

Nietzsche's Revaluation of All Values

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Recommended Citation

Kranak, Joseph Anthony, "Nietzsche's Revaluation of All Values" (2014). *Dissertations (2009 -)*. Paper 415.
http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu/415

NIETZSCHE'S REVALUATION OF ALL VALUES

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A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,
Marquette University,
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

December 2014

ABSTRACT
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This dissertation looks at the details of Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the revaluation of all values. The dissertation will look at the idea in several ways to elucidate the depth and complexity of the idea. First, it will be looked at through its evolution, as it began as an idea early in Nietzsche's career and reached its full complexity at the end of his career with the planned publication of his *Revaluation of All Values*, just before the onset of his madness. Several questions will be explored: What is the nature of the revaluator who is supposed to be instrumental in the process of revaluation? What will the values after the revaluation be like (a rebirth of ancient values or creation of entirely new values)? What will be the scope of the revaluation? And what is the relation of other major ideas of Nietzsche's (will to power, eternal return, overman, and *amor fati*) to the revaluation? Different answers to these questions will be explored. Ultimately, the conclusion is that the revaluation is meant to be an imminent or near-contemporary event instituted by an extraordinary but realistic revaluator, who will transform the values of the whole of society after revaluation personal values by returning to ancient values as well as creating new values and that Nietzsche meant for many of his key ideas to have a reevalutive role.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Joseph Kranak

I would like to thank my wife and my family for all of their support through this process. I would like to my professors at Marquette who have helped and advised me. And I would like to thank my dissertation director, Dr. Javier Ibáñez-Noé, and the rest of my committee, Dr. Michael Monahan, Dr. Noel Adams, Dr. Andrew Tallon, and Rev. John D. Jones.

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INTRODUCTION

There has been little emphasis on Friedrich Nietzsche's idea of the revaluation of all values in the secondary literature on Nietzsche, yet the revaluation was probably the most important project of Nietzsche's late writing. He spoke extensively of the revaluation throughout his published works and his notebooks and planned a work exclusively on the subject. He believed that the rise of nihilism in Europe was one of the main concerns of his day, and he saw the revaluation as the only antidote.

He feared the rise of nihilism because he believed that the values of Europe had been for many centuries exclusively grounded in a belief in the Christian God. God defined for Europeans what was good and what was to be valued. But now that belief in God was in decline, Christianity was losing its influence, and, though the forms and rituals of Christianity might persist for a long time, that role of determining the thoughts and values of the Western world was in the past. God's central influence over society admittedly had long been in decline, but now, in Nietzsche's day, outright disbelief in God was dramatically on the rise and was starting to change the direction of society. The question was what would ground the values of Europeans absent God. A revaluation of all values was necessary so that new values independent of the old assumptions could be formed.

If Nietzsche thinks we are to reevaluate all values, this leads to a number of questions. For example, from what perspective do we question the old values? What is to be the ground of these new values? How do we justify these new values? Are we to justify them by new assumptions? Who's qualified to establish new values for

Europeans? Are we really to reevaluate *all* values, or are there some that are above question?

Nietzsche is not explicit about how he would answer these questions, and we, as interpreters, may not be fully capable of discovering his answers. Nietzsche's planned project of the *Revaluation of All Values*, a work that would explain the reevaluation in greater detail, was ultimately incomplete. We have the parts of it that he did complete. He wrote the first book of it, *The Antichrist*; he integrated many parts originally planned for it into *Twilight of the Idols*; and he left behind in his notebooks several different plans for the work as well as numerous notes on issues relevant to the topic that weren't published. Nonetheless, there is much that he perhaps might have explained if he continued through with that project and had been able to complete it. That leaves us in the position of trying to fill in some of the gaps left behind.

In addition, even if he had completed the work, Nietzsche was never the type to simply set things out straightforwardly—he was not intent on laying out some plan for some future reevaluator to follow. One of Nietzsche's main strategies in these writings, as in other places, is trying to effect an end, instead of simply trying to describe ideas. Since Nietzsche was deeply interested in psychology and ancient history, he began to notice pretty early in his philosophical development that the beliefs that we take to be true have profound influence on what we perceive, and thereby influence our actions and can shape our world. Because of this, as opposed to philosophy's traditional role of simply describing the world as it is, Nietzsche saw philosophy as a practical pursuit with effects that should be anticipated and certain practical ends that should be sought. For this reason Nietzsche's philosophy is better described as more practical, rather than illuminative.

Nietzsche saw considerable, if not insurmountable, barriers that stood in the way of actually describing things as they are, noting the distance between our language and the world, as well as the limitations of our perspectives. In fact, when we look at history what we see is a train of evolving and changing ideas that give us no confidence that our particular perspective at the present has any priority.

The difficulty of reaching truth admittedly might lead us into some sort of resigned skepticism or even nihilism, but, as noted, our beliefs have a profound influence on our world and Nietzsche seriously doubted that we would want to live in a world predominantly shaped by nihilism and skepticism. In fact, from his perspective, if philosophy can't get us to truth and our beliefs shape the world, then why not try to shape the world (at least as we perceive it) with our ideas? Nietzsche saw philosophy as trying to achieve certain effects rather than finding insights into reality as it is or trying to explain the nature of things.

In the case of the revaluation of all values, that end is to undermine old values, and to hopefully accomplish the grand task of reevaluating all (or many) values. In fact, as part of this strategy of trying to effect an end, Nietzsche may have himself been trying to produce at least a partial revaluation of all values, not to try to explain how someone else might do it. This idea I will be defending in a subsequent chapter. Nietzsche uses a number of techniques to undermine old values, techniques that may show us how he expected the revaluation to be performed. These include: genealogical analysis to show the drives and motivations that underlie our values and ideals both historically and psychologically; exposing hypocrisy or underlying self-contradictoriness within moral rules or values; showing how values are essential to life and are only possible by living

things, but that some values are life-denying and thus undermine valuing itself; and others. Nietzsche also puts contemporary values against what he regards as higher values and shows how they are in conflict. A number of strategies are in fact employed, which have been explored in great detail by E. E. Sleminis in his book on the revaluation and which will thereby not be explored here.

The possibility that Nietzsche was himself trying to bring about a revaluation of values through his writings leads us to a few other corollary conclusions about the revaluation: that the revaluation was meant to begin immediately or very soon after Nietzsche's day, that the revaluator needn't be some super-human figure (like the overman), and that some of Nietzsche's ideas were presented in order to undermine old values and/or to create new ones. In subsequent chapters I will be defending these interpretations.

Outline of the Revaluation

We will start here by outlining, very briefly, what Nietzsche's revaluation of all values is. First, we'll have to understand what values are. Nietzsche speaks of tables of values and ranks of values and even proposes the idea of quantifying values (*WP* 710; *WLN* p253, 14[105]). As Nietzsche uses the term and as it is generally understood, values are, firstly, hierarchical. They are potentially quantifiable denominations meant to organize things in terms of higher and lower: a ranking of the relative importance of all things. Secondly, as Nietzsche believes it, values are not independent. Values are determined by valuing beings. The hierarchy of values is not written into the way the world is, but is a result of the interaction of living things with the world: "Whatever has *value* in the present world

has it not in itself, according to its nature—nature is always value-less—but has rather been given, granted value”(GS 301). Thirdly, values are completely relative. Something is only valuable in relation to something else, namely *more* valuable or *less* valuable than it. Nietzsche says, “[becoming] *has no value at all*, for there is nothing against which it can be measured and in relation to which the word ‘value’ would have meaning” (*WLN* p212, *KGW* 11[72]; cf also *WP* 708). Nothing can have value unless there is something to compare it to. This is why “The total value of the world is unevaluable”(*ibid*) and “There can be no overall evaluation of life”(*TI II* 2). In other words, just as for Aristotle the world as a whole has no place because there is nothing outside of it, for Nietzsche the world as a whole and life as a whole have no value because there is nothing against which to compare them to.

Values are also at the center of practical action. In fact, values are indispensable for action. Because values are hierarchical, non-independent, and relative, then a particular activity or object or end has value because it can be compared to other possible activities, objects, or ends by a valuing being. We use values to choose among alternatives. Without values we would be always faced with a type of Buridan’s Ass problem at every decision. Two alternatives will be both equally rational and logical absent any value considerations. It is neither illogical nor irrational to stay in bed all day rather than get up and work. It is so only if I deem it important to earn a living or accomplish something today. If choosing between a tasty but unhealthy meal or a bland but healthy meal, what could compel me to prefer one except, for example, my deeming long-term health more valuable than transient pleasure for my taste buds? We might tend to think that the healthful choice is more rational, but this is only because we have

already decided in advance that a life that last longer or has fewer health problems is more desirable than the sacrifices that have to be made to achieve this. What we perceive of as “rational” is already mixed with numberless value-judgments, not to mention that even preferring the “rational” over the “irrational” is already a value judgment. There is no value-free means of choosing amongst alternatives.

Organizing practical action around hierarchies of value is a radical departure from the traditional morality Nietzsche rejects. Traditionally moralities are comprised of sets of Oughts and Ought-Nots, which demand full and constant compliance. If one follows a hierarchy of values, then one is rather choosing among possibilities and making trade-offs. When one chooses A, one will have to opt-out of B, C, D, and so on. One does not abide by rules of Ought and Ought-Not, but rather chooses in favor of what is relatively most valuable.

Additionally, if there is a given arrangement of values from higher to lower, what we are doing when we reevaluate is reconsidering that arrangement. Some values will be raised up; some will be lowered; some will be discarded altogether as of little to no value, and some will stay where they are. A revaluation of all values would be a re-ordering of all existing values into a different hierarchy, as well as the creation of some new values and the destruction of some old values.

Some Further Questions About Revaluation

This only explains the most basic framework and raises many further questions. What type of values would we expect after the revaluation? On what ground would a revaluation be based? Is the revaluation meant to apply to all people or is it a personal

project for Nietzsche and like-minded individuals? To answer these questions we must look at Nietzsche's approach to the revaluation of all values.

To begin with the first question: To what type of values do we expect the revaluation to lead? The interpretation that I will defend, is that the revaluation will lead to new values that are largely like the ancient values that the "Christian Revaluation of Ancient Values" replaced. There are reasons why I think that the new values will not be entirely a revivification of ancient values. The methods of the revaluation are not such that they will necessarily lead to any particular mix of values. It is merely a method of testing values to see which are most beneficial and preserving those, whether they be ancient, Christian, or something entirely different. On the other hand, Nietzsche does revere ancient values and puts them in contradistinction to Christian values, which are presented as deeply problematic. He does present the revaluation as having two sides, a destructive side and a creative side, and it seems that the destructive side will largely undermine Christian values and the creative side will largely resurrect ancient values, but will bring in new values as well. These ideas lead to the conclusion that there is a simple reversion going on at times (reversing Christian values to create ancient values), but since this won't always be the case, then the values will be largely similar to ancient values, but still different. These arguments, though, will be explored in more detail in a subsequent chapter.

Another question is how will these values be grounded. In other words, how do we justify that it is this set of values that we should abide by, and not a different set of values? In general commentators have focused on Nietzsche deriving or intending to derive his values from certain core values or higher values, especially life-affirmation.

Here I think we should be cautious. If we look at Nietzsche's major historical example of a revaluation—the Christian revaluation of ancient values—it was, at least partially, based on certain metaphysical assumptions. For example, it was based on the belief in a separate world (another better, truer world beyond the sensible world) or belief in a benevolent all-powerful God, and on belief in an immortal soul. If we reject such ideas, such as the distinction between the apparent and the real world, then certain values evaporate. In fact, Nietzsche's revaluation is, for one, based on the rejection of this other world. Equally, he is going to build his revaluation on the assumptions that there is no benevolent, all-powerful creator who imbues reality with certain values. If a divine creator puts values into the world, then any subjective human valuations or any revaluation, to begin with, would be a distortion of reality. Valuation would be a matter of discovering the values of the creator. Thus, part of his revaluation is to embrace the possibility of being able to create values and revalue. These considerations lead us to conclude, that the values after revaluation may not be based on certain core values but on certain key assumptions about the way the world is, and thus a revaluation may be a based on a reappraisal of the nature of the world.

Furthermore, I would like to argue in following that among the perspectives that Nietzsche uses for this revaluation are his core ideas. These include and we will be focusing on the eternal return of the same, the will to power, *amor fati*, and the overman. I will focus on these four ideas as an exemplary, though not necessarily all-inclusive list. It is possible to imagine that a full revaluation of all values would require a considerable set of ideas perhaps beyond the scope of a single philosopher. But these basic ideas cover multiple important areas of human perspective. He hereby questions the status of and

future of humanity, questions the nature of life and basic building blocks of physical reality, as well as questions the nature of time and progress with these ideas. The values built on the assumption of the eternal return, will to power, *amor fati*, and overman will represent a significant departure from the Christian values of Nietzsche's day.

