



**Nietzsche and Eros between the devil and God's deep blue sea:**

**The problem of the artist as actor—Jew—woman**

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**Abstract.** In a single aphorism in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche arrays “The Problem of the Artist” in a reticulated constellation. Addressing every member of the excluded grouping of disenfranchised “others,” Nietzsche turns to the destitution of a god of love keyed to the self-turning absorption of the human heart. His ultimate and irrecusably tragic project to restore the innocence of becoming requires the affirmation of the problem of suffering as the task of learning *how to love*. Nietzsche sees the eros of art as what can teach us how to make things beautiful, desirable, lovable in the routine truth of reality: “*When they are not.*” The stumbling block for those of us paralyzed by impotence and frozen in a technological age of anxiety, longing for being not becoming (eternal youth), is that one can never possess but can only win great health, again and again (like erotic desire), because one gives it away again and again as sacrifice or affirmation without reserve: that is to say, with erotic artistry.

## 1. Introduction

Although in what follows I address the question of erotic love (that is: the domain of sexuality), it is important to emphasize that I will offer as oblique an approach to the issue of eros and sex as any other philosophical discussion. In philosophic reviews of the erotic (particularly analytic treatments),<sup>1</sup> abstraction invariably ablates the wings of the god.<sup>2</sup> Here, however, the obliquity of my approach has less to do with the philosophic elusiveness of the subject matter than with the complex of problems expressed by Friedrich Nietzsche under the name of the repressed problem of the artist. Nietzsche articulates the problem of the artist as the problem no less of the actor than as the problem of the Jew (GS §361) and because all three problems are ultimately expressed as

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<sup>1</sup> For examples of this fatal banality, consider Roger Scruton's chillingly asexual, monotonous account or the accounts by Robert C. Solomon or Alan Soble, or indeed Irving Singer's three volume treatment, or, in German, the tome by the one-man encyclopedia, Hermann Schmitz, or else Niklas Luhmann's patently oxymoronic "codification" in his *Love as Passion*. That these authors are male, that men are (in fact and despite the mythologization of male desire to the contrary) typically uninterested in the ideal of eros and even less interested in the nature of the erotic (which is always all about the Other) but write utterly incidental books (none of the aforementioned specializes in the subject: their books are extras, written on the fly, for fun: impotent efforts delivering nothing of philosophic relevance on a necessarily dyadic topic), all this is doubtless part but not the whole of the monological drabness of such philosophic studies of love. For Elfriede Jelinek, what is at stake reflects the dynamics of "a Hegelian relationship between master and slave." Thus with respect to desire, that is to say of desiring, and hence of desirability, Jelinek points out that "men are able to increase their sexual value through work, fame, or wealth, while women are only powerful through their body, beauty and youth." Her female interviewer predictably enough protested in response that this claim would not hold for famous women, but for Jelinek a "woman who becomes famous through her work reduces her erotic value. . . . A woman's artistic output makes her monstrous to men if she does not know how to make herself small at the same time and present herself as a commodity. *At best* people are afraid of her." Although below I refer to Howard Caygill and Tracy Strong and elsewhere to Luce Irigaray, Gilian Rose's painful and beautiful *Love's Work* (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), remains, to my mind, the most arresting philosophical venture of love.

<sup>2</sup> In the same way, to vary Nietzsche's aphorism on the relationship between Christianity and eros, when science gives eros poison to drink, it does not simply cripple but kills it outright.

the problem of woman, the erotic element is key in this constellation.<sup>3</sup>

In many of its particulars, the ‘problem’ of the artist (or actor or Jew or woman) has marked affinities with what educators are fond of calling the problem child. The artist is imbued with semblance: false, if not as child psychologists are likely to be false, but given to acting-out or to precocity or preciousness. This “falseness with a good conscience” (GS §361) expresses itself in the child’s characteristic (and, characteristically, sometimes over-exaggerated or feigned) delight in appearance, talent for mimicry, and inclination to affect as such. In strikingly postmodern terms, Nietzsche presents the ‘problem artist’ as the problem of mass culture and—although the age of psychoanalysis is rapidly waning—articulates the latter problem as the problem of the hysteric.

For Nietzsche, “*The Problem of the Artist*” is a problem that can only be understood in affine terms. Impossible to parse in itself, the problem of culture is the problem of the individual artist: the problem of cultivation and genius, the conditions of production and reception, and so on. The problem of the artist is the problem of representation as the problem of dissimulation and semblance: the problem of truth and lie, reality and illusion. Yet the goal is not to highlight the dissimulating or illusory character of the artist (actor, Jew, woman). Articulating a cadenced account that runs from artist to actor to the Jew

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<sup>3</sup> This reticulative correspondence also means that the problem of the artist is the seductive problem of the Other. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), section 361. Cited as GS by section number in the text.

and the diplomatic heart of truth/lie and precisely as an account ending with the problem of woman (in erotic love and in life), Nietzsche also adumbrates a parallel reading of democracy in accord with his own transfiguring sensibility.<sup>4</sup>

In one dense, evocative aphorism, Nietzsche resolves the artist's problem into a cascading tessellation of what might seem to be modernity's every problem with the other. Posing the problem of the actor (or "fool") together with the Jew yields an epistemic tension (with reference to 'falseness') and, given the intercalation of 'diplomacy' and the pragmatics of rhetoric, recollects the origin of scholarship in general (GS §348), culminating in the problem of woman outlined against the cultural phantasm of genius and contra the more virulent opposition between philosophy and science. Given the paradox of Nietzsche's profoundly democratic sensibility (precisely in its emphatically anti-democratic character), this reticulated register recapitulates and consummates almost the entirety of *The Gay Science*. In this same way, the "problem of the artist," (*qua* actor, fool, Jew, diplomat, rhetorician, woman) culminates with the hysterical sarcasm that embodies Nietzsche's ultimate word on the problem as a whole: "*Woman is so artistic.*"<sup>5</sup>

This hysteric resonance articulates a precisely or deliberately overwrought determinism:

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<sup>4</sup> I owe this—as so much else—to David B. Allison. See his *Rereading the New Nietzsche* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> The problem of the hysteric as the problem of the artist/actor/woman/Jew corresponds to the *vulgar* nihilism specific to contemporary modernity.

an excess to excess to excess.<sup>6</sup> The critical and dangerous significance of this associative cadence for contemporary reflection is Nietzsche's metonymic transfer of the problem of the Jew to the nineteenth century image of woman as a coy, fainting, fashion-conscious lie (BGE §145; §148; §237).<sup>7</sup> It is in this way worth remembering the ordinary reference of the histrionic (to the theatre) and the hysteric in the jokes of everyday life, whereby the apotheosis of the artist as focal point for the question that is the problem of the actor (or the mask) is transformed into the question of woman. And not only feminist scholars but philosophic chameleons like Jacques Derrida and his many imitators have made a good deal of the allusive resonance of this last connection, replaying the music box of Nietzsche's twilight theme wherein it becomes Platonic truth, taking a Jewish detour to become Christian love, subsequently becoming sufficiently female for the eternal German ideal of woman, ending via the enlightenment, Königsberg, and socialist sentimentality aground on its own evolutionary peak or loss of values. For Nietzsche, the *evolution* of the ideal is the decay, the decadence of the ideal. It is at once Plato's conversion (as/into Christianity) into the province of popular enlightenment values and as such an inversion, it is also the instrument of Plato's revenge: "what world is left? The apparent world perhaps? . . . But no! *With the real world we have also abolished the apparent world.*"<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Nietzsche's provocative constellation of ideas embodies what Agnes Heller expresses as its "shock" value in her *An Ethics of Personality* (London: Blackwell, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973). Cited as BGE by section number in the text.

<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), "How the 'Real World' at Last Became a Myth." Cited as TI by section title in the text.

## 2. Innocence and becoming

From the beginning, Nietzsche regarded the modern scientific progress ideal as the optimistic fulfillment of Socrates' invention of modern scientific thinking, i.e., a rational inversion of tragic culture characterized by a profound hatred of change or becoming. The same antipathy to process and becoming undergirds the technological enthusiasm of contemporary Western culture. Our horror of the desultory effects of the corruptions of becoming and time means that we want *technological fixes* in our cosmetics and in our medicines for aging, sickness, death, and decay; we want the same *fixes* on the same values in our engineering science for environmental disorders and contamination. In this way, the cult of the new refuses (mortal) change. This is the contemporary cult of juvenile perfection: all promise and potential, but nothing actual—unsullied by the real exhaustions and banal detours of procreative investment or the costs of consummation and growth, not to speak of the desultory transformations of illness and decadence.

It is also capital (it is also extraordinarily difficult) to note that Nietzsche does not simply oppose the optimistic status quo of this Socratic inversion *qua* life-stasis or cultural stagnation. Instead, Nietzsche opposes the remedial programme of Socratic knowing to the life-affirming potency of the artist who would consecrate or immortalize (and so imprint or stamp) not ideal reality but *becoming* in the image of being. The key note will be a pure moment of abundance or joy. Without this excess, without what Nietzsche

names flowing out or abundance, his word for affirmation (*amor fati*) is impossible. And I shall argue that failing Nietzsche's careful, constant attention to the disagreeable, to pain, suffering, or—equally—to banality or pointlessness, any expression of the affirmative ideal is empty because redundant. Without suffering, pain, anxiety and despair, that is, failing the intrusive presence of an oppressive and hard edge in life and love, Nietzsche's teaching of affirmation reduces to cliché-quality therapeutic counseling or television evangelism or new-age consolation (Write your life as literature! *You* create your own reality, you are responsible for—you *cause* your own illness) offered to the victims of cancer or other terminal illness. The placebo new-age spirituality of popular culture blandly, blindly declares: There is no suffering.

