so far as it relieves him from what tortures him[107]. In Schopenhauer's case and in the ascetic's case in general, this goes under the name of 'chastity' as part of the ascetic ideal, next to humility and poverty[108]. Nietzsche explains:

> "[...] the sight of the beautiful obviously operated as a catalytic stimulus to the *principal strength* of his nature (the strength of contemplation and of profound perspicacity); in such a way that the latter then exploded and all at once came to dominate his consciousness. [...]---sensuality is not canceled out [aufgehoben] through the onset of the aesthetic condition, as Schopenhauer believed, but only transfigured and no longer present to consciousness as a sexual stimulus."[109]

Reconstructing this argument will have its recourse to the earlier mentioned will to power as the most life-affirming drive. Almost identical to Nietzsche's characterization of romantic pessimism is that this transfiguration has its roots in an impoverished, degenerating, or sickly type of life: "*the ascetic ideal is derived from the protective and healing instincts of a degenerating life,* [...]."[110] What is more here, however, is that the solution to this sickness is given by a life-affirming instinct, here called the 'protective and healing instincts of a degenerating life'. The particular, and most paradigmatic and strongest according to Schopenhauer[111], life-affirming drive is the sexual impulse, to which the solution would be the ascetic ideal of chastity. What is more, chastity gives way to another drive to

---

[104] GM3 16 5.376f. cf. 11[128] 9.487
[105] GM3 8 5.356
[106] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, Translated by Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987) 45f.
[107] GM3 6 5.346ff.
[108] GM3 8 5.352.
[109] GM3 8 5.355f.
[110] GM3 13 5.366
[111] WWR vol.1 60.329

dominate and ‘fill up consciousness’, which constitutes the transfiguration of the sexual drive into a knowledge drive (contemplation and perspicacity). In other words, because every being’s will is to discharge its strength, called the will to power, and because Schopenhauer could not (as a biographical fact) discharge his strength through the satisfaction of the sexual drive, he had to take recourse into a knowledge drive, the drive to philosophize.

But does Schopenhauer not already admit something similar with much fewer words, if we apply retrospective inference here[112], in his *punctum pruriens* of metaphysics? When *punctum pruriens* is interpreted as a ‘point of (sexual) arousal’, we can already clearly see in what way the observation of the world as a wicked place aroused the will (or libidinal energy) to discharge itself into the project of metaphysics. If we take the *punctum pruriens* in this way, this would mean textual evidence of the claim that Nietzsche makes in the *Genealogy,* rather than just another psychologization. Nietzsche’s claim is that this unconscious dynamic eluded Schopenhauer, but that it nevertheless was Schopenhauer’s most refined form of life-affirmation. It is not the affirmation of the whole of existence, but most of all a self-affirmation, the affirmation of the philosopher and philosophy[113] over and against everything else, reducing the latter to nothingness. In light of this, Nietzsche surprisingly claims that Schopenhauer was in fact *not* a pessimist[114], but that through the metaphysical operation, Schopenhauer affirmed his own suffering in his struggle against his enemies. One of his enemies was the will-to-live itself, which inhabits all things, including Schopenhauer. This last contradictoriness, viz. Schopenhauer or the ascetic versus the will-to-live, was the mask that Schopenhauer’s life-affirming drive had to put on to perform a life-affirmation in favor of his ‘principal strength’, the only thing which had the strength to endure and truly live, Schopenhauer’s inspiring genius[115]. In this limited life affirmation, all else is denied and renounced as a form of revenge rooted in ressentiment on the world as will-to-live in favor of an escape into contemplation and metaphysics. This makes Schopenhauer, in Nietzsche’s terms, a romantic pessimist because it attests to his physiological degeneration.

Nietzsche’s project then poses him with a more difficult and complex problematic. Whereas the affirmation of one’s own life is possible in so many different forms of life, because the live-affirming drive called the will to power inhabits all things, the affirmation of the whole of life, with all its affirmations and denials is a much greater task, which also implies a much greater enemy, elaborated upon in the first chapter under the name of nihilism. Ultimately, neither morality nor science, as the sublimation of Christian morality in the will to truth can help in this task, because of its involvement in bringing about nihilism. The question is, according to Nietzsche, what offers the antithesis to the ascetic ideal, which is tied up with the advent of nihilism. Between brackets, almost at the end of the essay, Nietzsche anticipates that art, with its ‘will to deceive’, is the most suitable candidate as the opposition to the ascetic ideal[116]. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