We should note from the outset that these ideas evolved in Nietzsche's philosophy. It's very clear that the eternal return began as something different—a sort of thought experiment to test one's capacity to affirm life—but it evolved into something that could become the basis of a revaluation. The will to power, as well, was an idea that germinated slowly, out of the idea of humans' "desire for power," which evolved into a description of the ultimate nature of physical phenomena as will to power. We will have to spell these histories out in more detail later, but for the moment, suffice it to say that, especially with these two ideas, they were not originally intended as part of the revaluation and later would become integrated into Nietzsche's project of revaluation. The overman is different since it seems that from the first it was proposed as an idea to undermine old values, but it didn't persist or evolve in Nietzsche's thought like the other two ideas. And *amor fati* is also an important though not as thoroughly developed idea as the others. Nonetheless, I want to interpret these four ideas as part of or later integrated into Nietzsche's project of revaluation.

This raises the question of how accurate or how well these ideas are meant to represent things as they are. As noted at the beginning, Nietzsche's attitude towards philosophy is more strategic than revelatory. But the ideas meant to facilitate a revaluation can't be entirely fabulous, else people would never accept them. There must be some truth to them. For example, if we deemed it prudent to persuade people that the

world is a single flat landmass surround by water guarded at its edges on all sides by terrible sea creatures, it would be a hard sell, since there's ample evidence that disproves it. Nietzsche proposes ideas that are meant to persuade and meant to be accepted, and that Nietzsche himself may even be willing to accept. But he certainly can't vouch for their irrefutable truth, and he certainly doesn't promote these ideas as truths in themselves but as means to facilitate the more important project—that is, the revaluation. Part of the revaluation was Nietzsche's willingness to question the high value placed upon truth. This is not to say that truth is completely without value, merely that truth is arranged on a scale of values, and that there are things that are, at least in some cases, more valuable than truth. In cases where one has to choose between truth and one of these more valuable objectives, then truth must give way. Thus, if we are to assume that the overcoming of nihilism is more important than discovering truth, then it is acceptable to adopt untrue ideas if they are useful in overcoming nihilism. This doesn't mean it is *necessary* to adopt untrue ideas, but it does mean that whether an idea is true, untrue, or partially true is irrelevant if it serves the more important project of revaluation.

We might also ask whether the revaluation that Nietzsche speaks of is meant to be society wide or individual. Is it meant to be universal revaluation, where the values for all people within the society are reshaped by key influential figures, or is it meant to be personal, whereby individuals seek out new ways to arrange the values that they individually abide by? The original Christian revaluation is clearly of the universal type and Nietzsche's writings tend to suggest that the revaluation is of this type. This universal revaluation is meant to combat the rise of nihilism and to give life to society after the death of God. On the other hand, there is a heavy strain of individualism throughout

Nietzsche's writing. The themes of "becoming what you are" and cultivating virtues that are entirely your own and that are not shared with others (cf Z I "On the Passions of Pleasure and Pain") suggests the possibility of an individual revaluation. It is possible that individuals might create their own tables of values and that there might be an individual corollary to the universal revaluation. The individual revaluation would be built on individual perspectives and experiences. According to this interpretation of the revaluation the will to power, the eternal return, *amor fati*, and the overman are possible perspectives upon which individuals might found their own personal revaluation. And since nihilism is simply the problem of the absence of values, any revaluation that gives value to things and creates values would be a solution to nihilism. Is it possible that Nietzsche might be advocating a more individual revaluation instead of a universal revaluation that is meant to apply across the whole of society?

The weight of evidence leans towards the more universal revaluation, which seems to be what he is talking about most of the time. Nonetheless, indirect evidence does also suggest the individual revaluation. For this reason, I will interpret these two types of revaluation as simply two sides of the revaluation, each with their significance and importance in Nietzsche's full idea of the revaluation.

History of Interpretation of Nietzsche' Revaluation

Interpreters' opinion on the revaluation of all values and Nietzsche's theories of values have evolved over the years. It would be impossible to give a thorough account of all the interpretations, but I describe some of the highlights from throughout the history of Nietzsche scholarship.

Anthony M. Ludovici was among the earliest major Nietzsche commenters and the first that we'll look at here. Concerning Nietzsche's theory of revaluation, he interpreted Nietzsche as arguing that, because the current conditions favored the flourishing of certain baser types of persons (Ludovici 80), the revaluation was necessary in order to improve the conditions and make it possible that a higher type of person might emerge (73). According to Ludovici, Nietzsche was not writing his books for a general audience but only for the current higher types of persons. Nietzsche appealed to them, hoping that they would be able to realize these changes (73–4).

Karl Jaspers was probably the next most significant interpreter before Heidegger. Writing around the 1930s, Jaspers argued that Nietzsche's revaluation had its source in the death of God (Jaspers 429). According to Jaspers, the creative revaluation (the creation of new values) will lead to a new "morality," (413) that is a new system of values that is not based on the law of God (143). The new system will be based upon nature, upon the reinstatement of "purely naturalistic values in place of moral values" (327). Jasper also argued that, since values are human-created and subjective, "Values are never final; at any given time they must be created" (154). Thus, he interpreted Nietzsche as saying that the cycle of revaluation is endless; a new revaluation will always follow the previous.

Martin Heidegger in the 30s and 40s in his essays and lectures argued for a more systematic interpretation of Nietzsche. Heidegger believed there was unity of the concepts of will to power, eternal return, and revaluation of all values: "The doctrine of the eternal return of the same coheres in the most intimate way with that of will to power. The unity of these teachings may be seen historically as the revaluation of all values

hitherto”(Heidegger, *Nietzsche* 18). Heidegger believed that values for Nietzsche were grounded in life and life-affirmation (*Nietzsche* 156), and Heidegger thereby argued for a connection between will to power and revaluation (“Nietzsche’s Word” 173), with power/life-affirmation as the ground of the revaluation. He also saw the thought of the eternal return as being capable of achieving revaluation (*Nietzsche* 157). He also described the process revaluation as a simple inversion: “Nietzsche’s procedure, his manner of thinking in the execution of the new valuation, is perpetual reversal, (*Nietzsche* 29).

Walter Kaufmann, beginning in the 1950s, argued against many of Heidegger’s interpretations. Kaufmann believed that the revaluation consisted of a return from the contemporary Christian values to the previous ancient values, in other words, a return to naturalistic values instead of values based on belief in God (Kaufmann *Nietzsche* 102). Kaufmann also believed that the revaluation will come in multiple stages. As it is being carried out in the present, it is only a critique of current values (111). The process of creation of values is left to the philosophers of the future, who are uniquely capable of creating new values and will come about many generations from now. Kaufmann believed that Nietzsche undermines moral values primarily by showing that our morality is immoral by its own standards (113).

Gilles Deleuze offered his own unique interpretation in his 1962 work on Nietzsche’s philosophy. Like Heidegger, Deleuze argued for revaluation as simple reversal: “all values known or knowable up to the present have been reversed”(171). But he presented a unique version of this. He argued that the revaluation was a “change and reversal in the element from which the value of values derives”(163). This reversal

was accomplished by exchanging life-negation with affirmation: “Values and their value no longer derive from the negative, but from affirmation as such. In place of a depreciated life we have life which is affirmed”(175).

In 1983 Richard Schacht’s monograph on Nietzsche provided new interpretations of the revaluation of all values. Schacht argued that revaluation was necessary to fill the void created by the undermining of current values and to overcome the problem of nihilism (Schacht *Nietzsche* 344). Like Heidegger, Schacht argued the revaluation was grounded in the will to power (*Nietzsche* 346). He argued that the real value of something is in its value for life and quotes Nietzsche as saying that “Life is will to power”(*Nietzsche* 354). Life affirmation and life-denial are thereby that which is in accord and antagonism to will to power respectively. Like Kaufmann, he believed that this revaluation would be a task of the genuine philosopher (*Nietzsche* 109 & 343), the new breed of philosophers Nietzsche speaks of in *Beyond Good and Evil*.

Brian Leiter in his book on Nietzsche’s morality argues that revaluation is a reassessment of the value of our moral values (136). Similar to Ludovici, he argues that Nietzsche attacks morality because it threatens human excellence (26) and thereby seeks to undermine moral values, which serve the herd of mankind at expense of the most excellent. Leiter also argues that Nietzsche’s works are for these higher types and the revaluation seeks to rid these people of the false belief that the dominant morality is good for them, thereby loosening the attachment of potentially great human beings to this morality (27). Leiter argues that Nietzsche’s genealogy, looking into the origins of our morals, is guided by an interest in reassessing the value of our morality (43).

More recently, Bernard Reginster has argued that revaluation is a strategy to overcome nihilistic despair. As he writes, “The affirmation of life results from a revaluation of the nihilist’s life-negating values” (“Nihilism” 59). Nihilism results from commitment to certain life-denying values and ideals (*Affirmation* 50), and thus genuine life-affirmation is only possible after a thorough revaluation (*Affirmation* 15). Reginster believes that revaluation of suffering and compassion, and redefinition of the ideals of happiness and human greatness are particularly central to this revaluation (*Affirmation* 149).

Outline of the Present Work

To understand Nietzsche’s revaluation, I want to look at it historically. In the first chapter I will begin with a description of how the idea of revaluation changes throughout the history of Nietzsche’s philosophy. We will look at his early works, and I will talk about Nietzsche’s early interest in values. Critique of the value of truth is a concern that emerges early in Nietzsche’s thought. Nietzsche also speaks of the nature of the true philosopher, which will be an early model for the type of great figures capable of creating new values and which a revaluation will help to foster. Also, we will look at the beginning of Nietzsche’s critique of morality, a critique that will change significantly as Nietzsche’s thought matures.

In the period of his “middle works,” by which I mean those of the early 1880s, we see a growing interest in values: in hierarchies of values and creation of values and ultimately in the emergence of the concept of “revaluation.” Nietzsche’s critique of morality evolves into his “Genealogical Critique,” namely a critique of morality and of

values via uncovering their history and their evolution. Genealogy will thus become part of the negative part of revaluation, of destroying values.

Finally I will look at how the revaluation develops in Nietzsche's last philosophical works, in the published writings of 1888 (*Twilight of the Idols*, *Antichrist* and *Ecce Homo*) and in his unpublished notebooks. At this point, Nietzsche begins to make a connection between the revaluation and nihilism, perceiving the revaluation as an antidote to nihilism. Nietzsche planned a lengthy treatise titled the *Revaluation of All Values*, which he didn't finish. We will look at the ideas he planned on exploring in this treatise and how his plans for it changed through the years.

In the second chapter, we will explore both the nature of the person responsible for revaluation and the values that will result from such a revaluation. We will look at certain distantly future figures as models of the revaluator, such as the "genuine philosopher" of *Beyond Good and Evil*, who is spoken of as capable of creating values and as being a person of the future. I will argue that such a person, though capable of creating values, is not the minimum standard for one capable of creating values, and that when Nietzsche imagines the more immediate revaluation that is supposed to address the imminent threat of nihilism, he is thinking of a more realistic figure, such as a great artist or philosopher. In fact, I will argue that Nietzsche sees himself as a revaluator and believes that he is actively participating in a great historical transition.

In this chapter, we will also look at the question of what types of values are meant to result from the revaluation. We will explore what I consider to be the two leading interpretations, that the values that result will be a rebirth of ancient values and that the values that result will be entirely new values. We will explore arguments in favor of both

of these positions. I defend a compromise position, that the values that result will be new but will largely resemble ancient values.

In the third chapter, we will be looking at the question of whether the revaluation is a society-wide event, in which the values of all society are to be reevaluated by some exceptional individual. This is the way that the revaluation is generally spoken of in Nietzsche's works. Then, we will look at the revaluation as a personal project, namely that Nietzsche is speaking directly to his readers and asking them to reassess their own personal values. I will try to integrate these two ideas and suggest that perhaps the personal revaluation is a precursor to the society-wide revaluation.

In the fourth chapter, we will begin to look at the particular ideas of the will to power, the eternal return, *amor fati*, and the overman as they evolved through Nietzsche's philosophy. I want to look at them as the foundations of Nietzsche's revaluation. We will briefly look at them as they evolved through Nietzsche's thought so that we can fully understand these ideas better and understand better their place with the revaluation.

We will start with the concept of the overman. I intend to show how the overman is part of a reappraisal of ideals about humans and our place in the universe. Nietzsche intends to undermine our pretensions and place us within the history of evolution and how we are limited by that evolution and have yet to achieve our highest possibility. This is also part of reassessing values related to these ideas. With the eternal return of the same, I intend to show how the eternal return is part of a reappraisal of ideas about progress and history. Within the scope of the eternal return, key values relating to progress and the striving for progress are reassessed. With *amor fati*, I intend to show how *amor fati* is also a reappraisal of ideas about free will and sin. Within the scope of

amor fati, key values relating to virtue and vice are reassessed. Finally, with the concept of the will to power, I intend to show how the will to power is part of a reappraisal of ideas about life, human emotions, and human drives, and that it was part of reassessing values related to these ideas.

In the end, I intend to try and show, through these chapters, that the concept of the revaluation of all values was an evolving concept and that in his mature thought, Nietzsche thought of it as an imminent, society-wide historical event that he was participating in. He was actively trying to reevaluate values using some of his notable ideas and aiming towards a set of new values that largely resembled the ancient values that he frequently praises.

On the Weight of Evidence

In this work I will be using as evidence both Nietzsche's published writings as well as his unpublished writings: unfinished works, unpublished works, notes and, in some cases, letters. I take this approach because I believe my goal in interpretation is to explicate philosophical biography, namely that we, as interpreters, are trying to explain the thoughts that Nietzsche thought. We are not simply trying to interpret his writings, or trying to interpret some subset of "canonical" or "official" writings.