Although we are, of course, as liable to suffering and mortality as in Socrates' own time, and, for all its fanfare, modern medical science has done not a thing to eliminate the ultimate threats of disease and death, it is conspicuously easy to maintain the opposite. In the culture of techno-scientific modernity, the first thing we assert is a triumph over pain and disease and we are sure that a remedy is in the offing for old age, perhaps even for death.

We are committed to a celebration of accomplished permanence—what Heidegger is pleased to tease out of Nietzsche's *Nachlaß* notes as the ideal imprinting of becoming with the still form or image of being. This means that we celebrate what becomes in a measure that reflects our best ownmost possibility not according to any tragic accounting of being as and in time, but as good, little Platonic footprints or footnotes. Following in



the wake of the inversion of Platonism by way of the Hellenic invention of Judeo-Christianity and the latter's conversion into Western scientific rationality and technoculture, we today are careful to reserve our enthusiasm not for a tragic affirmation of becoming (i.e., with a choral affirmation of coming undone, being inevitably undone), but we keep our rounds for the latest banausic invention and preservation. Adverting to the ordinary images of consumer culture, we will buy anything that promises to keep us healthy or beautiful and if we might avoid illness, accidents, or age, anyone of us could spare a curse for a demon arrived to sell the eternal return of the same. The eternal ideal: eternal love, eternal life, eternal youth, yes; but the eternal return, life as it is/was, just as it is/was, **no**.

We want, because we desperately need, a *non-literal*, more than metaphorical interpretation of Nietzsche's teaching of the Eternal Return of the Same.<sup>9</sup> Yet the basic pattern of eternal recurrence is the ancient Greek insight into the tragic essence of life as the breath or flow of birth and emergence, spontaneous growth, persistence and pain, failure and a wide array of possible deaths. For Nietzsche, the fundamental characteristics of life—growth, procreation, aging, and dying—inherently involve difficulty and are ineluctably doomed in the exactly Schopenhauerian economy of what cannot be sustained. The enterprises of life entail failure.<sup>10</sup> In exactly this connection, in a “myth” invented by Plato, we have Eros the god conceived precisely as compensation: a “gift”

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<sup>9</sup> We are more sophisticated than the Victorian cycles of nineteenth century thermodynamics and if we can correct a simplistic reading of Nietzsche, this could be a useful place to begin.

<sup>10</sup> Nietzsche writes, for example: “In every age, the wisest have passed the identical judgment on life: *it is worthless*.” (TI, *The Problem of Socrates* 1).

born of life's poverty in its calculating concourse with resourcefulness.<sup>11</sup> From such a Platonic standpoint, 'becoming' regarded in all its aspects, includes growth and procreation as much as death and persists as an earthly, sullyng process of inconsequent beginnings, obscured innocence, fallen ideals.<sup>12</sup>

Against enduring values (Parmenidean stasis, the Platonic weight of being: an impossible value for breathing, organic creatures), Nietzsche wishes to install (or poetically to name as best and so musically to bless) "the values of the briefest and most transient, the seductive flash of gold on the belly of the serpent *vita*—" (KSA 12, 348). But it is indispensable to an understanding of the meaning of such values to underscore them as the values of appearance and these are values without (real) value: a shining glint of gold, rather less than a gleam on the belly of a metaphor. Only poetry or the music of artistic invention can achieve the highest will to power: marking *becoming* with the character of being, the seeming or appearance of being.

We will need poetry to stamp becoming with timeless, inalterable value because 'in truth' for Nietzsche—as for Anaximander, Heraclitus, Empedocles—there can only be alteration. Science and mathematical logic do not and cannot secure the becoming of what is real as perdurant being. Like poetry and like art, both science (and this includes

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<sup>11</sup> For a further discussion of the consequences of this "technical" myth in a related but different context, see Holger Schmid's *Kunst des Hörens: Orte und Grenzen philosophischer Spracherfahrung* (Köln: Böhlau, 1999), p. 163ff.

<sup>12</sup> Thus Aristotle's philosophico-bio-anthropology regarded the basic processes of life as vegetative, lower than animal life and even more incidental to the nature of the human. The most basic processes of life are brutalizing and soulless.

the human or the social as well as the natural sciences) and mathematics *work* as conventions or inventions but lie *about* and most perniciously *to* themselves.<sup>13</sup> Inventing itself, dressing itself to seduce its own expectations of reality, science's unshaken confidence embraces the metaphysical reality of its own invention.

The real—the experienced or lived—world exemplifies nothing but the very unremitting change or becoming Nietzsche celebrates in his most unsettling descriptions of the same world Plato deplures. Contrary to Plato's protest against physical life, the secret of tragic wisdom is the knowledge of ineluctable perdition.<sup>14</sup> Opposing becoming, philosophers seek unchanging truths or logical forms in the same (Lacanian) locus where theologians seek God or purpose, and scientists pursue a unified theory of everything. Nietzsche's project to restore the innocence of becoming, or to stamp becoming itself with being thus affirms neither the scientific mummification of the present moment nor the eschatological dream of the full time of an eternally ultimate life but the music of mere becoming as not only the native character of the physical or natural world but the best possible truth of the world.<sup>15</sup> This is the determinate scheme of the erotic—here conceived as the valence of

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<sup>13</sup> See Babich, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Science* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994) as well as my essay, "Nietzsche's Critical Theory: The Culture of Science as Art," in Babich ed., in cooperation with R. S. Cohen, *Nietzsche, Theories of Knowledge and Critical Theory: Nietzsche and the Sciences I* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1999), pp. 1–26

<sup>14</sup> As Karl Reinhardt reminds us, "Allerdings, was Nietzsche «Leben» nennt, ist ein sehr Unbequemer, fordernder Begriff des Lebens." *Vermächtnis der Antike Gesammelte Essays zur Philosophie und Geschichtsschreibung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960/1989), p. 345. ["In fact, what Nietzsche called 'life' is an extremely disagreeable, challenging conception of life."]

<sup>15</sup> "Dem Werden den Charakter des Seins *aufzuprägen*—das ist der höchste *Wille zur Macht*," Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), Vol. 12, p. 312. Hereafter parenthetically cited from the KSA directly in the text or in the notes with roman numerals (volume) and Arabic numbers (page) alone. It should be noted here that Heidegger renders the passage in question as a pro-technological

art. Speaking of eros, or speaking of art, or, indeed, advocating the renewal of innocence, should not obscure what remains transfigured but not for that redeemed as the tragic character of becoming.

Nietzsche thus returns at the end of his published reflections to his original tragic insight: “All becoming and growing, all that guarantees the future, postulates pain” (TI, “What I Owe the Ancients” §4)—as the very deliberate affirmation of subjective pain in every process and needful in every innocence. One is oneself a piece of fate, but—and this is the heart of Nietzsche’s insight—not fated by any determining power as a power that might intercede or change anything. Thus everything and anything that happens must be imagined as it is without blame. What is crucial in such an *amor fati* is the unremitting emphasis on what is ‘disagreeable’ or challenging (which is not necessarily difficulty) in the doctrine.<sup>16</sup> What is must be as it is not because it follows the law of God or nature (the point of the claim “*ni Dieu, ni maître*” [BGE §22], affirms the substitutive logic of secularity where the regularity of the law substitutes for both God as father and master and/as nature) but rather because it is without plan (beyond God or law) and that is also to say without recourse (or salvation/scientific remedy).<sup>17</sup> The erotic domain illuminates

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expression. I discuss this reading further in Babich, “Heidegger’s Relation to Nietzsche’s Thinking: On Connivance, Nihilism, and Value,” *New Nietzsche Studies*, 3, 1/2 (1999): 23–52.

<sup>16</sup> This, once again, is Reinhardt’s point.

<sup>17</sup> If what becomes becomes for or towards some end, it has a reason for being. In this project, it loses all innocence. Thereby the event acquires value in terms of its mediate good (or evil), that is, its ultimate utility. In order to love the world and not merely to *accept* or to *endure* the world as it changes and becomes, one has to deny the concept of ultimate truth or purpose or indeed the concept of God. For “as soon as we imagine someone who is responsible for our being thus and thus, etc. (God, nature), and therefore attribute to him the intention that we should exist and be happy or wretched, we corrupt for ourselves the *innocence of becoming*” (KSA 12, 35–36). Naming God the greatest objection to existence, in an earlier text, in a wholly, cadentially or melodically related context, Nietzsche invokes Meister Eckhart,

this insight as both attained in ecstasy and to be sacrificed in death.

Nietzsche's teaching of *amor fati* must be conceived as erotic affirmation. The key to such an affirmation will be consummation, i.e., works not faith. As eros, such affirmation has no part in the resignation endemic either to vulgar nihilism or to positivist determinism. Independently of one another, Howard Caygill and Tracy B. Strong have recently emphasized the secret to this teaching as what everyone, Nietzsche too, would call love.<sup>18</sup> And yet the word of love alone is meaningless. As an erotic, Dionysian affirmation of life, Nietzschean *amor fati* teaches an eros more demanding than *agape* and perhaps an eros even more impossible for the devotees of the cult of sexual distraction.<sup>19</sup> Love, just love, or the idea of sex (the image of eros or pornography) is meaningless unless immediately, really affirmed in praxis, declared, enacted in what we do. Whatever one's confessional standpoint on the question of faith and works, it is the working or the practice, that is: the act of love that counts in the real world.

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to remind us that exactly when one would be saint, transcending illusory and excess attachments, one has still to ask God to be disencumbered of God (cf. GS §292).

<sup>18</sup> This is the context of Tracy B. Strong's love-cult quotation: "what the world needs is love." Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000 [1975]), p. xviii. My critical reserve has fairly little to do with the conversational complaint that Strong "reduces Nietzsche to John Lennon" (p. xxix), a remark Strong has immortalized several times in several footnotes—and that, *nota bene*, in a culture that rarely reads them—and everything to do with the meaning of love's work. For a more straightforward or honest account of Nietzsche on love, see Howard Caygill, "Nietzsche's Atomism," Babich, ed., *Nietzsche, Theories of Knowledge, and Critical Theory*, pp. 27–36 in addition to Caygill's "The Consolation of Philosophy or 'Neither Dionysus nor the Crucified'," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 7 Spring (1994): 113–140.