---

[112] See chapter 1.2.2
[113] GM3 7 5.351
[114] Something Nietzsche already poses as a question in BGE 186 5.107. See also GS 27 3.400, where ‘the renouncer’ is seen in light of his life-affirmation, likely referring to Schopenhauer. In light of the *Genealogy* as a polemic (the undertitle: ‘ein Streitschrift’) and thus having a more explicit agonistic character contra Schopenhauer and the ascetic ideal, it is put forward more confidently here.
[115] Introduction, footnote 2
[116] GM3 25 5.402f.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to uncover the relation between Schopenhauer's world of appearance and his pessimism. I argued that Schopenhauer's world of appearance was explicated in an immanent metaphysics, making both the will and the will's objectification knowable through phenomena. What Schopenhauer called the *punctum pruriens* of metaphysics is in my view a pre-philosophical insight, the only 'event-in-itself' as Schopenhauer called it, that determines Schopenhauer's metaphysics as pessimistic from the get-go. For him, this also justifies an ethics of renunciation. However, as I have tried to show, this ties together well with Nietzsche's critique of the ascetic ideal in the *Genealogy*, especially if we interpret (to my mind correctly) *puctum pruriens* as a term with an erotic undertone.

Chapter 3. Nietzsche's Affirmation of Semblance and the Will to Power

The objective of this chapter is quite straightforward. If Nietzsche rejects the Schopenhauerian metaphysics of a dualistic ontology, even if it is an immanent ontology, what else remains for him? As I have indicated in the previous chapters, this is where Nietzsche's aesthetics of semblance comes in. In this chapter, I will first indicate the need for other terminology, that omits the association with a dualistic ontology. Next to that, I will show the way this turns up in Nietzsche's work. Afterward, I will evaluate if Nietzsche succeeds in enacting a Dionysian pessimism in favor of life affirmation through the recognition of semblance, an affirmation of Nietzsche's own 'world of semblance'. As will turn out, however, the key to this will go under another name than semblance, namely will to power.

3.1 Semblance as the Overcoming of Metaphysics

I will refer to a famous section in *Twilight of the Idols* to elucidate the overcoming of a dualistic ontology in Nietzsche's thinking. This section is often associated with Nietzsche's overturning of Platonism or the overturning of classical metaphysics. The section under the title 'How the "true world" ultimately became a fable; the history of an error' shows a historical devaluation at the hand of metaphysics and "reason" in philosophy (the title of the previous section to which the last section is appended). The devaluation regards, which the previous section points at, sensuality, and means the consequent valuation of the 'suprasensuous' or the transcendent, which can only be attained through reason. This is the development that Nietzsche criticizes and attempts to overturn in this section.

The section has six distinct stages, all of which I cannot exhaustively interpret within the scope of this thesis. However, in the six stages of the history of metaphysics, a few paradigmatic figures in the history of philosophy are described or alluded to. Whereas some of the different stages indicate the history of philosophy, some also imply Nietzsche's own history of thought[117]. This implicating gesture inscribes himself in the history of philosophy and marks his philosophy as an important moment in this history. In the first stage, Plato is mentioned as proto-Platonism, but not yet Platonism itself. The next stage signifies Christianity, in which the 'true world' is now something 'beyond' as a promised heaven over and against the world here and now. The third stage is that of Kantianism, in which the distinction between the thing-in-itself and the phenomenal world is interpreted in terms of a kind of Platonism[118].

The third to the fourth stage in this history marks the decisive turn, in which the history of philosophy (Platonism) begins its decline. The fourth stage signifies the unknowability of any 'true world', due to which it cannot inform us of anything anymore. Yet, with this step, the shadows of God and the Christian interpretation of the world have not been overcome[119]. This stage can be associated with the German Idealists and Schopenhauer, who all believed in the value of truth, which is the sublimation of Christian morality as indicated in the first chapter. The fifth stage introduces Nietzsche's thought and

[117] Heidegger, *Nietzsche* vol.1, 207.
[118] This is also Schopenhauer's interpretation in his equation of Kant and Plato: grades of the will's objectification (the appearance of the thing-in-itself) can be identified by means of knowledge of them as platonic Ideas. See chapter 2.3 and note 93
[119] Heidegger, *Nietzsche* vol.1, 206. cf. GS 108 3.467

his critique of metaphysics and the abolishment of the ‘true world’. However, to truly overcome the dualistic ontology of a ‘true world’ and a ‘world of appearance’, both should be abolished. The sixth stage goes: “ 6. We have suppressed the true world: what world survives? The apparent world perhaps?... Certainly not! *In abolishing the true world we have also abolished the world of appearance!*”[120] With this stage, Nietzsche indicates not the fact that ‘nothing’ remains when both worlds are abolished, but that while we deny the ‘true world’ we should not remain stuck in the attitude towards the world of appearance that is implicit in this dualism. This attitude is a condemning attitude towards the sensuous world, due to the preference of a supersensuous world. A transvaluation of the sensuous world is needed. This transvaluation is marked by the aesthetics of semblance (Schein). Aesthetics here means not only an attitude pertaining to a specific kind of art (visual, literary, or performing arts), but to the whole of our sensibility, from the Greek αἴσθησῐς (aesthesis), which means ‘(a) perception’. The world is taken as an aesthetic phenomenon, which aligns Nietzsche with the pre-Socratic Heraclitus[121], recognizing the world as a constant *becoming*, as is evident through the senses.