If we open ourselves to using works that are not published and thus not having Nietzsche's official imprimatur, then we need to consider the strength of different forms of evidence. When we speak of Nietzsche's thought, we wouldn't want to take some of Nietzsche's more passing or fleeting thoughts as relevant facets of his overall thinking. I am trying to interpret his thought, but not everything that passed through his mind is

relevant, rather only that which is considered and is part of his overall philosophy—that is the overall network of ideas that we might consider to be his worldview.

This means that, firstly, everything he wrote is potential evidence of his thoughts, but those ideas and concepts that recur frequently must represent more important thoughts. If they recur frequently, they mustn't be fleeting and thus are more likely to be part of his philosophy. Hence, any idea or argument that only appears once in Nietzsche's published or unpublished writings will be considered as less likely to represent his philosophy, and the more frequently it recurs the stronger is the evidence that it is part of his philosophy.

Secondly, we should consider whether a passage appears in a published or unpublished work. Ideas that appear in published writings will be considered to be more likely to represent his philosophy. Because producing, revising, and finishing for publication a published work requires considerable time and effort, then it is much less likely that ideas that Nietzsche didn't really give serious consideration to would be let to slip through into publication, as opposed to passages appearing in notebooks, which were probably written on the spur of the moment (we see a great many passages that are fragments of thoughts, frequently not even complete sentences). Additionally, Nietzsche would be more careful with his language and choice of words in his published works, versus his notebooks.

Based on these considerations we can create a hierarchy of reliability based on the effort and thought that went into various types of works. The published works are at the top. At most only slightly below that would be works Nietzsche wrote that were finished and polished but not published, such as his lectures (*Rhetoric*, *Pre-Platonic Philosophers*,

On the Future of Our Educational Institutions), Ecce Homo, and short, completed essays (for example his *Prefaces to Unwritten Works* and his short essays from his student days and time as a professor). Somewhat below that would be uncompleted works that were nonetheless quite polished and finished, such as *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* and *On Truth and Lying*. Below that we should include the notebooks. And even further below that, I would place Nietzsche's letters. I put these at the bottom mostly just because they weren't primarily written with the aim of expressing philosophical ideas and thus, even when he does speak of his thoughts, he may be speaking of fleeting thoughts and speaking of them in an unphilosophical way.

Thirdly, we should consider the time when relevant passages appear. Nietzsche's thoughts evolved over time, and he sometimes came to disagree with his younger self. The idea we're focused on here, the revaluation of all values, is one mostly from his last years of sanity. Hence, passages and quotations that come well before the period we're focused on won't offer as strong of evidence of his thought as ideas that appear at the same time. And we might generalize this as well: ideas that appear close in time with one another are thus more likely to be combinable—that is to say they are consistent with one another and might be combined to create more complex ideas.

For this reason, consideration of the overall timeline of Nietzsche's thought will be useful in constructing his philosophy, and it is to that we will turn in the first chapter.

CHAPTER 1

BIOGRAPHY OF THE IDEA OF THE REVALUATION

We will begin by looking at the revaluation of all values and closely connected ideas as they changed over the course of Nietzsche's philosophical career. The purpose of this chapter is to give us an overall look at the main ideas of the revaluation before we delve into some of the more perplexing and difficult-to-interpret details in subsequent chapters. I have presented this as biographical survey so that when we subsequently look at many of the questions pertinent to understanding the revaluation, we can put Nietzsche's relevant statements concerning these questions in context, and so that we can understand the revaluation as an evolving idea that grew and expanded and was being constantly modified and groomed. Nietzsche's views on the revaluation change in subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) ways, and it will help us in understanding Nietzsche to view some of these questions as having changing answers. When we look at revaluation in subsequent chapters, we will generally look at the most developed version of the revaluation, namely that of late 1888, but there will be times we will consider earlier versions.

We will also be looking at many of the ideas that are part of and pertinent to the revaluation in their earliest manifestations. We hope that by looking at many of these ideas earlier it will help clarify them. For one, looking at earlier, usually simpler manifestations of an idea can help us see more of the details of more complex manifestations of the idea. It can also expose the ideas behind some of these concepts that Nietzsche did not explain in his later work. We will also find at times that there are ideas

that Nietzsche employed or proposed that he later abandoned. The reasons why such ideas were abandoned also give us insight into the idea of revaluation.

Looking at the ideas as they germinated means that the focus of this chapter will be more on Nietzsche's earlier works, since this is where many of these ideas began. When we look at later works, it will be only to see what new ideas have been added and how these earlier ideas have changed, if at all. Many of the ideas introduced in these earlier works did not go through any appreciable alteration in later works.

As we look at the evaluation of Nietzsche's ideas, one of the major trends is that of accretion. Nietzsche started with some key ideas, added new ones, and integrated and interrelated many ideas that he would develop over the years into these ideas of revaluation, such as nihilism, the eternal return, and the will to power. He started with a few small pieces (critique of value of truth, idea of the true philosopher, eternal return) and built around them, by adding pieces to them, broadening their application, and connecting them to other ideas. As we look at this history, we will see that the questions early on were more narrowly focused, for example questioning the values of specific concepts, such as the value of truth or the value of art or historical scholarship. The importance of value only increased as Nietzsche expanded his critique of morality. As he started to see more and more problems with morality, he realized that an overall alteration of these values was necessary. Nietzsche began to believe that the deficiencies of the current values were at the heart of the cultural problems he perceived in his age and began to think that a profound alteration of these morals would be helpful, perhaps even necessary. Nietzsche was also thinking about nihilism as he began to articulate this idea in more detail, and he started to perceive a certain historical inevitability to the

progression of nihilism and the ultimate revaluation that must follow. At the time of his latest writings, he was planning on a substantial work that would explain how this revaluation was supposed to occur and that might itself be instrumental in initiating the imminent revaluation. The onset of Nietzsche's madness cut short these plans and make it difficult for us to ascertain how he would have followed through on this project, or even if he would have followed through on it at all. But it does clearly show the importance that revaluation had for Nietzsche throughout his career, and especially in these later works.

Early Thoughts on Value and Revaluation

We will begin by looking at the early writings of Nietzsche. Nietzsche's writing career spanned roughly from 1872 (publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*) to 1888 (last full year of sanity, completion of *Antichrist*), but Nietzsche doesn't explicitly refer to "revaluation" (*Umwertung* or its variants, such as *Umwerthen* and *Umzuwerthen*) in any of his published writings or surviving notes until 1884 (KGW VII2 26[259])¹ nor does he refer to any other concept explicitly connected to revaluation, such as "new values" or "new value-judgments" until 1880 (KGW V1 5[25]). Nonetheless, even if these ideas were not explicitly mentioned, we can still say that the revaluation was being developed, in that important foundational ideas were being explicitly explored. Looking back upon his earlier works later on, Nietzsche recognized that he was interested in many of the

¹ When quoting translations from Nietzsche's notebooks (namely, *Philosophy and Truth*, *Will to Power*, *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, and *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, I will also reference the location of the passage in the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (KGW).

issues that would more seriously concern him later on from his earliest works. In 1888 he would call his first book, the *Birth of Tragedy*, his first revaluation of all values (*TI* “Ancients” 5), and it does seem as if in these early works the precursors of his more fully developed idea of revaluation are present. Nietzsche was certainly concerned with values and valuation throughout his philosophical career.

In the early works, Nietzsche was more focused on questioning the value of certain specific ideas, such as truth, scholarship, art, and history. Not until his later works did he seek a more wholesale questioning of all values and talk about the historical immanence of such a revaluation. To look at these early works insofar as they pertain to the development of the revaluation, we will look at three critical ideas: the critique of truth, the nature of the philosopher, and the early critique of morality.

Critique of Truth

Nietzsche’s early writings show a consistent interest in undermining specific values. Nietzsche tries to show that certain values have simply been raised too high and that these excessive valuations interfere with other values that are genuinely more important, such as the pursuit of fruitful living. We will look at the revaluation of specific values as a first step towards a more generalized revaluation of all values. Here, we will look at probably the most important value Nietzsche critiqued in his early work, truth. Nietzsche would never really stop critiquing the value of truth, speaking of it extensively in *Beyond Good & Evil* and numerous times through his works of 1888, such as in *Twilight of the Idols* and *Antichrist* and elsewhere. Nietzsche seems to have started to question the value of truth very early on, writing, for example, in an 1868 student paper “On Schopenhauer”

that sometimes erroneous ideas are more valuable than true ideas: “The errors of great men are worthy of honour because they are more fruitful than the truths of the small”(p 260). We will look at this value both because it is so central to these early works and because many of the details and arguments will resonate throughout Nietzsche’s career and his later critiques of value.

The view of truth that Nietzsche attacked Slenis calls the “absolute theory of truth”(23). It is the prevailing understanding of truth as an absolute, universal ideal. Slenis, using Nietzsche’s writings, says that absolute truth has five characteristics: uniqueness (only one truth), objectivity (independent of any conscious being), unrevisability (always the same), unconditionality (independent of conditions of the knower), impartiality (independent of needs/wants/desires of knower), and universality (true for everyone and everywhere) (Sleinis 23–24). The alternative that Nietzsche will later present is his theory of perspectivism, but at this point early in his career, the concern is simply with critique. And the concern is also more so with the *value* of truth, than with the concept itself. Whether Nietzsche, throughout his career, believes absolute truth is genuinely possible or exists in some ontological sense is unclear, but it is clear that he thinks the value of absolute truth is greatly exaggerated.

Nietzsche questioned the value of absolute truth for two main reasons: firstly, because there are limitations to our ability to get at truth and secondly, because it sometimes doesn’t serve to promote healthy human activity. This is to say that, first of all, though the value of complete and perfect truth may be great, the value of the attainable truth that we can reach is of much more limited value, and certainly not of greater value in comparison to living a healthy and fruitful life. What he seems to think of

“healthy” human activity is whatever contributes to the health of a culture, and what defines a healthy culture is one that attains great cultural achievements and is admired by later generations.

He attacks truth first by looking at the limitation of language. He begins with the assumption—laid out as the first tenet of his short 1869–70 essay, “On the Origin of Language”—that, “All conscious thought is possible only with the help of language” (p 209). Nietzsche seems to have retained this idea throughout his career, writing as late as 1887, “the thinking which becomes conscious is only the smallest part of [thinking]… for only that conscious thinking takes place in words” (GS 354). Now, if our only way of thinking consciously about reality is through our language, then the limitations of language create limitations for our ability to philosophize about things and know them as they are.

The limitations of language that Nietzsche sees are quite substantial. A first limitation is that our words are only human-guided signs quite divorced from the things they signify. A word is like a metaphor of a metaphor of a thing, as Nietzsche explains in “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense,” with each metaphor quite divorced from its object since they are in entirely different spheres: “each time there is a complete leap from one sphere into the heart of another, new sphere” (TL, p 144). The word has no resemblance to the thing that it is meant to represent, no essential connection, thus making thought on that thing within that language quite divorced from the thing.

In addition, these metaphors of metaphors are not directed by the nature of the things they represent but are guided by human interests. Both the individual and the community shape language, both in that individual speech artists create speech and

language, and in that the taste of the community as a whole restrains these individuals.

People then play with this language, in ways that, according to then current standards, are errors, until they are widely adopted (*LR III*, p 25). The result is a language built by the needs of the community.

To sum up, Nietzsche writes, “What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short a sum of human relations which have been subjected to poetic and rhetorical intensification, translation, and decoration”(*TL* p 146).

“Language is rhetoric,” Nietzsche says, which Blair and Gilman explain as:

“Consciousness does not grasp things, but impulses or imperfect copies of things, and these impulses are represented only in images.... [Language] conveys an attitude or opinion, a partial view rather than an essential knowledge of the thing”(*LR* xiii).

A second limitation of language is its identification of dissimilar things, which is the basis of our logic. Each and every individual thing is unavoidably unique and singular, but we completely efface this when we try to group together a bunch of unique singular things with a word and assume they are uniform and interchangeable. As Nietzsche says, “Whereas every metaphor standing for a sensuous perception is individual and unique and is therefore always able to escape classification, the great edifice of concepts exhibits the rigid regularity of a Roman columbarium, while logic breathes out that air of severity and coolness which is peculiar to mathematics”(*TL* 146-7). Our language divides up the world with rigid lines, though in truth the world is a place of fluid continuity.

The logic that is built upon language implicitly assumes that language works like mathematics. Numbers are genuinely interchangeable. The 2 in “2 apples” and “2 trees”

are the same² because this is an abstract, precisely defined concept. Thus, the language of math is capable of precisely signifying the world of numbers. But the same does not apply to the logic of non-mathematical words and concepts. To assume that a statement such as, “all prime numbers greater than 2 are odd” and “all ravens are black” have the same status is naïve. Both “raven” and “black” are human-defined categories (just like “good” and “bad”); they are sets without well-defined edges encapsulating many non-interchangeable objects with ambiguous categorization. The sets of prime and odd numbers are unambiguous: even though we don’t know all their members, we can decide with indisputable certainty whether any given number falls into either category. The same cannot be said of “raven” and “black”—we can’t define exactly what constitutes a raven or what borderline cases fit into the class of “raven” and we can’t decide, consistently and non-arbitrarily, exactly what shade of gray is the darkest shade before black.