<sup>19</sup> Neither Casanova nor Don Juan may be said to love women (as some reconstructionist interpretations enthusiastically suggest) nor do they act in some Freudian sense out of a fear of or hatred of or whatever else of women *in general* or in particular—rather, both Don Juan and Casanova turn out to be more or less streamlined versions of the Platonic ideal, i.e., philosophasters of the imaginary erotic, like the ordinary fan of pornography and fashion photographs.

In other more philosophical words, the danger of talking about love is that it easily becomes a fainting aesthete's (we remember that Kierkegaard was a television evangelist *manqué*: i.e., in the age not of the internet or music video but only the novel—and the Danish novel at that), that is: love-talk is exactly not an artist's musical politics. As an Empedoclean *nisus*, love does not sit and catch an affective emphasis, gushing over the love of the world inspired by a night at the theater but, like Hölderlin's Napoleon or Nietzsche's own derivative "Caesar with the soul of Christ," lives and acts in the world.<sup>20</sup> This needful eros is the same as the Nietzschean program of reconstrued or restored innocence, or *amor fati*, which teaches the musical necessity of every individual and every event.

The idea of restoring the innocence of becoming is every bit as counter-intuitive and as implausible (or pointless) a notion as the restitution of virginity. And in reference to love in particular, it is likewise essential to emphasize the contextual reference to the pre-Socratic understanding of erotic love, particularly Empedoclean love, as a physical not a psycho-sociological dynamic innocent of the constructions of both the anti-materialist Platonic Eros and the Pauline eristic. Becoming is the crime or fault of change, aging, and death. Thus the innocence of becoming Nietzsche seeks to restore is an erotic innocence and the purity in question is the chastity of *true* love (cf. BGE §142). To regard becoming

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<sup>20</sup> The kind of love which the modern world might be said to "need more of, that is, again Tracy Strong's somehow anemic reprise of the charmingly popular song of the sixties generation, is accordingly better understood as what Caygill (in the direct lineage and spirit of integrity of Rose's complex and elusive *Love's Work*) insightfully recasts in terms of the traditional concept of *agape*, renewed throughout the complex registers of its changing historic context, necessary because popular music is as full of love talk as ever and we are (from a physiological standpoint: quite beyond the possibility of noticing this, just because this is the way sensual or perceptual accommodation works) continually bombarded by images of sex.

in such erotic innocence presupposes *nothing* like an acceptance or passive tolerance but an unconditional passion for the world, where the unconditional, impossible impetuosity of real love is a prerequisite for attaining an affirmative disposition toward the world as it is, where affirmation means desire and not resignation. In a *Nachlaß* note from 1883, Nietzsche proposes the “most important viewpoint: *to attain the **innocence** of becoming, by means of excluding **purposes** [or ends]*” (KSA 10, 245).<sup>21</sup>

Given the cruelest interpretation of becoming, excluding the concept of God or of truth, unchanging Being or the ordinal laws of nature, affirms the lack of ultimate purpose—as Nietzsche has it: “*We* invented the concept.” Life becomes, in all its becoming, transformations, its decaying in sickness, age, and death, very like the cherubic rose—without why. Pure blooming: not only buzzing confusion as James’s pragmatism winces, but also pure gift. Again and yet: to *really* see this, even once, that is, really to catch the aspect of life as *excess*, as *growth and decay, joy and pain inextricably mixed* will require at least one good day. You ‘have,’ as casual language puts it, ‘to be there’ and, in a passage entitled “*Vita femina*” in *The Gay Science*, as Nietzsche reminds us in his most rueful tonality, the raw odds against any such revelation are extraordinarily high (GS §339). Even then: the mischief will be to fight the fade.

The sour note of normal indigence here, as it is this that has produced the world-altering

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<sup>21</sup> Denying God—the ideal of perfect being and constancy—we forswear blame, attributing guilt and responsibility neither to our intentions nor the world of natural determinate causes nor a supernatural God. Likewise, for love of the world of flux and becoming, “we deny accountability” and restore the passing of things to innocence. And by denying accountability in pure love “we redeem the world” (TI, “The Four Great Errors,” §8).

contours of slave morality and culture, is that for the most part, for most of us there are hardly any moments that remain or *can* stay present as such a divine moment. For this reason, what Nietzsche recommends as consecration and blessing remains impossible or inconceivable for us until we catch what is given on such a needful day as may perhaps and yet still be born for us. For I argue that just such a transformational desire (not salvific Lacanian desire will do) corresponds to this same temptation to the expression of passionate love. And here we are thinking exactly of actors, of artists, and particularly of women—and I will add the necessary twist—not romantically but *exactly* as problematic.

For desire to work as the everyday model of the Dionysian intoxication Nietzsche proposes, it must be a sensualist, aesthetic desire, felt and lived in the world—not merely lust played at, and not at all—and this is the *heart of the problem* of the Jew, of woman, of actors, and of artists—and not ever the slavish seduction of another's desire. In the case of woman (not only in the West but in a diachronic extension the world over), the problem here is that she is rarely 'genuine' but always an actor, a "*Vertreter*" (TI, "Arrows" §38), a guise in her own space, in place of herself. And, according to Simone de Beauvoir, this disingenuousness is endemic to the traditional cultural 'situation' (or manner) of literally "becoming" a woman. Even in the act of love. To affect desire (which is what it is *to be the object* of erotic desire) in the heat of desire is the eternal sexual calling card of 'women' Nietzsche claims, and that no matter whether one speaks of a male or female 'woman'—"Dass sie '*sich geben*,' selbst noch wenn sie—*sich geben*"



(GS §361).<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, in his ideal description of passionate love, what Nietzsche imagines is the spiritualization of sensuality: the music or realization of art. Key to this spiritualization is that the putative fact that he had so little experience of love in his life does not invalidate this insight; much rather this lack of experience may well have been what enabled him to hold to it not because one must be naïve to love (nor does *naïveté* help) but rather because the work and the working of love is hard. Lacking experience, Nietzsche could escape the compromise, and compensation, *negotium* of disappointed, misappointed love—where what one so often learns in the experience of love is not how to love but how *not* to love: the art of compromise or giving up on one's desire.<sup>23</sup> Thus Nietzsche too, like the Napoleon he imagined himself to be (with the soul of Christ), might have imagined himself the martyr of love's ideal.

The aesthetic significance of Nietzsche's teaching of love or joy may be found in the tragic insight as the becoming which, again, in Nietzsche's words, postulates pain. Thus it is because the erotic is consummately, irredeemably *wrong* feeling—*gluko-pikron* as the oldest song of erotic love—that a tragically erotic aesthetic necessarily avoids the focus on 'right feeling' so prominent in recent readings of the politics of Nietzsche's eternal return. Against this radically wrong feeling, more than one specialist has proffered

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<sup>22</sup> Thus the casually ironic problem with women in the "love" that is supposed for them to be the whole of their lives (and only an incidental part of man's life) is that "she nonetheless 'poses' even when she yields herself" (GS 361). I note that Jelinek's *Women as Lovers* (1994), trans. Martin Chalmers (London: Serpent's Tail, 1994), offers yet another ironic twist on this same insight, albeit not in Nietzsche's name.

<sup>23</sup> This is, of course, an allusion to Jacques Lacan. I discuss Lacan and Nietzsche in "On the Order of the Real: Nietzsche and Lacan." In: David Pettigrew and François Raffoul, eds., *Disseminating Lacan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996) pp. 48–63 and more obliquely in Babich, "Nietzsche und Wagner: Sex," in H. J. Brix, N. Knoepffler, S. L. Sorgner, Hg., *Wagner und Nietzsche. Kultur—Werk—Wirkung. Ein Handbuch* (Reinbek b. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2008).

the same profoundly simplistic solution to the moral quandary underscored by Bernd Magnus as the irreducible danger of thinking Nietzsche's thought of the eternal return of the same as affirmation.<sup>24</sup> Nietzsche wishes to teach the will to will backward—that is *amor fati*. But would such an ambition be morally justifiable? Ought one, as Nietzsche seems to suggest, affirm what has been as it was exactly *as it was*? Strong readings of Nietzsche's teaching of the eternal return of the same, like that of Karl Löwith or Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, or even Alexander Nehamas's benignly exact rendering of the eternal return, tend to a universally affirmative, unreservedly positive response. Scholars like Bernd Magnus (and, more simplistically, Julian Young)<sup>25</sup> have perfectly analytic scruples regarding such a literal reading. The thought query that is the moralizing problem of the eternal return asks whether one *ought* to (without minding here about how one ever *could*) affirm what has been (as the test case of retrospective *amor fati*)? Would

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<sup>24</sup> Addressing this theme, Bernd Magnus raises earnest and nuanced concerns such as those expressed in "The Deification of the Commonplace: *Twilight of the Idols*," Robert Solomon and Kathleen Higgins, eds., *Reading Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 152–181. Magnus thus poses the deliberately provocative question: "Who could live, as some of us have had to do, in the midst of extermination camps, and love *that* unconditionally?" (p. 172). The more-than-merely-rhetorical force of this question leads Magnus to bow out of the commentators' braying ass festival (detailing Kaufmann, Danto, and Schacht, Magnus notes his own conviction that this is indeed, for the right reader, the Zarathustran point of the image), averring that most of us those who cannot be counted as *Übermenschen*—as Magnus reads the ideal of perfectibility (and Magnus's reading is to be distinguished from Cavell, et al.—simply cannot affirm or will the eternal return as Nietzsche requires but can merely "will our life and the world's in an edited version, if we are honest with ourselves." Magnus, p. 173. I take up the imperative force of this theme again, in connection with Alexander Nehamas, in Babich, "Nietzsche's Imperative as a Friend's Encomium: On Becoming the One You Are, Ethics, and Blessing." *Nietzsche-Studien*, 33 (2003): 29–58.