Semblance is the word Nietzsche uses concerning this aesthetics to signify the transvaluation of the sensuous world. This has a very particular reason, also in relation to Kant and Schopenhauer, as Rethy indicates[122]. In Kant’s critical project, semblance (Schein) is carefully distinguished from appearance (Erscheinung), the latter dealing purely with a scientifically knowable world. Whereas, likewise for Schopenhauer, appearance designates the opposite of the thing-in-itself, Kant indicates that *Schein*, which can either be translated as semblance or illusion, has to do (among other things) with error and faulty judgments regarding the senses. For Schopenhauer, appearance and semblance or illusion (Schein) essentially correspond. Schopenhauer’s falsification thesis, as I have indicated, designates the whole of the world as an illusion or dream that must be overcome through the unveiling knowledge of the ascetic. While this Schopenhauerian conception is still present in Nietzsche’s artist-metaphysics of *The Birth of Tragedy*[123], Nietzsche will also employ semblance as a notion later in his work, when this metaphysical project was disavowed.

The linguistic dimension of the difference between ‘Erscheinung’ and ‘Schein’ is important to keep in mind. Whereas ‘Erscheinung’ designates the world of appearance in a dualistic metaphysics, ‘Schein’ is truly an immanent concept for Nietzsche, designating the world as a constant *becoming*. ‘Erscheinung’ (appearance) is something that ‘erscheins’ (appears) or is ‘scheinbar’ (apparent), implicating an underlying being. When the term ‘Schein’ (semblance) is employed, it ‘scheins’ (shines), instead of something appearing as something else. Semblance does not represent or resemble something else, but only continually discloses itself as that which it is. The term therefore designates an overcoming of the dualistic ontology of metaphysics.

3.2 Semblance, Art, and the Tragic Artist

Although the world taken as an aesthetic phenomenon does not necessarily pertain to a specific kind of art, philosophizing about the world of semblance will have its import from

[120] TI Fable, 6.81
[121] PTAG 7 1.831
[122] Robert Rethy, ‘‘Schein’ in Nietzsche’s philosophy’ in *Nietzsche and Modern German Thought,* (London: Routledge, 1991), 60ff.
[123] See chapter 1.2.1

language that does pertain to art. For instance, a case in which classical metaphysics and ethics might describe something as a virtue, having to do with moral discernment, is now described as one's 'taste', an aesthetic discernment. This goes together with the moral category of cultivating one's virtuous character, which is described as giving one's character a 'style'[124]. I will leave aside the more metaphysical and Schopenhauerian *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which semblance already plays a prominent role regarding the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. At that time, philosophical insight is shown to us through tragic art and its semblance. For this thesis's purpose, however, I will look at Nietzsche's works which could be characterized as an anti-metaphysical project in favor of the world as an aesthetic phenomenon.

If we remember Nietzsche's aesthetic justification of existence, something similar is claimed in *The Gay Science* 107. "As an aesthetic phenomenon existence is still *bearable* to us"[125], which reminds us of the note discussed above in the first chapter about a tragic insight into life. Something similar is claimed here: art shows us how we can perceive life as a tragedy or a comedy. This makes life bearable, but not justified in a moral sense, with which Nietzsche is no longer concerned during this time. Again, in this section, life as an aesthetic phenomenon is portrayed as a cure against a suicidal kind of nihilism. Art, in general, is identified with a 'good will to semblance' or, 'the will to deceive'[126], which provides this cure and teaches it, as it were. This good will to semblance is incorporated in our conscience and can then be applied to life itself, which then gains significance outside the realm of any particular art piece.

This is what we see in *The Gay Science* 54, called 'the consciousness of semblance'. Explicitly here, Nietzsche claims that semblance does not designate the opposite of another being behind this semblance, something like a 'true world'. Instead, he recognizes the fact that he perceives the world through his senses, to which someone with a thirst for knowledge might assign predicates. These predicates are also semblance themselves. The logic of knowledge, guided by the will to truth, is here silently identified with semblance and its will to deceive. Another notable association in this section is semblance as a dream from which one can awake. However, whereas Schopenhauer's prime objective was awakening out of the dream, realizing 'nothingness', Nietzsche here affirms life as a dream and posits the possibility that insight into this world might keep the dream going, i.e. making life bearable. This is made possible by the self-negating character of the dream, of which we are aware that it is a kind of illusion: only a dream. Nonetheless, through the incorporation[127] of a 'good will to semblance', the dream can be affirmed. Knowledge of the world, brought about through the 'knower' or the 'masters of ceremony' are describers of the world in this section. Predicates are not assigned to the world to condemn it, which is the case with the distinction between a world of appearance and a true world, but they are assigned to keep the dream intact, to enable life.