We should note that Nietzsche does not take the extreme view that, from the limitations of our thought, we can’t know anything about anything; rather he takes the more cautious view that the limitations of language set limits on what we can know, writing, “The full essence of things will never be grasped”(*LR* III, p 23). This means we, as humans, exist in an intermediary position between full truth and ignorance, a position he seems to maintain throughout his career.²

As I said, this isn’t to say that truth has no value, but when the pursuit of this limited attainable truth gets in the way of something more valuable, such as the pursuit of healthy human activity, it is problematic. This seems to be a continuing idea throughout

² For example, we can see Nietzsche, as late as *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche speaking of “truth” both using quotation marks to indicate so-called truth and without quotations marks. For one, he writes about faith as an enemy of truth (*A* 52, 54), among many other barriers to truth.

Nietzsche's career. He writes, for example, in 1886: "Whenever you reach a decision, close your ears to even the best objections: this is the sign of a strong character" (*BGE* 107). In *Birth of Tragedy* he describes our ability to attain knowledge as limited—"the imperturbable belief that thought, as it follows the thread of causality, reaches down into the deepest abysses of being" is a delusion (*BT* 15, p 73)—and as detrimental to the activity, which is necessary for health: "Knowledge kills action; action requires one to be shrouded in a veil of illusion" (*BT* 7, p 40). As he adds in a contemporaneous note: "Illusion necessary for the sentient being to live. Illusion necessary for progress in culture... [the insatiable drive for knowledge] is hostile to culture. Philosophy tries to restrain it" (*WEN* p 112; KGW III4 19[64]). In fact, myth is often of much greater value than truth: "Without myth... all cultures lose their healthy, creative, natural energy; only a horizon surrounded by myths encloses and unifies a cultural movement" (*BT* 23, p 108).

Nietzsche continues to argue these ideas in "History in the Service of Life," in the context of historical scholarship. A historical scholar that simply seeks to uncover the straightforward facts of history will undermine healthy activity because the true events are seldom so useful as the myths and misrepresentations of the past. As Nietzsche writes:

A historical phenomenon which is clearly and thoroughly understood, and which is resolved into a phenomenon of knowledge, is dead to the person who has understood it, because he has understood the madness, the injustice, the blind passion, and, in general, the whole dismal and earthly horizon of that phenomenon" (*HL* 1, p 94).

In other words, the awareness of full historical truth is not healthy for a culture because the full absurdity of human action is disconcerting and discouraging and prevents a culture from thriving. The value of truth does not supersede all values and when it does in

an individual or culture that value is harmful. Nietzsche argues that “forgetting is necessary to all activity” because otherwise one will tend to struggle under the burden of the past which obstructs and distorts one’s actions (HL 1, p 89). As before, Nietzsche does not take the extreme view that we should completely ignore or forget the past, since the past does have value. Rather, an excessive regard for the past—excessive knowledge of the past—is stifling.

These ideas about the limitations of knowledge, as well as the more particular limitations of language and logic will continue to be in the background of Nietzsche’s thought, and are the base that he builds upon. As suggested, Nietzsche doesn’t seem to have abandoned these ideas, only expanded them.

Nature of the Philosopher

The question of the nature of the philosopher builds on the limitations of truth. If our access to truth is limited, then a philosopher, someone traditionally seen as one pursuing truth, must be seen in a different light too. In fact, the model of the philosopher that Nietzsche sets out in these early works will be similar to the sorts of human ideals that will crop up throughout Nietzsche’s career, such as the overman, higher man, philosopher of the future, and the revaluator.

Nietzsche doesn’t elaborate on the characteristics of the philosopher and of philosophy all in one place. Among the early works, he discussed what he thought of philosophy most particularly in the beginning of the unpublished and incomplete “Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks,” and in his third *Untimely Meditation*,

“Schopenhauer as Educator,” as well as in notes that he’d written for use in his planned work “The Philosopher.”

Throughout these works, the overall picture of the philosopher is that of a unique and special individual who acts as a cultural leader and the creator of a culture’s outlook on life. The philosopher is a type of intellectual innovator, a creative individual that is truly responsible for great cultures like the Ancient Greeks and that the great masses of people are primarily there to foster and produce. Great individuals are the pride and measure of any culture and to create them is its object, and the great philosopher in particular is the intellectual spokesperson for this great culture.

What distinguishes philosophers from other members of a culture and makes them such good spokespersons, as he writes in “Schopenhauer as Educator,” is that a philosopher is “not only a great thinker but a genuine human being” (*SE* 7, p 214). We can contrast this to his portrait of the scholar: a scholar cannot become a philosopher because a scholar is too much steeped within the ideas of others and within the past. The scholar, “lets concepts, opinions, past events, and books come between himself and things” (*ibid*). Presumably, philosophers can “see things for the first time” (*ibid*), as he says, because they can see them with their own ideas and values. They are genuine human beings because they are persons that live by their own ideas and values.

This explains the importance of freedom for the philosopher, which needs to be maintained on all fronts: “a nonscholarly education; exemption from the constraints of patriotism, from the necessity of earning a living, from any connection with the state,” etc. (*SE* 8, p 215). The more one is constrained by such institutions and ideologies the more one’s ideas will be a reflection of those institutions and ideologies, the less truly

genuine and individual one's ideas will be. The philosopher is an individual set apart from the culture, free from the culture.

What also distinguishes philosophers from others is their capacity to select ideas. Philosophy, as opposed to other disciplines like science, is most concerned with the ideas most worthy of consideration. As he would write in 1873, "Science rushes headlong, without selectivity, without 'taste,' at whatever is knowable, in the blind desire to know all at any cost. Philosophical thinking, on the other hand, is ever on the scent of those things which are most worth knowing"(PTA p 43). Thus, science may just as easily investigate a deeply important question to us as the origin of the universe, as investigate "On the Comparative Palatability of Some Dry-Season Tadpoles from Costa Rica."³ According to Nietzsche, for science the question of the value of an idea is merely determined by certainty, how confident is a scientist in the conclusions; whereas, to Nietzsche, a better criterion is the "indispensability for men"("Philosopher" 40; KGW III4 19[37]) or the "beauty and sublimity"("Philosopher" 61; KGW III4, 19[76]) of an idea. Nietzsche fears that the quest for truth is in conflict with truly grand and lofty achievements and individuals that make great civilizations great. This concern with the small but certain will sap the vitality of a culture. Thus, the philosopher's superior taste can guide a culture to embrace what is truly great and will make it a great culture. This is the idea of the "Philosopher as Cultural Physician."⁴ A genuine philosopher can amend the ills of a wayward culture.

When Nietzsche talks about a "healthy" culture, the adjectives he associates with it are prosperous, fortunate, successful, and joyous. He identifies great cultures with

³ Richard Wassersug. *American Midland Naturalist* 86, (1) (July 1971): 101-109.

⁴ The name of a planned work from 1873; see *Philosophy & Truth* p. lv.

healthy human activity, in that they are characterized by vigorous energy and living a beautiful existence, which is to say, “the man who is ready to risk his existence lives most beautifully” (*HL* 2, p 96).⁵ In “Homer’s Contest,” he had identified the competitive spirit in Greece as a major factor in its thriving, since it pushed men to excellence (*HC* 83). And in an 1875 note, he identifies the basis for great intelligence as “violent energy” (*WPh* V:188, p 385; *KGW* IV1 5[188]). In short, we’re talking about a culture that is active and vibrant, willing to take risks, willing to conquer. The health of a culture, as with the health of an individual, will be prosperity, victoriousness, and joyfulness.

Additionally, such healthy cultures will tend to produce good philosophies: “If philosophy ever manifested itself as helpful, redeeming or prophylactic, it was in a healthy culture.” (*PTA* 27). These healthy cultures are in turn strengthened by the healthy philosophies they produce. But it also works the other way, the unhealthy culture will tend to produce unhealthy philosophies, which will only make things worse: “If philosophy ever manifested itself as helpful, redeeming or prophylactic, it was in a healthy culture. The sick it made even sicker” (*ibid*). Fortunately, there can exist genuine philosophers who will stand outside their culture, who can emerge even in unhealthy cultures, who emerge out of nowhere, as Nietzsche says, like a comet—frightful because they are unpredictable and unexpected (*PTA* 34). Such philosophers in particular will be cultural physicians to their cultures and provide a model for the philosophical reformer.

When Nietzsche starts to look at these issues later in his career in terms of the revaluation, this model of the healthy culture is still prominent. He will diagnose the problem of cultural ill health as nihilism later on, but the idea is correlative. He will also

⁵ Echoed later in *Gay Science* 283.

later return to the question of the traits of the genuine philosopher. Whereas here the philosopher is a possessor of the good taste necessary to recognize what makes great ideas great, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, the genuine philosopher is a creator of values (*BGE* 211). And we will see similarities, with the contrast between, on the one hand, philosopher and “philosophical laborer,” and between, on the other hand, philosopher and scholar.

Early Critique of Morality

A part of such a philosophical reformer’s mission would be the undermining of contemporary morality, which Nietzsche certainly saw as part of the illness of his age. We will look here at how he began to develop this critique in his next works, *Human, All too Human* and *Daybreak*. By Nietzsche’s own account, his “campaign against morality” began with *Daybreak* (*EH* “Daybreak” 1), but much of that critique is continuous with ideas brought up first in *Human, All too Human*. Though Nietzsche had taken issue with certain morals and virtues of his age before, it’s not until the works of the late 1870s and early 80s that Nietzsche begins to devise an overall critique of morality. The critique begins out of his developing ideas about value, and his previous critique of truth.

Morality, as Nietzsche seems to be speaking of it here, is adherence to a uniform (equally applicable to all [*HAH* 25]) set of rules, derived from a higher authority, such as custom or a divine lawgiver. The emphasis in these earlier critiques is on morality as obedience to custom: those who deviate from custom are considered morally bad, whereas those who follow it are considered morally good (*HAH* 96). The act of accustoming oneself to follow rules and to derive pleasure in following rules is called

virtue, and our moral sense, our feeling of morality, is a sense of obeisance to a higher authority that commands, and which we follow because it commands (*HAH* 99). We feel an elevation in this obedience by feeling as if we are in accord with something higher (*HAH* 40).

In *Human, All too Human* and *Daybreak*, Nietzsche will begin to define how he understands values. We should note at the outset that the concept of value as Nietzsche used it was quite novel.⁶ It was a concept borrowed from economics and tied up in that discipline with the concept of price and exchange. Though Nietzsche shows no knowledge of economics and holds a general disdain for capitalism and capitalists, his usage is correlative. Values are relativistic and hierarchical feelings of rank order. As Andrew describes it, despite Nietzsche's general ignorance of economics and disdain for the market, he "exported the language of values from economics"(66). In fact, Nietzsche will much later write that we should seek to attempt to create a numerical scale of values, since it will help our understanding of values advance more rapidly (*WP* 710; *KGW* VIII3 14[105]), something correlative to a price list. From this we can understand that the value of a thing is only meaningful in terms of its relative value compared to something else (and there is an order of higher and lower in which all values can be arranged) and its context (the value of a work of art vs. the value of an action; or the value of an action done in war vs. the value of an action done in peace). Nietzsche will speak throughout his career about "tables of value" and "orders of rank," suggesting the idea that one could, at least in theory, create an ordered list of values.

⁶ See Andrew, "The Cost of Nietzschean Values," p 63.

The idea of the order of rank as he first introduces it in *Human, All too Human* is “The order of rank of desirable things” (*HAH* 42; also 107 & 132). It is a ranking and order of the values that we live and act by. The Order of Rank, as a means of ordering things according to some standard of value is a concept that will continue in Nietzsche’s philosophy, though it will transform, applying to the rank order of values (*BGE* 224, *GM* I:17), of goods (*BGE* 194), of drives (*GS* 116, *BGE* 6), and, most frequently, to the ranking of persons (e.g. *BGE* 62, 257, 294, *HAH* P 7, *GS* 373, *A* 57).

We depend on these orders of rank for our living and thinking. It isn’t possible to live without evaluating because we need aversion and partialities in order to make decisions (*HAH* 32). In *Daybreak* he will say, “All actions may be traced back to evaluations” (*D* 148). Living is dependent upon attraction and desire for certain things and aversion to other things. Even as late as *Twilight of the Idols*, he will say that, “life itself forces us to posit values” (“Morality as Anti-Nature” 5).

From these ideas, Nietzsche looks to first criticize morality for its dichotomy of good and evil. We think that good and evil are two separate categories, but Nietzsche argues that they are merely differences of degrees. Our actions are implicitly guided by their rank on such hierarchical orders of values as “orders or rank” and “tables of value.” In other words, it is considered immoral to desire things that are considered to rank lower than things that are considered to rank higher. We base immorality and morality on relative degrees of deviation from what is considered the proper order of values. Thus, in these early writings, good and evil are not different in kind, but rather differences of degree along a spectrum (*HAH* 107). At one end of the spectrum is good, and at the other

is evil. Different actions are either more good or less good, more evil or less evil. In traditional morality actions are divided simply into the good and the evil.