<sup>25</sup> Julian Young shares Magnus's conclusion without Magnus's sense of its complexity in Nietzsche's thought. In *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Young imagines the Nietzschean ideal of affirmation in terms of love on his way to get to sexual expression, where, of course, I am far from denying the erotic its decisive significance in Nietzsche's thinking. Parenthetically, it should be noted that the erotic act is the same image Magnus invokes as a strong test case (which he ultimately abandons, like the despairing Faust in Nietzsche's first book), and it is the note David Allison traces in his *Reading the New Nietzsche*, from the reflective height that is not the culmination of ecstasy (the best moment ever for Magnus)—which is the death of eros—but the keynote of consecration and love: that is, the blessing of the heart or memory looking back on life with gratitude and desire in Nietzsche's epigraph/benediction to *Ecce homo*.

one *have* to be able to will exactly everything—great and, what was Nietzsche’s word?—*unutterably* small—or could one not simply limit one’s affirmation to the ‘good parts’? Young thinks it reasonable enough to dispense with a ticket fluttering to the ground in Red Square; Magnus would like to make a sharp (and politically impeccable) exception for the case or historical fact of the Holocaust.

Arguing thus in good analytic fashion—that is to say employing a philosophic interpretive style that could not be more antipathic to Nietzsche’s spirit—Magnus critiques and Young corrects Nietzsche’s (aesthetic) account to find (at least in Young’s case) a more plausible middle way. For Magnus, seeking to catch but ultimately missing Adorno, ‘post-Auschwitz,’ one may not creditably countenance the moral insensitivity of a doctrine like the eternal return of the same. Young, for his part, thinks the issue a matter of the purely aesthetic justification of suffering.<sup>26</sup> It is to Young’s considerable credit that he has (bothered to) read (or to pretend to have read) Schopenhauer in order to catch the full sense of the riddle Nietzsche poses here. Where Young goes wrong is where he converts Nietzsche’s joyful scientist into the unhappy Cavellian image of a properly New England Emersonian. Thus Young declares: “*there is, in fact, no such suffering at all.*”<sup>27</sup> This claim may accord with Emerson’s Brahmin blindness, but despite a Cantabrigdean tendency (originating in the Cambridge in the US and disseminated by way of Pittsburgh)

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<sup>26</sup> Nietzsche’s solution to the Schopenhauerian riddle posed by absurd, meaningless suffering, ambitions what Young names a performative if also “atheistic theodicy.” Young, p. 109.

<sup>27</sup> Young, p. 109. Ignoring Nietzsche’s perspective (perhaps with the aid of a Cavellian lens), Young goes on to read even Wittgenstein with Emerson’s eyes: “ ‘*The riddle ... does not exist.*’ ” (p. 109, and Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* 6.5.) Yet as recent Wittgenstein scholarship has increasingly come to suggest, the declaration here is a riddle redeemed in the later Wittgenstein.

to read Nietzsche as a Saxon Emerson, it is foreign to Nietzsche. For the Nietzsche who observed that naming suffering illusory eliminated no part of it, suffering is much more than merely real.

For Nietzsche, as for other contemporary philosophers otherwise unrelated to him, such as Levinas and Theunissen but also such as Adorno, philosophy can hardly do better than to begin (and to end) with the problem of suffering.<sup>28</sup> This, yet once again, is what Karl Reinhardt in his reflection on the legacy of ancient Greece meant when he took pains to qualify Nietzsche's conception of life (precisely contra Winckelmann and Goethe) as "disagreeable" and uncompromising. This is, once again, the very same enduring question of every theodicy, here reworked as the question of difficulty, pain, banality. In the wake of the death of God (i.e., in modern, postmodern times), it is a question Nietzsche poses not to theologians but artists. The key to Nietzsche's thinking, early and late, is his understanding of the tragic as suffering but no less as a poetic or musical (archically Greek) understanding.

To teach the love of the world or life, love must first be learned. And learning love is not an exercise in the mindlessness of a platitude, be it the result of new age thinking or the

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<sup>28</sup> To begin where Michael Theunissen (or Adorno) would teach us to begin is not a simple matter of adverting to the other and more will be required than the moralizing efforts so often attached to a Levinasian enthusiasm in order to begin to pose the question/to do justice to the question of suffering. See my "Philosophy of Science and the Politics of Style: Beyond Making Sense," *New Political Science: A Journal of Politics and Culture*. 30/31 (Summer 1994): 99–114 but see also for a different and more difficult approach to the same question, "The Essence of Questioning after Technology: *Techné* as Constraint and Saving Power," *British Journal of Phenomenology*. 30/1 (January 1999): 106–124 and "Heidegger's Silence: Towards a Post-Modern Topology," in Charles Scott and Arleen Dallery, eds., *Ethics and Danger* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 83–106.

insular postmodern academicism that seems to have so much in common with it, especially as disguised as a conservative (exactly) right, positive style of thinking. To affirm what was, to love the past, and to call it good is to see that everything of what was and is, is all necessary, equally needful, and that one is oneself not apart from but a part of, an intrinsic piece of the whole.

To love something, to call something good, to bless it or to be astonished by and grateful for its being as such, is not to teach an other than Sophoclean lesson. Joy is spoken exactly as the cruelest draught of tragic suffering, as Hölderlin reminds us with sustained amazement.<sup>29</sup> This does not make tragic suffering any less tragic and it is not supposed that there is ‘no’ suffering—or that suffering is an illusion. This is the unconquerable, lasting difference between Nietzsche’s Greek sensibility and Eastern sensibilities.

What is to be loved is life, as it is, as it was and as it must inevitably be in what is to come. What is to be loved is the disappointment of the ideal, star-cursed. That is, the task is to learn to love everything nearest to you. And it is that affection for what lies closest to us, in Nietzsche’s telling of the Syrian gospel, that remains hard to gain, not automatic, and not already accomplished. What Christianity’s teachers remanded to the paradisiacal heights of the after-life, Nietzsche returns to the realm that is mortal immortality: the heaven all about us. That is: immediacy and memory, that is: the spare domain between

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<sup>29</sup> This is the black pearl of Hölderlin’s *Sophocles*, “Viele versuchten umsonst das Freudigste freudig zu sagen/Hier spricht endlich es mir, hier in der Trauer sich aus.” [“Many have tried, but in vain, with joy to express the most joyful;/Here at last, in grave sadness, wholly I find it expressed.” (Michael Hamburger’s translation.)]

blessing and curse in the human heart.

Young, Magnus, Strong, *et al.*, are unified in their contention that what Nietzsche wants (and that what he *should* want) is to teach right feeling. By contrast, what Nietzsche offers in place of merely right feeling is the affirmation of the great and of the utterably small as the kind of yes-saying or blessing shedding an aura of shining gold on even the poorest fisherman, exceeding such a spectator's aesthetics.<sup>30</sup> For this and other reasons, it is ultimately fatal that Young's account of Nietzsche's philosophy of art turns out to be neither an artist's nor (more critically) a musician's view. And if Nietzsche advocated music as the ultimate redemption from the perception of life as error, he also distinguished between the music of the theater or mass-culture—the hysteric or melodramatic music of high society—and the heart's music: an ingenious resonance which transforms the hearer and makes of him too a musician. This answering resonance is the esoteric key to Nietzsche's resolution of the problem of actor, artist, and it is also key to the problem of the other as such, the problem of the Jew and the problem of woman. What is transformed is the reactive spirit, rendered, and for the first time, *in artibus*, echoing the song of life in its own desire.

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<sup>30</sup> Young with his focus on love (not the reason the world might require transfiguration) ranged Nietzsche in parallel with Oscar Wilde: all image, all show. Young might have done better to have drawn the parallel more cleanly: (leaving Nietzsche out of the equation)—between Wagner and Wilde. For Nietzsche, Wagner (like Wilde, whose art was his life) was “a first rate actor.” Thus Nietzsche names Wagner in the same associative connection which runs explicitly from actor to artist and genius to Jew (in this case: the genius as Wandering Jew) to woman as “an incomparable *histrion*, the greatest mime, the most amazing genius of the theatre ever among Germans, our *scenic artist par excellence*.” Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, in *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967), section 8. Cited below as CW.