Incorporatiing both the will to truth and the will to semblance entails a necessary conflict. This brings me to section 346 of *The Gay Science*. Here human beings are identified with both the 'venerating animal' and the 'distrustful animal'. Human beings as venerating animals means that human beings tend to interpret the world according to a *need*

---

[124] GS 290 3.530
[125] GS 107 3.464
[126] GM3 25 5.402
[127] GS 110 speaks explicitly of an incorporation of 'truth', instead of the 'will to deceive'. Some speculate about the note in which the eternal return is first introduced (11[141] 9.494), as a plan for the writing of GS as four stages of incorporation.

(physiologically). This need is guided by the projection of a (fictitious) ideal, which promises its fulfillment, i.e. the 'true world' associated with the ascetic ideal. This is a kind of *idealizing*[128], a projection of our desire or a transfiguration of our needs into philosophy. As I have shown, this could be associated with degenerating life.

However, the human being is also identified as a 'distrustful animal'[129]. This can be associated with the will to truth, realizing an insight into a godless world. The will to truth then found its expression in the pessimism of Schopenhauer and his followers in the 19th century. This, however, can also be interpreted as physiological degeneration and romantic pessimism, as we have seen in Nietzsche's interpretation of Schopenhauer's ascetic ideal. The will to truth remains the last remnant of Christian morality. Nonetheless, Nietzsche wants to affirm the godlessness of existence: we cannot in any way go back to an earlier stage and affirm the Christian religion as semblance and belief in it like an illusion or dream when it condemns life. This would go against Nietzsche's project of life affirmation and yes-saying.

The condemning tendency seems to be inherent in both these types in human beings, either as venerating or as distrustful animals. In the first instance, we venerate a true world over and against the world of appearance. In the second instance, we venerate our own intellect and reason over and against the world of appearance it distrusts. This creates an either/or situation, according to Nietzsche: "'Either abolish your venerations or - *yourselves*!' The latter would be nihilism; but would not the former also be - nihilism?"[130] Doing away with oneself would be a suicidal kind of nihilism. But the last question is if the project of the hammer, i.e. the destruction of ruling valuations and sentiments (the destruction of idols)[131], is not also nihilistic. This destruction as the ultimate goal, making beliefs unbelievable, would be the veneration solely of the will to truth. For Nietzsche, omitting this Petersburgian nihilism of the 'belief in unbelief' (which may also ultimately lead to suicide) is what his physiology of aesthetics and semblance in *Twilight of the Idols* is about. So even though Nietzsche will continue to make ruling beliefs rooted in degenerating life more unbelievable, he will at the same time try to incorporate elements that 'feed' human beings as venerating animals in favor of growing life. The question then becomes: how do we incorporate this will to semblance further, not only to preserve life, but to make it an expression of power and the fullness of life. How do we make it testify to physiological *excess*?

Nietzsche tries to value the human as a 'venerating animal' by trying to shift the meaning of *idealizing*[132] toward the terms of aesthetics. Idealizing, associated with the creation out of a need, is now related to the creation out of the compulsion of excess. This is identified by Nietzsche as an artistic kind of idealizing and the creation of art in *Twilight of the Idols*. "Someone in this state transforms things until they reflect his own power, - until they are the reflections of his perfection. This need to make perfect is - art."[133] The physiological state which is called *ecstasy* or *intoxication* (Rausch*,* which can also be associated with the

---

[128] Van Tongeren, *European Nihlism*, 74.
[129] GS 346 3.580
[130] GS 346 3.581
[131] Even though this might be a correct use of the metaphor of 'philosophizing with the hammer', we are dealing with an overdetermination when it comes to many of Nietzsche's metaphors, as well as with this one according to Blondel (and he is right in my view). This means that the project of the hammer is not only destructive, but is also the instrument Nietzsche hands to future philosophers for them to shape new values, for example. See Blondel, *Nietzsche*. 16.
[132] TI Skirmishes 8 6.116
[133] TI Skirmishes 9 6.117

most primitive ecstasy: the sexual impulse)[134] is a will that is full of power and therefore externalizes this power, projects it, and makes things correspond to its fullness by accentuating certain aspects. This kind of idealizing is what creates art with its good will to semblance.