Nietzsche also looks to criticize traditional morality by looking at the less than moral origins of morality. For one, many moral rules were not originally moral—they are either derived from the values of the elite or from considerations of usefulness of the society as a whole. Secondly, those rules of morality are a set of rules that were originally adopted for some purpose, but which have lost that purpose and are now adhered to merely because they're customary. They are thereby arbitrary—if different conditions in the past had dictated different rules we would have different customs and thereby different morals. In fact, even the measure of utility might be quite arbitrary and unscientific (*D* 11). For example, if a tribe noticed that after they did a particular song and dance before hunting that they seemed to have better luck hunting, they might adapt the dance as a tradition, without seriously scrutinizing the actual difference between hunting with or without the dance, and they might regard as evil anyone who interfered with this song and dance. The idea behind our traditional morality is that there is some absolute good; but Nietzsche is saying this good is an arbitrary good based on historical accident.

Nietzsche first looks at the origin of morality with an early version of the idea of master and slave moralities. Nietzsche explains that there is a twofold origin of morality: “firstly in the soul of the ruling tribes and castes.[...] Then in the soul of the subjected, the powerless” (*HAH* 45). For the rulers, morality originates in those who are capable of requiting good with good and evil with evil, only those who are powerful enough to level the scales, to make things just, are considered good. For the subjected person, being weak

and mistrustful, all other persons are considered evil; even outward appearances of morality, like benevolence, are mistrusted as duplicitous. Thus, the morality of the subjected is a morality of distrust and suspiciousness of others. Nietzsche concludes (quite in opposition to the position he will later take) that our current morality must have derived from the morals of the rulers, since the mistrustfulness of the subjected undermines cooperation: “Signs of goodness, benevolence, sympathy are received fearfully as a trick, a prelude with a dreadful termination, a means of confusing and outwitting[...]. When this disposition exists in the individual a community can hardly arise”(*ibid*). Thus, the morality we have today is merely derived from the commanding power of those who rules.

The preference for the morals of the master is for practical reasons: the distrustful morals of the subject peoples make cooperation, and thus society, untenable. Additionally, rulers and subjects adopt their particular moralities for practical reasons. For the rulers, those who are most powerful are best able to rule and thus are regarded as the most useful and thus the most moral. For the subjected, on the other hand, since they are so vulnerable, a tendency to be overly cautious is most useful—better to regard all others as evil and be on one’s guard. In *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, in 1880, Nietzsche also emphasizes a more general utilitarian description of the origin of morality, noting that, “Morality is first of all a means of preserving the community”(WS 44). He explains that morals start out as useful rules meant for the benefit of the community. For various reasons, they become entrenched—youngsters see adults doing such things and imitate them, and are praised for following their elders; when the habit is established it becomes normal and people become fearful that deviating from it could lead to some

great harm (*WS* 40). Over time these customs become entrenched and useless, but this lack of usefulness only enhances their status as morally good (*WS* 40). The logic seems to be that to do something moral is to do it without personal motive. So, if we can exclude the motive of utility or other selfish motives, we can only assume it must be done for the sake of morality. Thus utility and morality are exclusive: if a thing is useful it can't be morally good, and if morally good it can't be useful.

He also criticizes the universality of morality—namely, that the rules are supposed to apply to all. He says that different people will need different things in different circumstances, and sees a higher morality in which people act by their own standards, in which individuals become their own lawgivers (*HAH* 94).

Nietzsche continues the critique in his next work *Daybreak* along many of the same lines, again attacking the morality of custom and adherence to inherited rules. Emphatically, Nietzsche states that, “morality is nothing other (therefore no more!) than obedience to customs”(*D* 9). He defines customs as “the traditional way of behaving and evaluating”(*ibid*). In short, morality is nothing more than obedience to a higher authority via inherited rules. And any individual who establishes personal rules, independent of custom, is considered deviant, or evil. Again Nietzsche repeats the ideas that these customs developed initially as genuine insight into what is beneficial—“Custom represents the experiences of men of earlier times as to what they supposed useful and harmful”(*D* 19). But again, over time, these moral rules become divorced from this sense of utility and harm.

In *Daybreak*, he expands on the problems of morality with four more critiques: the adherence to tradition makes morality insulated from revision, it leads to otherworldly metaphysical assumptions, it is opposed to individualism, and it stifles human action.

First of all, its divorce from utility means that there really are no independent criteria for evaluating it. With something useful (Nietzsche uses the example of baking bread) we evaluate it by whether it does what it's supposed to and how well it does it (does our recipe produce good bread?) (*D* 24). But morality is simply considered good because it is what has been considered good, making it independent from any revision. Customs are based on criteria like age and sanctity, which make morality a hindrance to new and better customs (*D* 19).

Morality also leads to metaphysical assumptions that give an appropriately lofty explanation to customs. For example, one may imagine the origin of a moral rule in some divine being, or one may imagine an otherworldly place of punishment or reward for, respectively, obeying or disobeying this command. Nietzsche sees this as spoiling “one’s sense for reality and one’s pleasure in it” (*D* 33). One has forgotten that the custom is merely an ossified habit and one is escaping from the real world with these otherworldly myths.

Morality is also dangerous to the individual, since individuals, to be moral, are not supposed to regard themselves as individuals. One must act, “without thinking of oneself as an individual” (*D* 9), without adverting to personal motives or personal needs, only with regard to the community. One cannot even bear the guilt of one’s own misdeeds, as the community can tend to interpret the sins of individuals as the sins of the community and think it appropriate to punish the whole community for the acts of a few. This can

enhance the need for punishment, since the community must punish wrongdoers to protect itself. The danger, thus, of any individual who seeks to be individual, who intends to act by individual motives, who seeks to be free of tradition, who seeks to create new customs and traditions, is the rejection of the community. Such an individual is regarded as immoral and will be attacked with every intent of forestalling what the community regards as a danger to itself.

Also, morality stifles life by stifling human activity. Nietzsche describes morality as creating a pall hanging over our head. Because most human action is egoistic, the perception that egoistic action is of low value, and thus immoral, makes it seem as if human activity and life is predominately immoral and that man is thereby inherently evil (*D* 148). Characterizing most action as evil is stifling to action, and it also demeans the value of humans. In response, Nietzsche criticizes the value of free and unegoistic actions (*ibid*). Nietzsche explains that both unegoistic and free actions have been overvalued hitherto. The reason for this is because there aren't really any actions that are completely unegoistic or free—all actions are at least partially unfree or egoistic; the difference is, again, one of degree and not one of kind. This reduces the value of, for example, doing something generous because we realize there is an element of egoism even in such action; and making a completely ungenerous action comparatively more valuable. He calls for us to adjust our value-feelings so that we value egoistic actions more highly than previously. By revaluing egoistic action: “we thus remove from the entire aspect of action and life its evil appearance!”(*D* 148).

Conclusion

A number of ideas emerge in these early writings, many of which will continue to be important throughout his career. Of particular importance for us here, are his attempts to reevaluate the value of particular values. His critique of the value of truth in terms of the value of language and logic is not one that will continue, though his concern with the value of truth will remain prevalent, focusing more later on an interest in the value or lack of value in specific myths and half-truths. His interest in the health of a culture and what defines the health of a culture begins in this period, as well as his interest in looking at the value of a culture in new ways. Additionally, he also first seeks to reevaluate the value of egoistic action here, something he will continue to do throughout his career. The importance of taste and discrimination, particularly the taste of higher person is of great importance. He also focuses on value of independence and freedom, which certainly will become important in *Zarathustra* and *Gay Science*, if not so much in later works.

The critique of the value of certain things is at the time focused, as it will be throughout his career, on questioning the value of things in terms of their purpose. For example, the problem of the value of truth is that it doesn't always serve certain purposes, such as the thriving of a culture or the health of an individual. When Nietzsche critiques language, the purpose is not to say that language is flawed and needs to be changed so that it better serves the discovery of truth; the purpose is to say that it has evolved to serve our human needs and that truth in the strict philosophical sense of complete and certain knowledge is not among these.

This period also introduces several new critiques of morality that will continue to be important throughout his philosophical career. Among these, Nietzsche critiques

morality on the ground that it is internally self-contradictory (that morality itself can be at times immoral), and that it leads to otherworldly assumptions (like God and a place of afterlife punishment, like Hell).

Certain other critiques Nietzsche seems to abandon later, or, at least, they aren't really brought in later works. Nietzsche for one critiques here the logic of morality in ways that are in accord with his critique of language, and does so rarely in subsequent work. Namely, he here questions the categories of good and evil as non-discrete are arbitrarily defined categories. Also, the idea that moral rules sometimes begin as genuinely (or at least apparently) useful practices that rigidify over time, is rejected his later works.

In general, the focus of these works is on a critique of morality, revaluation of specific values, most especially the value of truth, and in definition of the nature of the philosopher.

Revaluation in the Middle Works

With the writing of Nietzsche's next two works, the first four books of *The Gay Science* in 1882 and *Zarathustra* in 1883-85, Nietzsche starts to write in the language of the creation of values. In notes of this time he will begin to use the term "revaluation" to refer to this value creation. Following *Zarathustra*, with *Beyond Good & Evil*, he even speaks in terms of the "revaluation of all values," which he will further expand in his *Genealogy*. In these works, revaluation itself is much more the emphasis and Nietzsche starts to think through the idea of an actual historical event of revaluation, a profound reshaping of our values. At the same time, as he is developing ideas such as the will to

power, the overman, *amor fati*, and the eternal return of the same, he will think these ideas in terms of one another. There are still new developments that won't appear until even later works, and there are certainly ideas that he is integrating from earlier works that we have discussed, but this time period represents the core of Nietzsche's thought on revaluation.

Creating New Values

In *Human all too Human* and in *Daybreak*, Nietzsche had a few times alluded to the idea of individuals that create their own rules and do not simply obey established customs, noting how these people are considered evil and are shunned by the rest of the community. With *Gay Science*, Nietzsche really starts to explore the idea of individualism in more detail and the importance of not just creating new rules and new customs for such individuals, but creating new values.

Nietzsche emphasized individualism as a major theme of *Gay Science* from the very beginning, in one of the poems from his prelude, called “Vademecum – Vadetecum” (“Go with me – Go with yourself”) writing: “To thine own self and way be true: / Thus follow me, but gently do!”

Earlier we mentioned how Nietzsche had alluded to a problem of logic, namely that it assumes that all reality can be divided into interchangeable and uniform things, such as bird and tree. Nietzsche reiterates this problem of logic in *Gay Science* (GS 110), and then applies it to morality: morality too assumes that all people are basically the same and should abide by the same rules and that actions designated by the same name are also uniform. Nietzsche attacks this part of morality via a critique of Kant's first formulation

of the categorical imperative: that we ought to live by a maxim that can be willed as a universal law. Nietzsche describes it as: “the feeling, ‘here everyone must judge as I do’”(GS 335). Nietzsche argues that the categorical imperative represents a shallowness and pettiness because it overlooks the unique features of an action or person and only looks at what they have in common, what is on the surface. Universal laws are superficial; they only apply to the “rough exterior” but in their fullness and depth, “there neither are nor can be actions that are all the same[...] every act ever performed was done in an altogether unique and unrepeatable way”(*ibid*). Each and every individual and every act they perform are unavoidably unique and incomparable.

Correlatively, Nietzsche argues that the popularity of something is inversely proportional to its value. He says, that if you want to rob something of its value, you should promote it to all people up and down, and as a result, “all the gold that was on them will have worn off through handling, and all the gold inside will have turned to lead”(GS 292). Value creation occurs away from the marketplace (Z:I “Flies in the Marketplace”). By making something too common the uniqueness of it completely disappears.

Additionally, our values are malleable; they are not intrinsic and unalterable. Ultimately nature is value-less (GS 301). Values are granted to the world by us: “It is we, the thinking-sensing ones, who really and continually make something that is not yet there: the whole perpetually growing world of valuations, colours, weights, perspectives, scales, affirmations, and negations”(*ibid*).

For these reasons, Nietzsche advocates the pursuit of individual values, which will determine what we consider moral and immoral, right and wrong, proper and

improper: “Let us therefore limit ourselves to the purification of our opinions and value judgements and to the creation of tables of what is good that are new and all our own”(*ibid*). He concludes that, “We, however, want to become who we are – human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves!”(GS 335)

In *Daybreak*, Nietzsche had noted that the basis of morality is in feelings of morality and immorality and that if we want to really undermine morality, we have to not only learn how to think differently, but to feel differently (*D* 103). Again, the idea is repeated, this time with Nietzsche latching onto the feeling of our conscience, which ultimately determines what we judge to be right and wrong, moral and immoral (GS 243 & 335). The same applies to our value judgments—they are feelings too. Nietzsche speaks a number of times of our value-feelings,⁷ of our creation of these value-feelings (*KGW* VIII1 6[25]), criticizes the raising of these value feelings to absolute value principles (*KGW* VIII2 9[1]), and even speaks of orders and ranks of these value feelings (*BGE* 186, *KGW* VII2 27[28]). These value feelings are described as “aversion and partiality”(*HAH* 32) feelings of “respect and antipathy”(*HAH* 107), and “inclinations, aversions”(*D* 35). Thus the creation of new values is the creation of new feelings. In *Daybreak* Nietzsche had said that we must first learn to think differently in order to subsequently feel differently (*D* 103), suggesting that it would take a long time of thinking a certain way (consciously thinking in linguistic terms, as explained above) before that thought was imprinted on the (non-linguistic) depths of our feelings such that

⁷ He'll use the phrase “value feeling”(Werthgefühl) a few times in published works (*D* 148, *BGE* 4, 186) and even more in his notebooks (*KGW* VII2 27[28], VII3 35[37], VIII1 2[161], 6[25], 6[26], VIII2 9[1], 9[16], 9[30], 9[60], 9[62], 10[2], 10[23], 10[149], 10[167], 10[168], 12[1], VIII3 14[134], 14[185], 15[17] & 15[192]).

we automatically feel in a certain way. In *Gay Science*, Nietzsche speaks of how much of our mental activity is unconscious (*GS* 333), which is probably the reason why our feelings are so difficult to shape, because they are the result of unconscious and unfelt mental processes that are not directly accessible.