Thus Nietzsche simply never abandons the problem of tragedy (blindness, stupidity, cursedness, injustice, extra-human pain and ordinary sorrow) *as music, as art, as life*. Nor may one render the tripartite division of Nietzsche's life in four installments (as Young claims), exactly because Nietzsche always comes round again to his own beginnings. It is as mistaken to divide Nietzsche into three as it is to break him down into four parts because Nietzsche has never left his starting point. And what is more, with the poets, with Heidegger, Nietzsche claims that none of us ever do. Every advance consists in coming to own what one is, in winning and in losing the self, as Nietzsche teaches, with Pindar, with Hölderlin.<sup>31</sup>

It will not do to redeem Nietzsche's 'wrongness,' neither the wrongness of his feeling (the erotic as royally wrong) nor the wrongness of his doctrine of *amor fati*. This is not only because it involves an injustice to Nietzsche's thinking but because what is of lasting importance in his thinking turns exactly on the redemption not of right feeling or beauty but of wrong feeling and the transformative power of art in the question of "how we can make things beautiful, attractive, desirable for us when they are not" (GS §299) as what it is that can ultimately best be learned from art. This is the meaning of what we

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<sup>31</sup> Nietzsche's call, "*Du sollst der werden der du bist*" (GS §270) which recurs as the subtitle to his autobiography, *Ecce homo: Wie man wird was man ist*, derives from Pindar's second Pythian ode: "γένειοιοζ εσσι μαθών." Contra Stanley Rosen's philosophically inadequate interpretation of Pindar, Nietzsche's insight is that it is redundant to translate the mathematical measure of being oneself. This is the arched bow in Hölderlin; it is collapsed to the mystery of becoming in Nietzsche. It should be noted that while quietly resolving many of the philosophical debates that grew up in the wake of Alexander Nehamas's *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), as well as a few incidental ones for good measure, Nehamas also offers a finely lapidary rendering of Pindar in his recent book: *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1998): "Having learned, become who you are" p. 128). See for further discussion, including the role of this saying in Nietzsche's understanding of the friend, Chapter 2, "Philology and Artistic Style: Rhetoric, Sources, and Writing in Blood" and other references in my *Words in Blood, Like Flowers*.

name Nietzsche's aesthetic gnomon as it is variously expressed: "Art is worth more than truth" (KSA 13, 522) or, "*We have art so that we do not perish of the truth*" (KSA 13, 500) or, as Nietzsche writes in the last of his *Untimely Meditations*, where Wagner's Schopenhauerian Bayreuth is rendered beyond itself with a quintessentially and sweetly Hölderlinian insight—"Art exists *so that the bow shall not break*."<sup>32</sup> Bent by life, alive, we are the bow, lancing forth. Nietzsche continues in this context to explain the meaning of tragedy: "The individual must be consecrated to something higher than himself . . . he must be free of the terrible anxiety which death and time evoke in the individual: for at any moment, in the briefest atom of his life's course he may encounter something holy that endlessly outweighs all his struggle and all his distress—this is what it means to have a *sense of the tragic*." Or, "There is only one hope and one guarantee for the future of humanity: it consists in his *retention of the sense for the tragic*" (UM, "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth" §4).

Yet and again it is crucial to emphasize that Nietzsche supposes that the ideal of the tragic is not simply 'the sense of' greater (militarily Jesuit or Protestant) glory added to one's actions. As Nietzsche reflects on Shakespeare (and indeed Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, as the quintessential morality play on ambition thereby catching an obvious riff between Wagner and Aeschylus), "Do you suppose that Tristan and Isolde are preaching *against* adultery when they both perish by it? This would be to stand the poets on their head."<sup>33</sup> In

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<sup>32</sup> Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, trans R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), section 4, p. 213.

<sup>33</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), section 240. I discuss this point further in my "Nietzsche und Wagner: Sex" (cited above).



this wise, exactly embracing or pushing the tragic envelope (to use today's metaphor) the tragic poet celebrates life's Saturnalia: "Not so as to get rid of pity and terror . . . but beyond pity and terror, *to realize in oneself*, the eternal joy of becoming—that joy which also encompasses joy in destruction" (TI, "What I Owe the Ancients" §5).

### 3. The problem of the actor-artist

The problem of the artist is yoked to the problem of art and life. Because the problem of the artist (and the problem of art) exceeds the artist—if only via the actor, Jew, diplomat, woman—more is at stake than a turn to an active, or virile, or creative aesthetics in Nietzsche's artist's aesthetics. More than a matter of understanding the provenance of the rare or exceptional or consummate human being—which is the nineteenth century and still ordinal vision of the artist as genius—the problem of the artist is much rather the problem of education or culture, and the problem of culture is again mass culture.<sup>34</sup> The political space of this problem is the theatre: a doomed place where tragedy once perished at its own hand and whose decline has been traced throughout the course of Western civilization to Wagnerian opera in Nietzsche's day and the music video delights of our

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<sup>34</sup> The problem of the artist is the problem of the artist's culture. And for a good many cultures there is simply no difference between the artist or genius and the criminal.

era.<sup>35</sup>

If Nietzsche defines the problem of the actor as “falseness with a good conscience” he does not simply excoriate deceit from the moral standpoint of truth and lie. That is, contrary to current analytic unreadings of the cogency of Nietzsche’s ‘cognitive’ claims, Nietzsche does not merely praise the lie of art as an honest lie (it is that, to be sure, but that is only the beginning). Instead where the truth itself must be justified (there is no truth as such for Nietzsche) illusion, the mask, or appearance, lays claim to much more than a negative provenance. That is, it is not because Punch and Judy declare themselves invulnerable as puppets that the violence represented is ameliorated or redeemed: Nietzsche’s philosophy of art is not a theory of cathartic, Aristotelian, or even Freudian honesty. Art, as the art of illusion, is the quintessential achievement of human intuition and only from its origins in sense perception can it move to the free invention of the imagination or of cognition. This epistemological *nisus* or intentionality reducing the claims of truth to the conventions of art does not suffice to make every human perspective the achievement of a poet. For the most part, the human artist is less an inspired genius than a dreaming savage, incapable of naming the dream as such, and ultimately unequal to it, even where the course of therapy (or philosophic insight) can lay claim to the dream in words: the “lying truth” as Lacan names it. “That one becomes what one is presupposes that one does not have the remotest idea *what* one is” (EH, “Why I am so Clever” §4). With a word of praise for “even the blunders of life,” for its

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<sup>35</sup> The problem of the actor is the problem of the theatre itself, here as in the *Case of Wagner*: for as we “know the masses, we know the theater” (CW §6).

wrong turns and “wastes of time,” Nietzsche speaks of the “great sagacity” below the “surface” of consciousness itself. “One is,” Nietzsche explains, “much more of an artist than one knows” (BGE §192). The archaic pathos of Nietzsche’s reminder that “we are *neither as proud nor as happy* as we might be” (GS §301) suggests that precisely in the absence of such self-knowledge or consciousness of ourselves as artists, Nietzsche’s programmatic teaching is meant to recall us to ourselves.

Thus the task of Pindarian becoming is “an act of supreme coming-to-onself” (EH, “Why I am a Destiny” §1), but that will mean that it can be won or it can be lost. One can equal oneself, becoming what one is, or one can indeed fail one’s own measure. Here we must remember the distinguishing importance of the difference between higher and lower human beings, a difference Nietzsche—anti-democratic to the core of a supremely democratic sensibility, as a very esoteric move affording the first foundational possibility for democracy as such—never failed to emphasize.

For the early Nietzsche, reflecting on truth and lie, not only are we “eternally condemned to untruth” but resistance to the truth of untruth is quintessentially human: “only the belief in an attainable truth, a trustworthy, self-confirming illusion is proper to humanity. Doesn’t mankind actually live by virtue of being progressively deceived?” (KSA 1,760).<sup>36</sup> Throughout his creative life, Nietzsche would maintain that art is the only way

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<sup>36</sup> In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche reminds us that existence can only be “justified” as an “aesthetic phenomenon.” Many commentators feel sure that this claim can only be a juvenile exercise in pessimistic or Schopenhaurian bad taste. But, in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche explains that it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon [that] existence is still *bearable* for us (GS §107). It is (at least to this reader) quite unclear

to live with the truth that it is *impossible* to live with the truth. The truth of art is that there is no ideal of ‘truth’ There is no truth, no justice, goodness, beauty: “The truth is ugly: we have art so that we not undone by truth [*damit wir nicht an der Wahrheit zu Grunde gehn*]” (KSA 13, 500).

In this way, art or illusion or indeed the actor’s ‘falseness’ will be the basic instinct of human society. In particular, we should note the genealogy of illusion or the lie is its utility for life, its indispensability for those who cannot do without it. An instinct for deception and illusion will translate to a practical prowess in seeming, and such a capacity for appearing to be what one is not will be developed by the vulgar, by the base or “lower classes who had to survive under changing pressures and coercions in deep dependency, who had to cut their coat according to the cloth, always adapting themselves again to new circumstances, . . . until they learned gradually to turn their coat with every wind” (GS §361). As it turns out, the lower classes in society resemble Jews, but I hardly need emphasize that we can substitute any ethnic other we choose and of course, and above all, we may substitute women of any social ranking whatever. The claim that “*Woman is so artistic*” now turns on the miracles of couture, cosmetics, and romance novels (love songs, movies, magazine advertisements). ‘Woman’ is ingenious at turning her coat with the wind of impossible fashion and the equally impossible aspiration of love.

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how much may reasonably be made of the difference between what may be justified and what one can stand—aesthetically—conceived.

Invoking the actor and the artist to get to woman, Nietzsche addresses every member of the excluded grouping of disenfranchised others. All coyness, flirtation, dissembling, delight in the mask, like the depths of all love, must be understood in terms of its origins. As psychologist, using the biological metaphor of pulsion, Nietzsche always traces the genealogy of need. But Nietzsche never traces a genealogy just to leave it there. Instead he uncovers the *frisson* at the heart of every basic need. And in this fashion, he captures the desperation of a god.

In a reading that is anything but anti-Christian, Nietzsche reads the life of Jesus as “one of the most painful cases of the martyrdom of *knowledge about love*” (BGE §269 cf. §270).<sup>37</sup> To negotiate the inadequacy of our human ability to love and the deiform infinity of desire (Cartesian, Augustinian “will”), Nietzsche dares an extraordinary question as he asks in a strained query poised within a painful series of reflections and therewith raises the hardest of questions posed within and thus apart from all mockery or reproach, what it is that a god who comes to be the very God of love, would be condemned to *know* about love? What echoes in Nietzsche’s question here is a shattering sensitivity to the divine, forsaken and abandoned, a divine indigence. As the non-erotic god of love, the God of the Jews fell from nomadic jealousy and a thunder or sky-god’s vengeance to the cloying nuzzling of Christian need. Love becomes the supreme characteristic of God, thus, the *need* for love becomes the supreme passion, agony, or suffering *of* the divine. And because, this is the catch, the banal and ordinary run of humanity is anything but divine

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<sup>37</sup> I owe the impetus for the following reflections to Tracy Strong and a catenna of e-mail exchanges on this issue. This however is an acknowledgement of deeper recollections than any one name can afford just because the substance predates this impetus.

when it comes to the matter of passionate (that is the works of) love, human love has never deserved its name. Nevertheless, in the economy of seduction omni-present in eros, it will be this infinitesimal mite of human love which is to be transfigured as the measure of redemptive potential or salvation. Thus it seems—and this will be the key to Milton’s twist on the same Hesiodic eros, from Lucifer’s light to God’s deep blue sea, moving over the waters of Genesis—the somehow always embarrassing sentiment of the 1968 generation ideal that repeats in its enduring disappointment that the world *needs* love is a foregoing and foregone point of departure for Nietzsche and for every theogony and for every story of love.