What is important here is that Nietzsche's physiology of aesthetics implies a shift in the aesthetic concepts of beauty and ugliness[135]. The physiological condition of the artist in ascribing aesthetic judgments becomes more important. This can be measured by the effect that it produces in the observer. Art and its beauty are not solely seen from the point of reference of the artwork, as beauty-in-itself (i.e., without interest), but from the point of view of the artist and observer of art. Regarding the observer of art, the meaning shifts towards the ascription of aesthetic judgments and its root in the physiology of the artist. Hence, he writes: "Nothing is beautiful; man alone is beautiful"[136], which means that everything that is assigned 'beauty' is a projection of the artist's physiology in terms of excess. The observer values this reflection of excess in something they call beautiful due to its effect: it is a feeling of the heightening of power. And he adds: "nothing is ugly save the degenerate man", meaning someone sees in something one calls ugly the "decline of his type"[137], their own degenerating tendencies accentuated in the artwork by an artist suffering from physiological degeneration. This results in an effect of the weakening of power in the observer. In this section, this is still related mostly to the sight of the beauty or the ugly of a work of art and the resultant effect in the observer.

As we can see, however, the role of the artist is even more important, if we want to make sense of the physiological condition projected in the work of art. Can the portrayal of the ugly, hard, and questionable[138] be a sign of physiological excess? Nietzsche's aim is not to outright destructively negate life-negating tendencies, this would be contradictory and would repeat the logic of revenge and its destructive no-saying. Contrary to that, the ugly in art, e.g. its tragic elements, like the downfall of the hero, is redeemed as a grand enemy by the tragic artist. In this context, Nietzsche starts talking about Schopenhauer and attacks him for his appraisal of the weakening effect that the tragic and ugly in art has. But then, Nietzsche turns to the artist:

> "What is it that the soul of the tragic artist communicates to others? Is it not precisely his fearless attitude towards that which is terrible and questionable? This attitude is in itself a highly desirable one; he who has once experienced it, honours it above everything else. He communicates it. He must communicate, provided he is an artist and a genius in the art of communication. A courageous and free spirit, in the presence of a *mighty foe*, in the presence of a sublime misfortune, and face to face with a problem that inspires horror—this is the triumphant attitude which the tragic artist selects and which he glorifies. The martial elements in our soul celebrate their Saturnalia in tragedy; he who is used to suffering, he who looks out for suffering, the heroic man, extols his existence by means of tragedy,—to him alone does the tragic artist offer this cup of sweetest cruelty.—"[139] (my italics)

---

[134] TI Skirmishes 8 6.116
[135] TI Skirmishes 20 6.124
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] TI Skirmishes 23 6.126
[139] TI Skirmishes 23 6.126

By seeking out everything hard and questionable in life, including perhaps his own ugliness and degenerating tendencies as a 'mighty foe' in his depiction in the form of tragedy, the tragedian affirms it. The essential therapeutic nature of the tragedy is situated in the heightening of the feeling of power in the observer, which can also be related to the earlier mentioned backward inference[140]. This all depends on the physiological dynamic of the artist: if he takes the side of the Dionysian pessimism inside him, or that of the romantic pessimist; a yes-sayer or a no-sayer.

This treatment of tragedy of course hearkens back to Nietzsche's first treatment of the Greeks in *The Birth of Tragedy*. In *The Gay Science* 370, Nietzsche claims that the word 'classical' (pessimism) is against his taste (referring to the Greeks), for which he then substitutes the word 'Dionysian' (pessimism). Nonetheless, this kind of pessimism, as the affirmation of all that is 'hard and questionable' in human beings, is heavily inspired by the Greeks and their tragedy. Because of this context, he refers to the Greeks in the preface (1886) to*The Gay Science*. In the last section, the tension present in the incorporation of the will to truth and the will to semblance and the conflict that entails is explicated. Nietzsche here explains a pitfall of the will to truth in an analogy between truth and a woman. He says: "We no longer believe that truth remains truth when the veil is withdrawn from it", referring to Schopenhauer's veil of Maya. A few lines further he says: "Perhaps truth is a woman who has grounds for not showing her grounds?"[141] With this line, he indicates that the tendency of semblance to 'cover over' or 'veil' in art is needful for the preservation of life, as we have seen. Next to that, the terribleness depicted in tragedy is a sign of the power of the artist. Even though we are aware of the questionable brought forward in tragic art, its semblance is the counter-force able to preserve this powerful form of life. He therefore writes: "Oh, those Greeks! They knew how to live: for that purpose, it is necessary to keep bravely to the surface, the fold, and the skin; to worship semblance, to believe in forms, tones, and words, in the whole Olympus of semblance! Those Greeks were superficial—*from profundity*!"[142] The Greeks already professed the terrible nature of reality in tragedy (their profundity) and affirmed it through art, at the same time covering it over and venerating its semblance (their superficiality).