In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche argues that this valuing, just as our language, is inevitably going to be human-centered, that is, based on human needs and desires; and it is human to create such values (*Z:1* “Thousand & One Goals”). This is, in a sense, a reversal of the idea from “On Truth & Lies,” when Nietzsche said that language doesn’t reflect the world because it is human-centered, that it was grounded in our needs and desires and not grounded in reality, which it is meant to describe. Human-centeredness was a problem for language with respect to truth, but it is acceptable, even desirable, when it comes to the creation of value since these values are meant to serve us, not truth.

In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche also starts to explicate some of the features of the creator of values. He alludes in multiple ways to a creator of values, first with the child from “The Three Metamorphoses” and then with the Creator. The child is the final metamorphosis, following the lion that does battle with traditional morality (in the form of a dragon covered in scales of “thou shalt”). Only the child can create new values because, “The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a wheel rolling out of itself, a first movement, a sacred yes-saying” (*Z:1* “3 Metamorphoses”). In speaking of the creator, as one who creates values, Nietzsche similarly says this creator must destroy (*Z:1* “Prologue 9, “1001 Goals,” *Z:2* “Self-Overcoming,” *Z:3* “Old & New Tables” 1). And Nietzsche also alludes to the creator’s need for freedom (*Z:I* “Way of the Creator”), as he had with his model of the philosopher earlier.

Additionally, we see Nietzsche speaking in terms of the historical relevance of creating new values. He still holds the idea that values were created in the past for preservation: “Humans first placed values into things, in order to preserve themselves”(Z:1 “1001 Goals”). But he also many times speaks of the future and the creation of new values as part of the development of a new future: “I shall join the creators, the harvesters, the celebrators: I shall show them the rainbow and all the steps to the overman”(Z:1 Prologue 9); “A seer, a willer, a creator, a future himself and a bridge to the future”(Z:2 “Redemption”); “He, however, is the one who creates a goal for mankind and gives the earth its meaning and its future”(Z:3 “Old & New Tablets 2”). In a contemporaneous note, Nietzsche says that a higher morality would facilitate the creation of the overman (*KGW* VII1 7[21]), and he seems to be saying here that new values, better values, would facilitate the emergence of the future overman. In other words, the creation of values is about setting the stage for persons of the future capable of greater things.

A number of key ideas are expanded at the time of *Gay Science* and *Zarathustra*. The idea that values are only values for a specific context gets more emphasis and expansion at this time. Specifically Nietzsche emphasizes the human-centeredness of our values. He also expands on the importance of higher persons here. The need for their independence/freedom is again repeated, but we see it in a different light as it is based on their role of creating values. The importance of higher persons for creating values can be seen in the previous time period, if we look closely at earlier works, for example, in the unique role of philosophers in their capacity for taste and discrimination. But now it is more explicit and more generalized.

A number of ideas are added as well. The importance of value feelings (though it actually is first introduced in *Human All too Human*) is an important idea that is added here. We learn about the idea of values as feelings and about the inaccessibility and difficulty of changing these values. The historical significance of the creation of new values is also introduced. Creators of values aren't just defying rigidified moral rules; they may have a genuine role or shaping the culture and contributing to its future.

“Revaluation”

Beginning with *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche starts to speak in the language of the “revaluation,” and begins to really define what key values are the main targets of the revaluation. The first appearance of the phrase “revaluation of all values” (*Umwerthung aller Werthe*) is in a note from an 1884 notebook, where he lists the title of a proposed book, called “Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence” (*Wiederkunft*), with the subtitle “Attempt at the Revaluation of All Values” (KGW VII2 26[259]). A little bit later in the same notebook he speaks of the “revaluation of all values” as the means of enduring the “hardest idea,” (which, based on context, seems to be referring to the idea of the eternal return).

He lists some of the core ideas that will be reevaluated: “No longer joy in certainty but in uncertainty; no longer ‘cause and effect’ but the continually creative; no longer will to preservation but to power; no longer the humble expression, ‘everything is merely subjective,’ but ‘it is also our work!’” (WP 1059, KGW VII2 26[284]). In short, he speaks of reevaluating ideas of certainty, cause and effect, will to preservation, and subjectivity so

that we more highly value uncertainty, continual creativity, will to power, and subjectivity (over and above objectivity).

The first appearance of the word “revaluation” in a published work is in 1886 in *Beyond Good & Evil*.⁸ It is first mentioned in an aphorism from Part 3 “The Religious Character” where he describes Christianity as a “revaluation of all the values of antiquity”(46). We first see here a model of revaluation that he will continue to use, namely of Christianity as the first comprehensive revaluation of all values. Some of the ancient values Nietzsche mentions here being reversed are of freedom, pride, and self-confidence, qualities extolled by Nietzsche, which he sees as denigrated by Christianity. The image that summarizes much of this inversion is the striking image of the “god on the cross”(*BGE* 46). The reason it was so striking is because it was a total reversal of traditional views of deities: a god sacrificing himself, even humbling himself, abasing himself, descending to the level of human to be treated as the lowliest of humans, instead of the usual order, where it was normal for people to make sacrifices to the gods and to revere them. What could be more opposite to the ancient’s way of viewing the gods as free, proud, and clearly above humanity? Since for both Ancients and Christians, their God is meant to be the highest model, the ultimate example to be imitated, from the inversion of the self-sacrificing god follows the values of self-sacrifice, humility, and obedience, which Nietzsche discusses.

In *Beyond Good & Evil* 203, Nietzsche again speaks in terms of a greater future promised by a revaluation and the undermining of what are considered to be “eternal

⁸ The exact phrase “*Umwerthung aller Werthe*” doesn’t appear in *Beyond Good & Evil*, but the closely similar phrases: 46: “*Umwerthung aller antiken Werthe*”; 203: “*ewige Werthe’ umzuwerthen, umzukehren*” and “*Umwerthung der Werthe*”

values.” He believes that with these new values our leaders will actually be able to control and guide the future, “To teach humanity its future as its will, as dependent on a human will.” The alternative is the way events proceed through history now, which is arbitrary and meandering. The empowered leader can “put an end to the gruesome rule of chance and nonsense that has passed for ‘history’ so far.”

There is no allusion to the overman here—or for that matter, anywhere in *Beyond Good & Evil*—but, similarly, the idea of revaluation as a path to a high culture and to higher human beings is explicit, and one can’t avoid being reminded of the notebook entry mentioned earlier, that a higher morality would facilitate the creation of the overman. In the language of *Beyond Good & Evil*, better values would facilitate the creation of the much higher genuine philosophers, the philosophers of the future.

The major contributions of this period are, first of all the first explicit mention of the revaluation of all values, which he now defines as an historical event. It happened once in the past, with the Christian revaluation of ancient values, and it may happen in the future. Also, in speaking of the revaluation, he expands on the list of ideas that are to be reevaluated. Uncertainty, subjectivity, self-preservation, pride, and so on are emphasized.

One of the most significant developments of *Beyond Good & Evil* is the introduction of genealogy and the genealogical critique, which is first introduced in an aphorism near the end of the book, and which is expanded upon in his subsequent work, *The Genealogy of Morality*. This we’ll discuss next.

Genealogical Critique

The idea of a distinction between a master morality and a slave morality, as mentioned above, is first brought up by Nietzsche in *Human, All too Human* 45, in which he argued that a master morality would be defined by a respect for power and effectiveness and a slave morality would be based on distrust and suspicion. Because a morality of distrust would be impractical for a society, our morality, he back then concluded, must've been derived from the master's morality.

This was a relatively short aphorism, and it seems to have the same point as his later genealogical critiques, to criticize morality by exposing its origin. This serves two purposes: to expose internal contradictions in this morality, only evident in its origin, and also to undermine the value of this morality by exposing its less savory origins. Nietzsche notes that pointing out the origin of a value is not a critique of that value, but a way of diminishing its value, in order to prepare the way for a fuller critique (*KGW* VIII1 2[189]).

Nietzsche further developed and adapted his genealogical critique with the distinction between master and slave moralities in *Beyond Good and Evil* 260, where he argues that current morality is derived from slave morality. He also brings a more sophisticated sense of morality to this critique. Instead of simply being adherence to universal custom, morality is more broadly a system of absolute values and absolute distinctions of good and evil that command obedience to some higher authority.

In *Beyond Good & Evil*, he describes master morality as valorizing “elevated, proud states of soul” and being typified by value creation and self-glorification because the noble master types see themselves as the standard to which others should live up. He

explicitly sets this morality apart from utilitarianism, pity, and selflessness. Because the masters set their own values, they look down upon systems of morality that focus on the common good, such as utilitarianism. From the perspective of the masters they themselves are good and certain moral considerations (such as gratitude, justice, and friendship) apply only between them. From their perspective, the subject peoples, who are considered “bad”—meaning inferior, common, low—do not deserve the same moral considerations.

Slave morality, derived from the experience of oppressed, unfree, and suffering peoples, is first of all defined by their unpleasant experience, leading to a pessimistic attitude and low opinion of the human condition. It is defined also by a disdain of the powerful who have subjected them, and a defining of good as the opposite of the strong, luxurious, unproductive masters above them—thereby extolling values such as humility, pity, generosity, patience, and industriousness. As opposed to the masters, who hold up themselves as their own ideal (what they are and what they have), the ideals of the subject peoples are that which they don’t have and are not (such as freedom and happiness) and lead to a dreaming of another world where such goods are attainable. Both the masters and subjects define themselves as “good,” but the meaning of this good varies. Whereas the powerful define themselves as “good,” and then, in opposition, defined their subjects as “bad” (common, low, inferior, falling short of the masters’ high standards) the slaves defined their masters as “evil” (powerful, dangerous, fearful [BGE 260] as well as rich, godless, violent and sensual [BGE 195]) and themselves in opposition as “good.” So, to sum up the perspective here, we have two meanings of good: the masters’ “good” meaning something like “noble, high & uncommon” and the

subjects' "good" meaning something like "not powerful, not dangerous, nonthreatening" and "poor, gentle, god-fearing and non-sensual."

The contemporary morality that we live in is a form of slave morality because we abide by a Christian morality—derived via its Jewish founders, such as Jesus and Paul—from the morals of the Jewish people, who lived as a subject people under the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Romans. The morality we live by he calls a slave revolt against the ancient morality (*BGE* 195, *GM* I:7 & 10, *KGW* VIII1 2[128]).

In Nietzsche's next work, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, he elaborates on the origin of morality in more detail. In the preface, he points us back to some of the nascent passages of these ideas from *Human, All too Human* (*GM* P 4), reminding us of the concept of morality he is criticizing, morality as adherence to established customs. In *Human, All too Human*, Nietzsche had stressed morality's need to forget the origin of customs, since remembering the origin would tend to knock them off their lofty perch (*HAH* 92 & 96, *WS* 40). A genealogy of morality, pointing out the less savory origin of morality, would be similarly be capable of undermining the value of morality (*GM* P 6).

Nietzsche's description of the origin of morality is in opposition to the so-called "English psychologists" who believed that morality stresses unegoistic principles since people in the past realized this was the most exigent way of organizing a society. The logic is that people in the past recognized that unegoistically motivated action was the most useful and practical way to do things, since it is an important part of cooperation and collaboration and is opposed to the apparent destructiveness of selfish action. Over time, this became entrenched in culture and retained. Nietzsche himself had earlier advocated the idea of forgotten origins, and he had accepted the idea of moral rules as

originally being genuinely useful guidelines (as noted above), that people established customs based upon what rules are effective for achieving desired ends (*HAH* 39, *WS* 40, 44). But, the problem with the argument of the English psychologists is that if unegoistic action has and always will be useful, the origin should not have been forgotten (*GM* I:3). If this is its true origin, we should still explicitly recognize that we do unegoistic action for practical reasons. But it seems like we do unegoistic action because we consider them moral, that is, as a rule or “ought” that must be followed.

Identifying morality as rooted in usefulness is also problematic because usefulness is only meaningful if there is some end aimed for. If a set of values is useful, what is it useful for? Earlier he had framed the original purpose of morals as “preservation of a community” (*HAH* 96), but even such a seemingly unquestionable end as that is not absolute or value-neutral. Preserving the community is a particular goal that a community may value, and certain morals may be useful for achieving it, but it’s not the only possible goal. Such goals can vary (*GM* I:17), such as expanding the community (say, through conquest) or enhancing the happiness or physical health or economic prosperity of the community, or perhaps not focusing on the whole community at all, but promoting the success of the most valuable members.