Everyone needs love. But that is, i.e., quite literally, and just as a *woman* might long to be or as a child demands to be loved, and likewise every (male) porter, Nietzsche cheerfully reminds us, confidently expects an admirer. And, just as it takes a pastor’s son to teach us a lesson about Christian love—most protestations of love are like the cries of a child: demands for love. Even God’s love is such a demand, a claim for affection, exchange, or requital, a chit for being as such. The ideal of love is the ideal of just deserts: purely deserved love or ‘free’ love. The law of love is the exchange of justice as love. Thus and again: the hardest question Nietzsche asks in his book-long reflection on what can be learned from the artist (“*la gaya scienza*”), cuts to the core of the paradox of the banal and everyday condition of life beyond both exultation and pain: “How can we make things beautiful, attractive, and desirable for us when they are not?” (GS §299)

*Where things are not beautiful, attractive, desirable* (when what is to be loved is not the friend, but exactly what is unlovable), what Nietzsche has called *The Gay Science* turns to art (*techne, scienza*), not to sound an invective or lament but for the erotic transfiguration that is love. The lowest or bass tone is the note sounding between the antique (and not only Aristotelian) commonplace that one loves and one can only love what is lovable (with its terminus or paradigmatic idea in love of the self) and the Judeo-Christian transformation of love in the image ideal of charity (both socialist and communist, including as well the occidental ideal of the *deus ex machina* of the free market).<sup>38</sup> The Judeo-Christian *qua* Enlightenment *qua* Smith-Weberian or Protestant ideal of love is the infinite (disinterested) favour that would be the love of the world as a free choice to love everyone as one's nearest and dearest just as one is oneself unconditionally—unaccountably—loved (and this too will be a demand for the sake of the self). It is an important complication that Nietzsche's cruelest comments turn on the pagan indefensibility and, still more critically, the classic ignobility of such love. Any God, even the almighty, the supreme, than which no greater can be conceived, seeking a human response or answer to creation is forsaken indeed. Human beings want God's love, but the love of God has to be genitive through and through. Raising the question of love in Christianity, Nietzsche also poses the problem of the neediness of human desire in our own lives.

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<sup>38</sup> See Alasdair MacIntyre's crucial contrast in *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 174f. and 184.

The dialectic of love requires love and this virtuosity excludes even the God of love (though not the commands of eros). This is the erotic point at issue in the valence of art. The context of the satyr dance which framed the development of (served as prelude to) the play of tragedy, suggests a connection between the eros of antiquity and Christian love in the excess eroticism of ritual. Beyond Christian and Greek, beyond ancient and modern, experience affirms that in passion, particularly (if not exactly) orgiastic passion—which Nietzsche reads as the key to the Dionysian transformation of the tragic—one simply does love the world, without the least self-denial and yet without self-absorption, presuming, for the moment, a sufficient measure of ecstasy. However, in order for such a passionate moment to count as such one really *has* to be beside oneself. Thus the answer to Nietzsche’s transfiguring question will depend upon the intoxication of desire or the framed veiling of artistry.<sup>39</sup>

Base desire, however, that is to say, womanly desire, that is to say: a slave’s desire to be loved, is a semblance, feigning love, offered to win love: “it is ‘the slave’ in the blood of the vain person, a residue of the slave’s craftiness—and how much ‘slave’ is still residual in woman for example—that seeks to *seduce* one’s neighbor to good opinions about oneself; it is also the slave who afterwards immediately prostrates himself before these opinions as if he had not called them forth” (BGE §261). Or as Nietzsche expresses the same point more pithily if no less convolutedly, “Seducing one’s neighbor to a good

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<sup>39</sup> The question of transfiguration here is exactly (importantly with reference to both Strong’s subtly opposed reading and MacIntyre’s more concordant reading) *not* a Christian question just because Nietzsche’s question is not how to love the unlovable, i.e., what MacIntyre names as the love for the sinner (see his key emphasis in *After Virtue* [loc. cit., note above]) but rather—and here Nietzsche is strangely, more pragmatically Aristotelian than either Aristotle or MacIntyre, *how to make* the unlovable lovable. This is also the “work” in Gillian Rose’s *Love’s Work*.



opinion and afterwards believing piously in this opinion—who could equal woman in this art?—” (BGE §148). For Nietzsche, for Aristotle, as for all antiquity, including the flattering and whining Catullus and the other Latin love poets, this ambition is not merely ignoble but impotent: it can only mimic success. “*Woman is so artistic.*”

Contrary to the simple cult ideal of genius, the artist as such (or more evidently the fool, buffoon, or mime), is exactly not what Nietzsche would name the *noble* in his genealogical polemic on morality or in his reflections *Beyond Good and Evil*. Much rather and like his closest relative, the criminal, the artist is hard pressed for everything that he or she becomes and, at the most basic level, this includes the artist’s own survival. What is more, the womanly ideal of the artist—as this includes Nietzsche (as philosopher, poet, author), together with actors, buffoons, rhetoricians, and Jews—is always an artist who is never an artist by choice. In Nietzsche’s unmasking of the masks of seduction, a divine or daemonic and furtive neediness unifies actor, artist, Jew, and woman. The urgency of disguise is predicated upon the absence of a sure or secure place in society except on the conditions and terms of that same dissembling and assuming just such a disguise. And yet, and this can be seen in the passions to which all humans are susceptible (in sexual desire above all), one can be driven to distraction, as we say, and in such a state or compulsion, we are the mask and *no one*, not women, not artists, not Nietzsche himself, *has ever had any choice*. It is Nietzsche’s merit to have traced the appearance of the mask/artist back to the need that gave it birth.

If the mask is common, general as it must be, it is so for the success of the ruse. Thus the problem of the theater is not the lie as such. The problem of Wagner (or Schopenhauer or any one of Nietzsche's "educators") as the problem of the actor is not that the effect of truth must never be true. Rather the rub is the backwards and forwards vulgarity of display. The paedagogic ideal of the theater always lags behind its practice which in its turn absorbs and reflects the standards of the theater's own public and that always remains mass culture. Thus the conceit of the artist is to imagine that the public for which he plays can be led by his art.<sup>40</sup>

The confusion between the artist and the "artist of one's own ideal" is due to the inconsummate genius of the artist except and only as it achieves an exactly vulgar expression. For there is only vulgar genius. "Success has always been the greatest liar—and the 'work' itself is a success; the great statesmen, the conqueror, the discoverer is disguised by his creations, often beyond recognition; the 'work' whether of the artist or the philosopher, invents the man who has created it, who is supposed to have created it; 'great men' as they are venerated are subsequent pieces of wretched minor fiction; in the

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<sup>40</sup> In this context, Nietzsche refers to the best men of his own era, to name Napoleon, Goethe, Beethoven, Stendahl, Heine—and also Wagner. And it is relevant that Nietzsche includes in this list an exception among exceptions, the quintessentially modern guise of the conquering hero, the world-spirit on horseback. Napoleon captured the Machiavellian aesthetic political ideal, and was, at least as we read the historian's tale, loved and feared. Any other tyrant has had to settle for terror alone, and at the end of power: revulsion. If Napoleon was different it was only because he was, as Nietzsche suggests, himself an artist of his own ideal. For Nietzsche, "all of them were fanatics of *expression* 'at any price' . . . all of them great discoverers in the realm of the sublime . . . still greater discoverers concerning effects, display, and the art of display windows" (BGE §256). Thus although such tyrants represented "on the whole, an audaciously daring, magnificently violent typology of higher human beings who soaring, tore others along, to the heights," their century, as our own, remains "the century of the *crowd*."

world of historical values, counterfeit rules” (BGE §269). Hence, Nietzsche writes, for higher men, for artists, “ruination is the rule.”

We cannot communicate except, Nietzsche reminds us, on the precise condition that we make ourselves common. This commonality or communion is the condition of democratic sublimation. The artist in reality (in ‘truth’) must play to the public in order to be an artist. This is the classic standard of artistic success. In this context, the artistic culture of ancient Greece is not an exception but an exception of exceptions out of sequence and to it we cannot return. Preserved within Christianity, the strength of Hebrew culture is the clue but not the answer. For this reason Nietzsche’s project was the task of a revaluation of values, values themselves once transformed. But I suspect that after two thousand years we need much more than just a new god.

Once again, the clue is found in the problem itself as our culture is a culture of vulgar, slave morality. Thus Nietzsche asks whether “falsity, indifference to truth and utility may be signs of youth” as symptoms of “childishness” in an artist? Asking this of artists (actors, Jews, women) he refers to “their habitual manner, their unreasonableness, their ignorance about themselves, their indifference to ‘eternal values,’ their seriousness in ‘play’—their lack of dignity; buffoon and god side by side; saint and *canaille*”(WP §816).

In the artist as in the ascetic priest, problem and redemption are yoked. But therewith we have again no more than a clue; we have neither the answer much less the cure. Nietzsche's approach to this puzzle seeks to make a distinction between art as "a consequence of dissatisfaction with reality? Or an expression of gratitude for happiness enjoyed." In this contrast, we speaking of the art of passionate love only in the latter thankful or loving case: this is what Nietzsche classifies as "aureole and dithyramb (in short, *art of apotheosis*)" (WP §845). Nietzsche, like Schiller, is always and everywhere speaking to (or of) the artist not the appeal to the crowd, thus he can observe that art in the grand style has that rhetorical diffidence "in common with great passion, that it disdains to please; that it forgets to persuade; that it commands, that it wills" (*ibid.*). If the soul of music seems opposed to this same grand distance that is also because, as a sign of its own consummate decadence, it has been limited to the play of one sense alone and no longer the dance of the senses. Music is more than two long millennia separated from its equally long degenerate progeny: the complete work of tragic art.