The question of the transfiguration of a physiological dynamic of excess into art is made clear. But as we should remember, this does not only count for art in a strict sense but also for philosophy itself. The question would then be how the questionable is depicted and covered over by the philosophical tragedian Nietzsche himself.

3.3 Semblance, Perspectivism, and the Will to Power

An obvious answer to this last question would be that it is nihilism, the *mighty foe* that Nietzsche envisions and ultimately his (and our) *grand enemy*. Nihilism is the condemnation of life as will to power. Firstly, Christianity and Platonism were nihilistic, they favored an ideal over and against life. It expressed this ideal in 'the art of dying' or the ascetic ideal. In Schopenhauer's case, as I showed, the ethics of compassion prepares one for the ascetic experience of 'nothingness' and the release out of the grasp of the will-to-live. In this interpretation, this ideal is as close as one gets to being dead among the living, essentially preparing us for death.

---

[140] Chapter 1.2.2
[141] GS preface 4 3.352
[142] GS Preface 4 3.352 (translation edited by me, rendering "Schein" or "Scheins" as 'semblance' instead of 'appearance')

The will to power preserves life (much like Schopenhauer's interpretation of the will as will-to-live), but is also the expression of physiological strength, and growing life: it expresses its excess. If life is becoming, anything fixed cannot stay what it is very long. This is why everything has to overcome itself. Everything stagnant must eventually die in favor of something else. In a short section in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche says:

> "What is life? - Life - that is: continually shedding something that wants to die; Life - that is: being cruel and inexorable against anything that is growing weak and old in us, and not just in us. Life - therefore means: being devoid of respect for the dying, the wretched, the aged? Always being a murderer? And yet old Moses said: 'Thou shalt not kill.'"[143]

The problem is not only that nihilism (or romantic pessimism, essentially a form of nihilism) condemns life in favor of some ideal, be it the Christian form or the atheistic Schopenhauerian form, but that life itself seems to include a constant dying as a necessary condition. Everything that wants to die has to be cast off of us, in order for strength and growth to express itself. This casting off of dead things is painful no doubt and entails necessary suffering. This was thematized in the first chapter as Nietzsche's a-romantic self-therapy as the healing from a certain sickness. To indicate and underline here again, romantic pessimism is an escape out of this necessary suffering, "man would rather will *nothingness* than not will at all"[144], as Nietzsche indicates in the last line of the *Genealogy*. It is the task of Dionysian pessimism to affirm this inherent suffering in life, the constant dying and casting off everything that wants to die; to affirm our cruelty instead of our compassion.

The Christian, Platonic, or Schopenhauerian (in short, ascetic) reflex to the 'problem of suffering', the fact that there is so much evil, wickedness, and suffering in this world is to justify this suffering in some sense. This can be done through theodicy or the struggle towards 'nothingness' and the contradictory nature of Schopenhauer's ethics of compassion towards 'eternal justice'. Although not all kinds of justice have their root in a kind of ressentiment[145], these forms of justification do, as the revenge against life; justifying an ideal in favor of this life here and now. In Nietzsche's thought, however, there is another attitude towards justice and law in the second essay of the *Genealogy*. Justice and law in this essay are on the side of the "active, the strong, the spontaneous, the aggressive man."[146] And again: "Wherever justice is practiced, wherever justice is upheld, one sees a stronger power seek means to put an end to the senseless raging of *ressentiment* among weaker powers subordinate to it (whether groups or individuals)."[147] It is in this light that Nietzsche claims in *Beyond Good and Evil* that: "the real philosophers are commanders and lawgivers!"[148] But what then of semblance?

The creation of art and its good will to semblance is a kind of idealizing, as shown in the previous section. In art, the artist accentuates or emphasizes certain things over other things, which he under-emphasizes. For example in clair-obscur painting: some things are light and easy to see, whereas the background and 'unimportant' things depicted are left in the dark. This accentuating tendency of art and its semblance is what Heidegger explicitly

---

[143] GS 26 3.400
[144] GM3 28 5.412
[145] GM2 11 5.309ff
[146] GM2 11 5.311
[147] GM2 11 5.311f.
[148] BGE 211 5.145

links to Nietzsche's perspectivism. He writes that semblance as the reality of things "should be understood to mean not that reality is something apparent, but that being-real is in itself perspectival, a bringing forward into appearance, a letting radiate; that it is in itself a shining. Reality is radiance."[149] Leaving Heidegger aside, this is to indicate the important relationship between semblance and perspective. Idealizing is showing a certain perspective on life through art. Nietzsche's perspectivism does not entail relativism: that each perspective has its merit and value equally among all perspectives. As I indicated, the value can be measured by its physiological conditions in the artist and the resulting effect on the observer, ultimately evaluated through the lens of either degenerating life or growing and expanding life.