Nietzsche argues against the English psychologist and against his earlier ideas by arguing that our current morality is grounded in slave morality. Just as he wrote in *Beyond Good and Evil*, the masters see themselves as the standard of value and believe themselves capable of creating values. The subject peoples, in contrast, define their ideal as the opposite of their masters, who are defined as evil. Slave morality is a reaction to the morality of their masters and is built out of hatred and revenge against those who

subjected them. According to Nietzsche, the Jewish people, from whom we derive our morals, developed morals that specifically extolled lowly people like themselves and belittled those in power. They imagined those in power laid low by divine wrath while they themselves will be raised up. They developed these morals through a revaluation of previous values, a reversal of established ancient moral values (*GM I:7*).

The important critiques in this history are first of all that the Christian morality, which extols such virtues as love, benevolence, and forgiveness, is, in Nietzsche's account, actually grounded in revenge and hatred. Nietzsche will later describe the genealogy as demonstrating "the birth of Christianity out of the spirit of *ressentiment*" (*EH* "Genealogy"). Even the Jews who condemn the powerful, prophesy a second coming when they will themselves be powerful (*GM I:15*).

Additionally, since every system of values has a value, this genealogical history is also meant to diminish the value of the Christian moral values and its history in Jewish morality. As Nietzsche puts it: "The question: what is this or that table of values and 'morals' worth? needs to be asked" (*GM I:17*). This is an important later idea of the "value of values," namely the relative merits of a table of values versus another table of values. To evaluate the value of a table of values we'd look first at the value of the end sought after and second, how well it achieves that end. The original end of Jewish morality, as stated, was revenge—revenge against their masters. It was built out of hatred and *ressentiment*. This end cannot be divorced from the valuations of current morality since they are the same valuations. A morality or system of values aimed towards an end that's of low value, such as *ressentiment*, would thereby be of low value.

Conclusion

A number of new ideas are added and others expanded in this period from the *Gay Science* to the *Genealogy*. Nietzsche introduced the idea of value-feelings as the basis of values and spoke the first time of asking about the value of a system of values. He also developed the genealogical critique as a method of undermining the value of a system of value.

Nietzsche also questioned earlier ideas of his. His definition of morality as simply tradition is altered so that morality now is defined as a system of obedience to absolute values and absolute good and evil. He also rejects the idea of morality being grounded in master morality and the idea of morality originating from utility. Nietzsche argues that moral rules cannot have begun as useful practices, for one, because utility itself depends on some standard of value.

This period also emphasizes the importance of freedom and independence for individuals, something that will not continue to be emphasized in later works. He also expands on the idea of the value of higher individuals for the well-being of a culture. At this point, we begin to see these higher individuals in a historical context, namely that they may be instrumental for a future revaluation. Additionally, the revaluation is seen historically, as something that has happened at least once before, in the Christian revaluation of ancient values. Such ideas will become critical as we look at the justification of revaluation and the ground of revaluation, which we'll discuss later.

Revaluation in the Late Works

In Nietzsche's last few sane years, he made big plans for the explanation and development of the revaluation. In the late 1880s, while writing *Beyond Good & Evil* and *Genealogy*, Nietzsche was also planning a new work on revaluation. It was perhaps his most ambitious work, initially titled "The Will to Power" and later retitled "The Revaluation of All Values." This work would have laid out the revaluation in great detail, but the work was cut short by the onset of Nietzsche's madness in 1889. To understand what we can about these late ideas, we must mostly rely on his notes from the late 1880s and his last published works. There are some ideas added in the major published works, most notably *Antichrist* and *Twilight of the Idols*, but it appears that Nietzsche was reserving many important ideas for his uncompleted work. His notes give us insight into his thoughts, but as we might expect from notes written off hand and casually, they aren't as finished and thought-out as the writings of his published works. From these works we do see some new ideas introduced late in his thought, particularly the importance of revaluation and nihilism.

Nihilism

Nietzsche's concern with nihilism appears to have only developed relatively late in his career. The references to this concept in his published writing are significant,⁹ but much

⁹ There are 30 appearances of the word "*nihilismus*" and its variations (*nihilisten*, *nihilin*, *nihilistich*, etc.) in Nietzsche's published works. In chronological order: *BGE* 10, 208, *BT* P 7, *GS* 346-47, *GM* P:5, I:12, II:12, 21, 24, III:4, 14, 24, 26-28, *CW* Postscript, *TI* "Arrows" 34, "Skirmishes" 21, 32, 50, A 6-7, 9, 11, 20, 58, *EH* "Books" 1, "BT" 1-2

of the real explanation of this idea is found in his unpublished notes, suggesting he would've like to have developed it in more detail in his uncompleted "Will to Power" project. The very first mention of nihilism is found in a note from 1880 (*KGW* V1 4[103]), in which he referred to Schopenhauer as the nihilists' philosopher, but he doesn't make more than scattered references until around 1884-85.

To understand how Nietzsche defines nihilism, Arthur Danto identifies two usual meanings of the term: firstly, "a belief that the world we live in and seem to know has no ultimate reality" and secondly, to hold "in total discredit the beliefs, tastes, and attitudes of [the nihilists'] elders and those in current authority" (10–11). This latter type was presented in terms of not holding any beliefs at all, which is how it is normally understood today. The way Nietzsche uses the term is unique but similar to these ways of using the term. Bernard Reginster defines Nietzsche's nihilism as the despair "that our highest aspirations cannot be realized" ("Nihilism & Affirmation" p 56). But this view is difficult to reconcile with the positive elements of Nietzsche's nihilism, such as the active nihilism (and how he describes nihilism as a recreation for philosophers), and seems more in accord with the meaning of pessimism, which Nietzsche calls a preliminary to nihilism (*KGW* VIII2 10[58]). On the other hand, most commentators have tended to read Nietzsche as using nihilism to refer to a belief in the absence of values or a belief that nothing has any value,¹⁰ which seems to be how he usually uses the term.

Nonetheless, Nietzsche uses "nihilism" in a variety of contexts. He calls it: "the radical rejection of value, meaning, desirability" (*KGW* VIII1 2[127]) and calls it the belief that existence in general is "inherently worthless" (*GM* II:21). He refers to nihilism

¹⁰ E.g. Heidegger, "Nietzsche's Word" pp166-167; Schacht, "Nietzsche and Nihilism" p 65; and Larmore, p. 82.

as “the belief in the absolute worthlessness, i.e., meaninglessness” of the world (*WP* 617; *KGW* VIII1 7[54]), “aimlessness”(*KGW* VIII1 7[61]) and the belief that nothing is true (*BTP* 7, *KGW* VIII2 11[108]). He also identifies nihilism with a preference for nothingness over existence. In *Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche calls Buddhism nihilistic because he sees the goal of nirvana as nothingness,¹¹ calling nihilism elsewhere a “will to nothingness”(*GM* III:14), and In *Beyond Good and Evil* he says it is nihilism to prefer to “lie dying on an assured nothing than on an uncertain something”(10). In short, even if Nietzsche is generally using nihilism to refer to the absence of values and meaninglessness of this world, he uses it in several different ways.

At times, Nietzsche deviates from this negative perspective on nihilism and gives it a positive perspective. Nietzsche acknowledges potential virtues of nihilism. He calls it a recreation for philosophers (*KGW* VIII2 11[108] & VIII3 16[30]); he says the most extreme form of nihilism, the complete rejection of a true world, could be considered a divine [*göttliche*] way of thinking (*KGW* VIII2 9[41], 12[1]:31); and he calls nihilism a state for strong spirits and wills (*KGW* VIII2 11[23]).

This ambiguity may derive from the distinction Nietzsche makes between “Passive Nihilism” and “Active Nihilism”(*KGW* VIII2 9[35]). Active nihilism he calls a possible sign of strength and a sign of the “increased power of the spirit” and passive nihilism he calls a possible sign of weakness and a “decline and retreat of the spirit’s power.” Heidegger, noting that Nietzsche sees pessimism as a precursor of nihilism, identified the distinction in Nietzsche between the “Pessimism of Weakness” and “Pessimism of Strength”(“Nietzsche’s Word” 168). Pessimism of weakness is a

¹¹ GM I:6; cf. also GS P:3, A 7 and *KGW* VII3 34[204].

pessimism of resignation, a conviction that all activity will only end up in failure that therefore leads one to seek out nothingness. On the flip side is a pessimism of strength, which sees the danger of inactivity and recognizes the ugliness of life and seeks out mastery of the situation. In short, we have a passive nihilism of weakness that resigns itself in the face of valuelessness and is the dangerous, and a negative type of nihilism that Nietzsche mostly speaks of. But then there is an active nihilism of strength that is liberated by the lack of pre-determined values, freed from constraints from traditional morality to do and think new things.

As nihilism applies to morality and values, Nietzsche believed that it is “the necessary consequence of recent value estimates” (*KGW* VIII1 2[100]) and that any system of morality (by which he means traditional Judeo-Christian-based morality) or any religion based on such morality is bound to lead to nihilism (*KGW* VIII1 7[43], VIII1 7[64]). The reason for this is that, on the one hand, morality tends to lead us to value truthfulness (*KGW*, VIII1 5[71]) and also our religion tends to lead us to regard ourselves as unworthy of positing our own values (*KGW* VIII1 7[64]), since there is some higher power to which we are supposed to advert. The common values held by all must be based on some sort of fiction, like a divine lawgiver or some form of otherworldly justice. When our will to truthfulness leads us to doubt this fiction, which is the source of values, then we come to believe that the world has no value because, when we come to believe that there is only one source of valuation, such as God for example, the demise of that fiction can lead us to think that no other source of valuation exists (*KGW* VIII1 5[57]). A belief in God is not necessary for leading to nihilism, since even Buddhism leads to nihilism; the problem is the value-setting according to morality (*KGW* VIII1 7[64]),

according to a system of universal rules built on some fiction, which our will to truthfulness will eventually doubt.

The danger of nihilism is that, because we need values in order to live and act (as mentioned above), in a state of nihilism life and activity will be undermined. Human life cannot continue without values, and certainly it is impossible to live a life of healthy human activity in the absence of values.

Reginster sees nihilism as having two possible sources. He sees nihilism in the undermining of our ultimate goals for life and argues that there are two ways we can fall into nihilistic despair over failure of these goals, “a devaluation of the goals in the realization of which our life has hitherto found its meaning, or the conviction that these goals are unrealizable”(*Affirmation 24*). Nihilism is emerging both because of the death of God (discrediting the value of our values) and an undermining of our belief in the realizability of our goals (*Affirmation 49*). For example if we have a view of absolute truth as the only valuable form of truth or absolute moral perfection as the only valuable form of moral action, and these absolutes are shown to be unreachable, then it can also lead to nihilistic despair.

In order to address the problem of nihilism, we need revaluation. In particular, we need revaluation that will replace the unrealizable, life-denying goals and values with life-affirming values. As Sleinis argues, I think correctly, “The overall goal of the revaluation of all values is to replace life-denying values with life-affirming values”(xiv). We need values that no longer depend on some fiction outside of life or some unrealistic absolute (we’ll discuss the idea of “life-denying” or “anti-life” values below). Nietzsche even thinks that nihilism is important as a precursor to revaluation—“we must experience

nihilism before we can find out what value these ‘values’ really had” (*WP* P:4; *KGW* VIII2 11[411]). This is distinct from previous discussions of value creation and revaluation that had mentioned revaluation as a step away from mediocrity and democratization towards a higher culture and higher persons. Though the idea of creating a higher type of person may not have been abandoned (see *KGW* VIII3 15[100,102]), the importance of nihilism is definitely new.

With his discussion of nihilism, Nietzsche is expanding on the historical significance and meaning of revaluation with this new idea of nihilism. There is a certain sort of historical determinism in these ideas, of traditional morality eventually leading to nihilism, and nihilism requiring, even setting the stage for, revaluation. This seems to change the meaning of revaluation from a useful tool for directing the future, to simply a historical phase. Admittedly, his understanding of nihilism and revaluation is unclear and Nietzsche may have intended to develop these ideas even further in his uncompleted book *The Revaluation of All Values*, which we’ll look at next.

The Project of Revaluation

Alongside this discussion of nihilism, Nietzsche planned a work that would explain nihilism and the revaluation in more detail. In truth, Nietzsche planned out and took notes on many never-written works throughout his career, sometimes nothing more than titles that pop up only once in his notes. The most ambitious of his late projects was a book titled “The Will to Power,” which would later be abandoned for a work titled “The Revaluation of All Values.” Based on what plans we have, the “Revaluation of All

Values” appears to be not an entirely new work, but rather a new version of “The Will to Power,” which he would have completed had not madness prevented him.

Nietzsche seems to have first thought of the idea for this project at least as early as 1885–1886 when he wrote down a book title (among other book titles) in his notebooks: “The Will to Power: Attempt at a new interpretation of all events”(*KGW* VIII1 1[35]). Shortly afterwards, it was subtitled “Attempt at a new world-interpretation”(*KGW* VIII1 2[73]). The planned sections suggest themes and issues relevant to revaluation, being about the physiology of ranking, “the great midday,”¹² breeding, and the eternal return (*KGW* VIII1 2[74]).