The slave morality of the Jew, as the vulgar morality embodied in the image ideal of woman, may never be able to emerge from the circle it builds for itself, even if it learns to survive the wound of its weak existence by continually reinflicting the wound upon itself. The standing problem is that if your life is a lie, you cannot be spared that lie in yourself.<sup>41</sup> And yet: *exactly* in this violent and self-delusory illusion, we are, exactly as

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<sup>41</sup> "Bist du echt? oder nur ein Schauspieler, ein Vertreter, oder das Vertretene selbst?" Nietzsche asks in *Twilight of the Idols*, "Mixed Maxims and Arrows."

artists—as actors, Jews, women—those beings who play with stars: “*Wesen die mit Stirnen spielen.*”

This is tragedy not science, not logic: the paradox of the Cretan, the paradox of Freud’s truth-telling Jew insulting his interlocutor with the lying insinuation of truth between Cracow and Lemberg, exceeds the opposition between good and evil or truth and lie with the remainder that Lacan calls the Real.<sup>42</sup> Once again, we review the odd cadence of Nietzsche’s rendered relationship between the problems Artist-Actor-Jew-Woman. The most interesting of these cultural problems, to use Nietzsche’s words, is the problem of the Jew which is the same problem of the actor precisely resonant in the metaphor of erotic music. In “Peoples and Fatherlands” in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche offers a sustained reflection on the political history of nothing but European music. Yet we can hardly recall this thematic focus without adverting to the then contemporary sense of the title (and apart from the now-dangerously misleading ahistorical resonance) to clarify the contextual meaning of the section title. It is after noting “What Europe owes to the Jews?” and because Nietzsche’s context has precisely nothing to do with Hitler, but everything to do with the complex artist-actor-woman, that Nietzsche defines the Jew in terms of a racial or scientific metaphor if also in terms precisely opposed to the biologism that ended in National Socialism. For Nietzsche, the Jews “are beyond all doubt the strongest, toughest and purest race at present living in Europe; they know how to prevail even under the worst conditions (better even than under favourable ones)” (BGE §251).

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<sup>42</sup> I discuss this further in Babich, “On the Order of the Real: Nietzsche and Lacan.”

The context is a metaphorical one and it is all about music. This is the erotic music Nietzsche prescribes, that is: like the Jew or the actor or the woman—or the Mediterranean-Adriatic-Aegean—in music. This erotic music could be poised “against German music” as “the redemption of music from the north,” as “prelude to a deeper, mightier, perhaps wickeder and more mysterious music.” This potential music not yet sung, certainly not yet heard, where we would have more than mere hearing to do with it, would have to be a “supra-European music which holds its own even before the brown sunsets of the desert, whose soul is kindred to the palm-tree and knows how to roam and be at home among great beautiful solitary beast of prey.” For Nietzsche claims that he, at least, is able to “imagine a music whose rarest magic would consist in this, that it no longer knew anything of good and evil, except perhaps some sailor’s homesickness, some golden shadow and delicate weakness would now and then flit across it” (BGE §255).

This is the music heard by the same heart’s ecstatic genius which has tempted so many seduced and intoxicated commentators to reinvent the conclusion of *Beyond Good and Evil*: “the tempter god and born pied piper of consciences whose voice knows how to descend into the underworld of every soul” (BGE §295). There the poses of Nietzsche’s seduction take us beyond our routine pettiness (resentments), redeeming in an almost confessedly Christian mode—and, incidentally enough, in the bravest democratic fugue yet heard—nothing less monumental than every vulgar instinct. It is “the genius of the heart, who makes everything loud and self-satisfied fall silent and teaches it to listen, who smooths rough souls and gives them a new desire to savour —”, teaching the agitations of

modernity stillness and superficiality out of profundity: “. . . that the deep sky may mirror itself in them.” Such a genius teaches not the cheap promise of the market and its seduction of still vulgar desire in the curse that is the blessing of the “goods of others” but instead and much rather *forms* the common man so that he is “richer in himself, newer to himself than before, broken open, blown upon and sounded out by a thawing wind, more uncertain perhaps, more delicate, more fragile, more broken, but full of hopes.” Yet it is important to recall that Nietzsche cannot close with this rarest of sustained lyrical notes. In the end, the human must be brought to teach this genius how to be humane, that is to say, as beings inevitably condemned to art, be it knowingly or not, we will always need a trick to get there. We *need* artistry, we need the bronzed music that is the soul of the south, the gondola song resonant in the soul singing itself to itself.

Such a music is of course the music of brown and bronzed night, the music of the soul that sings to itself a song a tremble with wild bliss.<sup>43</sup> The colors of this music, which can only be heard in the night, elusive in the morning of their youth are as written words, sketched out, no more than fragrance faded shadows of music, so that what is left to tell barely hints at the tones of what Nietzsche calls his “beloved—*wicked* thoughts!” painted like a musical poem, in “many many-coloured tendernesses and fifty yellows and browns and greens and reds.”

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<sup>43</sup> See for a discussion of Nietzsche’s metaphor of the erotically charged, bronzed or brown night, Babich, “Between Hölderlin and Heidegger: Nietzsche’s Transfiguration of Philosophy.” *Nietzsche-Studien*. 29 (2000): 267–301 as well as in a different dimensionality, Holger Schmid, “Nietzsche’s Philosophical Nocturne,” *New Nietzsche Studies*, 1, 1/2 (1996): 57–63.

When Nietzsche speaks of the innocence of the moment it is an innocence that looks hard into the abyss, into the weakness of human vanity, ambition, inadequacy. But at the same time he affirms the only source of transcendent power, glory, and beauty from and on the same humane side of life. It is for this reason that Nietzsche opposes the rhythms of his lived body to the long theatricality of Wagnerian music. Speaking of the body, of “iron, leaden life,” he asks only that it be “gilded by good golden and tender harmonies.” Hence Nietzsche can complain that what he suffers most when he contemplates the fate of music is the loss of the tragic sense: “deprived of its world-transfiguring, affirmative character . . . *décadence* music and no longer the flute of Dionysus” (EH, “The Wagner Case”). This decadent music redeems neither the heaviness of life nor ameliorates its tragic side. It is a tragic joy or “melancholy” that seeks “to rest in the hiding places and abysses of *perfection*” (GS §368)

The monological art, an art not made for the theater, for the masses of self-conscious playing affect, would be like Greek art—which “never ‘knew’ what it did” (GS §369).<sup>44</sup> Causality works forwards in this kind of passionate affirmative love only by working backward like the ray of sunlight Nietzsche sees shining on his life at the start of *Ecce Homo*, “I looked backwards, I looked forwards, never did I see so many and such good things at once.” Nietzsche’s account, telling his life to himself, thus *works* upon his life as a benediction. And it is this benediction which transfigures the glance, transfiguring what

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<sup>44</sup> That this is not the same as a pure *naïveté* is plain. Nietzsche distinguishes monological art from an art that plays to the crowd, as he distinguishes an esoteric irony. For Nietzsche the innocent Greek as an ancient warrior never did anything except for appearance’s sake, that is: all bravery requires a witness. Yet the Greek still “never ‘knew’ what it did.” The difference is a noble pathos.



*was* into what *was willed as such*, which is the meaning of what it is to will backwards, declaring: “*how, could I fail to be thankful to my life?*”

The gift of such a benediction is the affirmation of the great and the small, “a yes-saying without reserve: to suffering itself, to guilt itself, to the most questionable and strangest in existence itself,” simply because “nothing that is can be subtracted, nothing is dispensable” (EH, “The Birth of Tragedy” §2). This does not mean that there is or was or will be ‘no suffering,’ no guilt, nothing strange and questionable but—this is the meaning of fate—that everything is necessary: not only one thing is needful. What is required in everything is everything that preceded, accompanies, and succeeds it. Ergo, if in one tremendous or happy moment one affirms or blesses even one joyous fruition, one inevitably wills as well everything that has been as necessary for it to be at all.<sup>45</sup> Echoing the *Saitenspiel* that is the full soul trembling like a strung chord sounding with happiness, Nietzsche notes that “all eternities were needed to produce this one event—and in just this moment of yes-saying, all eternity was called good, redeemed, justified, and affirmed” (KSA 12, 308).

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<sup>45</sup> The difference between vulgar theatricality and artistic style reflects the chasm between taste and creative power. By adverting to this distinction, Nietzsche does not merely offer a new canon of taste. Rather the ground condition *par excellence* for all genuine creation is the consciousness of creative limit and impotence. For human beings, the creative accomplishment grows out of and at the same time confirms a keen reverence for “the interconnectedness of all things” (KSA 11, 341). I hear this (along with E. Heller) in Nietzsche’s note from 1884–85 where he declares that “die Ehrfurcht vor Gott ist die Ehrfurcht vor dem Zusammenhang aller Dinge und Überzeugung von höheren Wesen als der der Mensch ist . . . Der Künstler ist Götter-Bildner . . .” (KSA 11, 341). Reflecting the knotted interpenetration of everything that is, where “nothing is self-sufficient, neither ourselves nor things,” Nietzsche notes that the “first question is by no means whether we are satisfied with ourselves, but whether we are satisfied with anything at all. Assuming we affirm a single moment, we affirm not only ourselves but all existence” (KSA 12, 307).