In the recognition of reality as semblance and perspectival, the philosopher can still posit a law and be a commander. In the third essay of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche indicates how the philosopher might come closer to 'objectivity'. "Perspectival seeing is the *only* kind of seeing there is, perspectival 'knowing; the *only* kind of 'knowing'; and the *more* feelings about a matter we allow to come to expression, the *more* eyes, different eyes through which we are able to view this same matter, the more complete our 'conception' of it, our 'objectivity', will be."[150] The philosopher's first task is to work towards this full kind of 'conception' and 'objectivity', to ultimately have all these perspectives "*at one's disposal* and to suspend or implement them at will:"[151] this is the second task of the philosopher. This suspension- and implementation-at-will is the philosopher's law-giving activity. In this activity, the philosopher accentuates certain aspects over others in a kind of idealizing way. Also in art can law already manifest itself out of the fullness of a strong will[152].

Yet, in this law-giving activity, it is not semblance that is once again created by the philosopher. As Rethy puts it adequately: "'So soll es sein!', not 'So soll es scheinen!'."[153] In the transformation of these perspectives into his own valuations the philosopher expresses the highest form of the will to power, explained in the *Genealogy* as follows:

> "that anything which exists, once it has somehow come into being, can be reinterpreted in the service of new intentions, repossessed, repeatedly modified to a new use by a power superior to it; that everything which happens in the organic world is part of a process of *overpowering*, *mastering*, and that in turn, all overpowering and mastering is a reinterpretation, a manipulation, in the course of which the previous 'meaning' and 'aim' must necessarily be obscured or completely effaced."[154]

The will to power expresses itself through the philosopher in the reinterpretation and evaluation of all kinds of perspectives. He gives these perspectives order and organizes them under a certain law. Artistic valuations in terms of accentuation and semblance are thereby raised to the height of the philosopher's law and his valuations as 'truth'. The philosopher is not only a tragic artist in terms of the creation of art and semblance but also a creator of law and truth. Whereas the philosopher as a tragic artist recognizes the reality of things as semblance, the law-giving philosopher recognizes it as the will to power.

---

[149] Heidegger, *Nietzsche* vol1., 215.
[150] GM3 12 5.365
[151] GM3 12 5.364
[152] 7 [7] 12.298f.
[153] Rethy, ''Schein' in Nietzsche's philosophy', 71. referring to BGE 211 5.145
[154] GM2 12 5.313f.

3.4 The Affirmation of the Will to Power: Transfiguring *Excess*

The last question that will have to be answered is if this distinction in Nietzsche's thinking, between semblance and will to power, does not repeat the duality already put forward by Schopenhauer between the world as will and appearance, thus falling back into romantic pessimism. This might be the impression that we get when opposing semblance to the will to power. However, even though this might be a seeming duality, it is not of a life-denying kind.

As I mentioned, perspectivism does not entail merely a form of relativism. I argue that the law-giving activity of Nietzsche himself can be seen as articulated in a physiological dynamic, either growing and expanding or degenerating and impoverishing. This law is evaluated on the premise of the world as will to power. According to Nietzsche, the idea he puts forward in *Beyond Good and Evil* 36, the world seen from the inside and according to its 'intelligible character', is will to power. What Nietzsche adds here, however, is important, that it "would be just this "will to power" and nothing else."[155] In this section, he argues against the world as semblance or representation in the Schopenhauerian sense. Because, as we should not forget, semblance, appearance, and illusion are essentially the same in Schopenhauer's metaphysics. The essential duality in Schopenhauer's thinking turns out to be the duality between the will and our knowledge of the world, the world of appearance only being an intermediary between this duality, but always in service of the will as the inside or 'kernel' of the world. Nietzsche wants to bring together the inner and the outer, characterizing it as one and the same. In this sense, knowledge has been characterized as just one of many manifestations of the will to power. This leads to the critique of Schopenhauer already discussed in the last section of the second chapter, the fact that Schopenhauer's flight into knowledge amounted to his self-affirmation, the affirmation of his own manifestation of the will to power as knowledge.