The creative, artistic response to the conditions of life expresses neediness or abundance, but the articulation of such an expression is inevitably non-exclusive.<sup>46</sup> Nietzsche affirms that both “*ascendent artists* [and] *decadent artists* . . . *belong to all phases*.” (KSA 12, 264).<sup>47</sup> And if artists of ascending and declining life characterize every stage, every excess and destitution of life and history, everything, both hunger and abundance, must also be affirmed. Thus Nietzsche retrospectively describes his own Zarathustra as “*yes saying* to the point of justifying, of redeeming even the entire past” (EH, “Zarathustra” §8). This Zarathustra does as he composes, singing his own song to his own soul, bringing together into one “what is fragment and riddle and dreadful chance.” The lean time and the wreckage of life, the failures and the humiliations are as necessary as the full and perfect moment of time, as the consummate turning of life.<sup>48</sup> The stumbling move must be caught, not denied or named deception or illusion but blessed *and* turned into the balance. And all for the sake of affirmation or creative abundance. But—to keep to the claims of ordinary or real life—it is here that it gets hard to hold, hard to ambition, hard to keep. The point is that it cannot be kept: the key is gift, expression, sacrifice. Contra

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<sup>46</sup> Thus Nietzsche asks whether “falsity, indifference to truth and utility may be signs of youth” in an artist by which he means “their habitual manner, their unreasonableness, their ignorance about themselves, their indifference to ‘eternal values,’ their seriousness in ‘play’—their lack of dignity; buffoon and god side by side; saint and *canaille* —” (KSA 13, 264).

<sup>47</sup> Nietzsche emphasizes this by posing the rhetorical question whether “*Aufgangs-Künstler*” (ascendent artists) and *Niedergangs-Künstler* (decadent artists) *do not belong to every phase*,” and supplying the inevitably counter-rhetorical reply, “*Yes*” (KSA 13, 264).

<sup>48</sup> From this perspective on the importance of the entirety of the artist’s being, life, and history as condition for what can be worked as the artist’s work, as the work of art, I need (as promised earlier) to oppose Nehamas’s otherwise admirable egalitarianism as well as the recently celebrated or declared appreciation for the “other,” following not only in the wake of Levinas but contra the ascendancy of formerly Eastern European critical socialist sensibilities. Nietzsche’s broadly nuanced conditionality does not mean that “anyone” can be an artist of life and the “art of living,” even taken in a Foucaultian wise, even as an ethical stylist of one’s own, ownmost individual life. But see, for a nuanced and new elaboration of the contrary, Nehamas’s *The Art of Living* (cited above).

current conservative (i.e., cutting edge, Foucaultian, Deleuzian)<sup>49</sup> readings, Nietzsche's convalescence has nothing to do with recuperation or reserve or yet another effort but is always all about expenditure. This is the erotic trope *par excellence*, the organismic, i.e., the orgasmic meaning of what Nietzsche describes as the defining aspect of "the *great health*—that one does not merely have but also acquires continually and must acquire because one gives it up again and again and must give it up" (GS §382).

At the same moment and drawn into the same breath with which Nietzsche teaches love of life, he underscores every last reason for despair, frustration, impossible desire. This is the tragic condition of life, where life always "presupposes suffering and sufferers." What is transformed in the possibility of love is the disposition of suffering, a transformation as rare as that same (impossible) possibility. Only lovers fully alive to everything in life, which means those arched *not* with right feeling but by what I have deliberately been calling 'wrong feeling,' commanded by eros beyond themselves (not in imaginative projection) but exactly incarnate in what and how they are. Lovers, bodily, *physically* representing 'the *over-fullness of life*,' are able to desire the Dionysian, wholly erotic art Nietzsche consecrates as presupposing "a tragic view of life, a tragic insight." As an erotically charged being, the lover, precisely ecstatic, can "not only afford the sight of the terrible and questionable" as a spectacle to be admired at an aesthetic distance, but such a 'Dionysian god and man' can also face the actuality of the "terrible deed and every luxury of destruction" (GS §370).

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<sup>49</sup> NB: not, of course, contra Deleuze.

In the genealogy Nietzsche traces between artistic creativity and artistic culture, both abundance and need can give birth, yielding either immortalization or destruction. And Nietzsche wishes to look less at the fruits or works of the artist as a means to understand the psychology of the artist (“I am one thing, my works are another” [EH, “Why I Write Such Good Books” §1]), than the nature of the creative impulse, the expression of overabundance or the product of hunger or need (cf. KSA 7, 440). Thus, for example, a delight in destruction may be the result not of a cheap or vulgar nihilism but “an overflowing energy, pregnant with the future” (GS §370). Commentators, including trend-ambitioning readers like David Krell, typically read every energetic metaphor into *pregnancy* in its connection with the future save the critically metonymic reference to how one gets that way (this last point is the erotic dimension that is always occluded in Krell’s putatively feminist enthusiasm for *couvade* or elephantine female envy). It is crucial to catch the specifically erotic tone of the image of pregnancy not only because it could not be more obvious but also because it could be argued that in its time and context (especially for the eternally adolescent Nietzsche): such talk was suggestive enough.<sup>50</sup>

What is telling is abundance, that is: potency or sovereign *not* slavish desire. Immortalization can be an apotheosis of flux and destruction can be the precondition for

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<sup>50</sup> By the same token, the talk need not be read as Nietzsche’s “becoming” female, even if Nietzsche’s metaphoric language has seduced so many readers into infectious readings of this kind, although it remains significant that in such accounts, Nietzsche never ends up female, not even metaphorically, but always either a homosexual or transgendered, moping elephant and I have never seen the interpretive advantage of this account over the ordinariness of heterosexual (male and/or female) desire with its pretensions, demands, disappointments, and concomitant loneliness. The overfullness of which he speaks has been outlined by more than one reader as a phallic metaphor, and so on.

creation. Nietzsche's consciousness of the tragic insight colors both the affirmative and the reactive dispositions of abundance and need. Whatever is replete with overflowing energy cannot be conserved—this is the economy of expenditure or expression: affirmation. The will to power that is a capacity for expression can only be given out without reserve.<sup>51</sup> In contrast with art, knowledge merely seeks to tell itself a story: justifying and enduring its own impotence. Thus Nietzsche speaks of the gap between “know” and “can” (BGE §253) and suggests that what can act must perhaps exclude knowledge. The will lacking power is the will to power that does (and can do) nothing but conserve itself in the power it lacks, already played out, already without reserve. The difference is between the will to expend and the will to save. If no one can spend more than one has, expenditure remains the point at issue. In any case: in the economic dynamic of life as erotic love, power can *only* be kept if it is continually spent, lost, given out. This is the energetics of eros, the erotic dynamic, as it is an exact economy of discharge. It is the impotence of fear which cannot imagine and can *never* believe that such power, such great health, “one does not merely have, but also acquires continually, and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up” (GS §382). The course of desire sacrificed is the eternal return of the same.

If it is true of everything organic and inorganic that the conditions of life include death, the condition of the artist as the creator of the work of art (as of the condition of everyday

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<sup>51</sup> The Dionysian instinct which Nietzsche employs as a cipher for the “older Hellenic instinct,” is also, Nietzsche writes in praise of Burckhardt, “*explicable only as an excess of energy*.” In the “orgy,” Nietzsche writes—meaning to propose a stumbling block for Winckelmann and Goethe—in “the mysteries of sexuality,” eros expresses a will to life—“exactly as the triumphant Yes to life beyond death and change.”

life) is also the history of what must be overcome or mastered as what must be brought forward or heightened to produce the work. Not only “mud and chaos” but also “the divine spectator and the seventh day” (BGE §225) are absolutely necessary aspects of a holy yes, a wheel rolling out of itself, which Nietzsche’s Zarathustra compares first to the child’s innocence and poises again with the very same words in the impossible ideal of lovers who promise a life to one another.

As a defining condition of artistic creativity, Nietzsche mused that a Raphael “without hands” be imagined as the rule rather than the exception. Nietzsche also emphasized the tremendous vulnerability of the human capacity for and openness to beauty. And, again and again, he points out that no one can get more out of anything—art or life, even a book—than what one brings to bear on it. In the case of art, life, or, indeed, a text, this limit is that of the interpretive wherewithal at one’s disposal, which includes everything one is and everything one has experienced. The conditions of art for the artist, for artistic perception as for the culture or cultivation of a people are exceedingly rare.

To *become* what one is, one must take over one’s own life as an invention; even more importantly, at the same time, one must learn love. The need for love, for learning how to love, and an active erotic deed or lived passion or expressed, articulated desire corresponds to the importance of what Nietzsche calls benediction. This is a yes-saying. To learn love is to learn to bless and this love has an extraordinary mien: as human as

divine. And from the first moment of creation, benediction is a song of blessing or naming or calling things good.<sup>52</sup>

Nor would Nietzsche ever stop talking about, longing for, arguing love, which he spoke of as *amor fati*. Dionysus teasing Ariadne. Thus he could charge (as Wittgenstein similarly observed) that “The degree and kind of a man’s sexuality reaches up to the topmost summit of his spirit” (BGE §75). Thus Nietzsche could echo his ideal definition of chastity in love: “*Dans le véritable amour, c’est l’âme qui enveloppe le corps*” (BGE §142). The dream of love was always in his mouth, even if as the actor, artist, Jew, or else as the woman “born of a rib of his own ideal” (TI, “Mixed Maxims and Arrows” §13, cf. GS §71, etc.). The Nietzsche who “ventured to paint his ‘happiness’ on the wall” (GS §56) owes much of what made him “dynamite” to a dying era and the insight that the eighteenth and nineteenth century ideal of energy or love was a metaphor for what he always knew better than to reduce to sex without illusion, without erotic artistry.

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<sup>52</sup> Yet what remains the unadverted obstacle in all such arts of living and writing the self is the need for love. That is the need to learn love, which is also to say to learn to see that things are good, the necessary art or science of joy, in order to love life itself, that is, with respect to one’s own life, “here and now and in little things” as Heidegger expresses it in his essay on technology.

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