Nietzsche's thesis is similar to that of Schopenhauer in the sense that the inner essence of the world is characterized as will. The difference outlined in the first chapter is between the will seen as a *lack* of satisfaction or as a Dionysian *excess*. This led Schopenhauer to the 'nothingness' of knowledge, and led Nietzsche to an explosion of excessive thought. According to Nietzsche, we know of the will to power due to our affects and passions, our drives[156]. The will to power is simply an extrapolation of this reality, outside of which nothing else is 'given', to the 'outside world' which is then determined according to this causality: will acting on will. Regarding the concept of a 'soul' then, this has important implications, which Nietzsche indicates in section 12 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. Against the 'atomism of the soul' inherited from Christianity, other hypotheses about the reality of the soul have to be reconsidered. Of these hypotheses, Nietzsche names a few: "concepts like the "mortal soul" and the "soul as subject-multiplicity" and the "soul as a society constructed out of drives and affects"[157]. Although these are put forward here as seemingly separate hypotheses, among which future psychologists might pick and choose, these hypotheses are arguably all connected to each other. The soul as a society of drives and affects consider the soul to be a multiplicity of different forces as manifestations of the will to power, all expressing their own values. Every drive expresses its own perspective, necessarily expressing its value over and against another perspective. These perspectives can be overcome if a person can command different perspectives, drives and value judgments under an organizing principle. This is the result of a productive conflict between drives, even

[155] BGE 36 5.55
[156] BGE 36 5.54
[157] BGE 12 5.27

though some drives might have to ‘die’ (entailing necessary and possibly the intensification of suffering) in favor of the proliferation of other drives. We can see the romantic drive in Nietzsche as an example of such a drive that had to be overcome.

This line of thinking leads us to the following question: in what way can this dynamic concept of a soul, a claim that would also pertain to Nietzsche himself, manifest itself, i.e. be transfigured into a Dionysian pessimistic philosophy? This leads us right back to the distinction made in *The Gay Science* 370, in which he distinguishes between a romantic/Dionysian distinction and a being/becoming distinction. As I indicated, Nietzsche prefers the first over the being/becoming distinction. I would argue that this is because Nietzsche recognized that both would have to become manifest in his text. His philosophy does not only testify of a Dionysian becoming (and self-overcoming) but also of an artful eternalization, a transfiguration of his own becoming into the fixity of the written word. His aim is therefore to capture his becoming by testifying of the differential impulses and as it were to immortalize them in the text.

This also harkens back to Blondel’s saying and unsaying[158]. In order to testify of these differential impulses and drives, it would not make sense to at one time be a romantic, yet at another time a Dionysian pessimist, undermining any organizational whole or fixity. By at the one hand *saying* and the avowal of Dionysian pessimism, while at the same time *unsaying* and a disavowal of romantic pessimism, his work performs the law that his work is supposed to testify of, namely life-affirmation. Nietzsche’s work can therefore be characterized as the transfiguration of the fullness of life into a becoming being. Multiplicity in his work is saying and unsaying, but principally: yes-saying to life as the will to power. Or, to quote Nietzsche’s own words: “To *impress* on becoming the character of being — that is the highest *will to power*.”[159] (my translation)

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have expanded on Nietzsche’s own world of appearance, characterized by him with the notion of semblance (Schein). This notion is supposed to omit the association with a dualistic ontology. This notion figures the world as an aesthetic phenomenon, which has its relation to art which makes life bearable. However, life does not only have to be made bearable, but the tragic artist’s art is supposed to be a transfiguration of an expanding physiological dynamic. In the last two sections, I have added the notions of perspectivism and the will to power, in order to explain the philosopher’s law-giving activity. Lastly, I explained how Nietzsche tries to perform the transfiguration of Dionysian pessimism by his own law-giving activity.

[158] Blondel, *Nietzsche*, 30.
[159] 7[54] 12.312

Bibliography

Beiser, Frederick C. *Weltschmerz: Pessimism in German Philosophy, 1860-1900*. First edition. Oxford: University Press, 2016.

Berger, Douglas L. *"The Veil of Maya": Schopenhauer's System and Early Indian Thought*. Binghamton, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2004.

Blondel, Éric. *Nietzsche - the Body and Culture: Philosophy as a Philological Genealogy*. Trans. Sean Hand. London: Athlone Press, 1991.

Hassan, Patrick. *Nietzsche's Struggle against Pessimism*. 1st ed. Cambridge University Press, 2023.

Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche*. Trans. David Farrell Krell, Joan Stambaugh, and Frank A. Capuzzi. 1st HarperCollins pbk. ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*. Edited by J. H. Bernard. Translated by Werner S. Pluhar. Cambridge/Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987.

Rethy, Robert. "Schein in Nietzsche's Philosophy." In *Nietzsche and Modern German Thought*, 65–93. Routledge, 1991.

———. "The Tragic Affirmation of the Birth of Tragedy." *Nietzsche-Studien* 17, no. 1 (1988): 1–44.

Siemens, Herman W. *Agonal Perspectives on Nietzsche's Philosophy of Critical Transvaluation*. Monographien Und Texte Zur Nietzsche-Forschung Vol. 74.. Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2021.

Tongeren, Paul van. *Friedrich Nietzsche and European Nihilism*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018.