In 1886, Nietzsche quickly changed the subtitle to “Attempt at a revaluation of all values”(*KGW* VIII1 2[100]), a subtitle he would retain from then on. This new plan focused more on nihilism and the undermining of current values. The subtitle makes it clearer that this work was intended to explain revaluation in some detail. We see subsequent plans dealing with the value of truth, the history of European nihilism, the eternal return, critiques of current values, and predictions of a future after the end of current values (*KGW* VIII1 5[75], VIII 2 9[164]), and a section on breeding (“*Zucht und Züchtung*”) (*KGW* VIII1 7[64]).

On February 13, 1888, Nietzsche wrote to Franz Overbeck that he had already completed the first draft (*Niederschrift*) for the “Attempt at a Revaluation.” But he continued to revise the plan several times that year (*KGW* VIII3 14[78], 14[136], 15[100,102]). He is clear, at least with one of these outlines, that these new values would

¹² “The great midday” was spoken of in Zarathustra as the midpoint between the transition from animal to overman, and was meant to imply a step on the way to a greater future (Z:1 “Bestowing Virtue” 3). It’s also associated with “the great choice”(see *KGW* VIII3 14[77-78]).

be based on the will to power (*KGW* VIII3 14[136]). In a somewhat later outline, he identified four areas of false values: morality, religion, metaphysics, and modern ideas, and listed the will to power as among the criteria of truth (*KGW* VIII3 16[86]).

By September 1888, Nietzsche decided to rename this project simply “The Revaluation of All Values” (*KGW* VIII3 19[2]). Though a continuation of the “Will to Power” project, it was also a new project. A large chunk of notes planned for “Will to Power” were used for *The Twilight of the Idols*, which was written in August–September 1888, but many ideas were carried over into this new project. The change in the title from “Will to Power: Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values,” to simply “Revaluation of All Values” suggests perhaps a change in emphasis. Perhaps he realized revaluation as a more central an idea than will to power; or perhaps it was a recognition that the will to power would not be the sole vehicle for revaluation.

Nietzsche laid out a plan in four books:

- 1) “The Antichrist: Attempt at a critique of Christianity,”
- 2) “The Free Spirit: Critique of philosophy as a nihilistic movement,”
- 3) “The Immoralist: Critique of the most completely ill-fated kind of ignorance, morality”
- 4) “Dionysus: Philosophy of the eternal recurrence” (*KGW* VIII3 19[8]).

Only one other outline for this work appears in Nietzsche’s notebooks, with the only difference being that the third chapter is retitled, “Our yes-saying (*Wir Jasagenden*),” with the same subtitle. Nietzsche completed the first book of the planned “Revaluation,” namely *The Antichrist*, in September, though he continued to make corrections. He wrote to Paul Deussen on November 26, 1888 that he had finished the “Revaluation of Values,” with the main title of “The Antichrist.” And some time shortly before the onset of his madness in January 1889, Nietzsche changed the subtitle of *The*

Antichrist from “Revaluation of All Values” to “A Curse on Christianity,” which some¹³ have taken as an indication he had decided to abandon the project of revaluation. It’s best probably not to read too much into this, though. For one, the four books had subtitles in the two plans. It’s possible he simply decided he preferred “A Curse on Christianity” to “Attempt at a Critique of Christianity.” And at least as late as November of 1888, he still planned on four books (see letter to Overbeck 11/13/1888). Admittedly, though, we can’t say for certain what his intent was since he soon after fell into madness and was no longer able to contribute to the expression of his philosophical ideas.

Looking at the overall history of “The Will to Power” and subsequent “Revaluation of all Values,” we can get a general idea of the themes that were at play in Nietzsche’s last thoughts on revaluation. Clearly a critique of the modern world and its values and their connection to nihilism, including morality and Christianity, would be central; this would include a critique of the over-valuing of truth; the will to power would probably play some part; predictions about a future after the revaluation would be explained, a probably better future world, perhaps defined by a higher type of person; and the eternal return might be integrated into these ideas.

Thought it’s impossible for us to say in detail what Nietzsche intended to be included in this late work, much of what appears throughout these various plans and in the late notebooks is familiar from throughout Nietzsche’s thought on the revaluation and allows us to guess at what he intended for this idea late in his career. As discussed, the revaluation is a corrective for traditional morality (especially embodied by Christianity) and its consequence (nihilism), and revaluation will facilitate the creation of higher

¹³ For example, Karl Schlechta *Werke in Drei Bänden* vol III, p 1388, and Keith Ansell Pearson and Duncan Large, *The Nietzsche Reader* p 447.

cultures and higher human beings, perhaps through some process of breeding; revaluation will involve undermining at least certain key ideas, such as permanence, unegoism, and pity, and will involve a yes-saying, an opposition to pessimism, and an embrace of this world.

Twilight of the Idols to Antichrist

As mentioned, Nietzsche used some notes originally planned for “The Will to Power” in *Twilight of the Idols* and that *Antichrist* was written with the intention of being only the first book of the “Revaluation of All Values,” and we can see some of the new and emerging themes from these late works reflected here. At this stage, the ideas surrounding revaluation were already highly developed, and most of the new ideas, such as on the issues of nihilism and the future of revaluation and the nature of the revaluator, were apparently to be reserved for the planned work he never wrote.

There are some notable ideas in these works, though, that I want to highlight. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche continues his critique of morality on the grounds that it is anti-life. For one, he thinks it is anti-life because it leads to the valuing of the otherworldly over this world. For example, he discusses the belief that there is a “true” world that is secretly hidden behind the “apparent” world that we perceive as a “sign of decadence” and “a symptom of life *in decline*” (“‘Reason’ in Philosophy” 6). Since the apparent world is the one we live in and the one our body exists in, such an idea is antagonistic to life and living. As I said above, life-affirming or life-promoting ideas are ones that promote healthy human activity, and to deny the importance of this world, the body therein and the activity therein, is to downgrade this life. Nietzsche predicts an upward evolution in

thought towards one in which the true-versus-illusory-world distinction will dissolve (“How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable”). Also, he suggests that morality is hostile to our tangible, living body: “The church combats the passions by cutting them off in every sense: its technique, its ‘cure’, is *castration*.... But attacking the root of the passions means attacking the root of life” (“Morality as Anti-Nature” 1). The idea of morality as antagonistic to healthy living has been discussed before, but here, as well as in *Ecce Homo*, there is more of a focus on the physical body, and the health and needs of that body as central and important.

In *Ecce Homo*, among the most notable developments are, first, the idea of revaluation as imminent and revolutionary. It is something that will “rack the earth with convulsions” (*EH* Wagner 4), and it will do so soon. Second, Nietzsche himself will be playing an important part in the revaluation: “*Revaluation of all values*: that is my formula for an act of humanity’s highest self-examination, an act that has become flesh and genius in me,” and “coming from *my* mouth, the mouth of the first immoralist” (*EH* Destiny 1). These ideas will be explored more in later chapters, but it is important note that it is first brought up in published works here.

The last of his published works, *The Antichrist*, is focused on a critique of Christianity. Within the context of the planned “Revaluation of All Values,” the purpose of this work was apparently as the first part of a critique of current values. He explicitly connects here the end of Christianity with the beginning of the revaluation: “*Why not count from its last day instead? – From today? – Revaluation of all values!*” (*A* 62). Additionally, he’s also clear that there was another attempt at the revaluation of all Christian values, during the period of the Renaissance, which was forestalled by the

Reformation (*A* 61). The subtitle from the “Will to Power,” the “Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values,” would suggest that this is the second attempt at the revaluation. The idea that the first attempt fails would imply that this revaluation might fail as well, but it certainly suggests that Nietzsche thinks we are in another period like the Renaissance, wherein Christianity and its values are being seriously challenged. Also, like in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche identifies himself as working to effect a revaluation of all values. Here, though, he says here is merely one of many immoralists who “already constitute a ‘revaluation of all values’” (*A* 13). This seems to imply that he believes that the revaluation of all values is already in process and that he is only one among others.

Conclusion

In these later works, the basic addition to previous ideas is to put the revaluation in a historical setting. For one, he sets up the revaluation as the antidote to nihilism, which is something he perceives as a historical inevitability, due to the current values. He predicts that revaluation will eradicate the problem of nihilism, even begins to think rather later on that the revaluation is beginning and that he is a part of it.

We will try to develop more of the details of this revaluation in subsequent chapters. What we have outlined here is a chronological framework in which we can understand the ideas that Nietzsche presents. As we look at the important ideas in the revaluation, we will see how they fit within this framework. Beginning with certain key ideas, the revaluation was a concept in continuous development. So, it’s not really appropriate for us to think of the revaluation as a finished or completed project. It was a project started early and developed until the end of Nietzsche’s career. It might even be

appropriate to think of it as an uncompleted idea. As we look at the revaluation in more detail, we will try to keep this in mind and put the questions and answers we discuss in their context within this development, since the answers do sometimes change at different points in Nietzsche's career. This should help us better understand the relation among such ideas, since ideas that appear at different time periods may not be integral to one another. It's also hoped that by looking at earlier versions of certain later ideas that we can understand those ideas more clearly, by seeing how they evolved or how they were justified by a younger Nietzsche. Overall, this chronological survey should serve as a background for subsequent, more detailed exploration.

CHAPTER 2

CHARACTER OF THE REVALUATOR AND VALUES AFTER THE REVALUATION

After looking at a chronological survey of the progression of the ideas about revaluation, we can begin to explore more closely some further questions, which have been touched upon or alluded to in the previous chapter. To begin, we will look at the question of the aim and direction of the revaluation. The question that will need to be addressed is what new values will result after the revaluation. What will the values of Europe look like after the revaluation process? Will these new values simply recreate the ancient values that Nietzsche often praised, or will they be something entirely new?

We will also look at here the nature of the revaluator. It seems pretty clear that Nietzsche does not believe that any random person is capable of truly creating new values. There are going to be certain unique individuals that are capable of the rather difficult process of revaluing values. As was pointed out in the first chapter, the revaluing of values is a process of changing our value feelings, changing how we feel about the relative worth of various things, and these feelings are not easily changed. Thus, it would take quite a rare individual to change such values feelings, especially if such a revaluator is supposed to do it for the whole society.

Understanding the nature of the revaluator will help us to answer the question of what values the revaluation will lead to. In particular, the autonomous, independent nature of the revaluator means that the values produced will be up to such a person and that they are not be constrained by the needs and desires of others.

The Revaluator

In one of his outlines for the “Will to Power” from 1886, Nietzsche included a section titled “*The problem of the lawgiver*,” a section in which he would have discussed the character of a person who is capable of creating values. He outlined what he planned on in only sparse detail, writing, for one: “How would men have to be constituted whose evaluations would be the reverse? – Men who possess all the qualities of the modern soul but are strong enough to transform them into pure health?” (*WP* 905; *KGW* VIII1 2[100]). Presumably he means to say that such lawgivers would have values that are contrary to contemporary values but also have all the qualities of the modern soul. What precisely those qualities are is unclear.

He then continues a bit further down:

How the men undertaking this revaluation of themselves would have to be constituted. The order of rank as an order of power: war and danger required for a rank to maintain its conditions. The grandiose prototype: man in nature; the weakest, cleverest being making itself master, subjugating the more stupid forces” (*WLN* p 87; *KGW* VIII1 2[131]).

There are allusions to a number of themes that Nietzsche speaks of quite frequently. He speaks of the revaluator as dominant and powerful and that only in conditions of war and danger would such a figure be capable of being created. But there’s not much to go on here, and we’ll have to look elsewhere for more clarity.

Throughout Nietzsche’s writings, there are a number of different, not quite identical characters we might describe as “higher persons,” which seem like plausible candidates for a revaluator type: the overman, Zarathustra, genuine philosophers, noble

persons, Dionysians, immoralists, free spirits, and so on. These various higher persons are definitely quite similar figures, and there appears to be much overlap amongst them, but they don't appear to be identical figures. Not only are they described in distinct ways, but some of the characters are clearly only figures of the future, like the overman and the philosophers of the future, and others appear in the present day, like the immoralist and the free spirits.

We will look at these various figures as possible examples of the nature of the revaluator. I will argue that since the revaluation is an event of the present or near future, that contemporary figures such as the noble persons and the free spirit represent our best model of the revaluator. Additionally, though the philosopher of the future is a figure of the future, it is also described as a creator of values and thus also gives us another, perhaps loftier, example of the revaluator.

Genuine philosophers

In *Beyond Good & Evil*, Nietzsche speaks of value creation in the context of what he calls “new philosophers”(203). He also calls them “genuine philosophers” and “philosophers of the future”, and speaks of them in several places (2, 42-44, 61, 205, 210-213). In an 1885 note, Nietzsche acknowledges that in his younger days he also puzzled over the nature of the philosopher (*KGW VII3 38[13]*), referring to the 1870s, where Nietzsche had discussed the nature of the philosopher in some detail in published and unpublished writings. As discussed in the previous chapter, in those works he had emphasized individualism and taste. Individualism was the ability to be unconstrained by the influence of others or persuaded by other needs: such as a person unconnected with

the state, free from patriotism, not needing to earn a living, not steeped in the ideas of others. For example, he had distinguished the philosopher from the scholar, who was one steeped in the ideas of others (*SE* 7, p 214). And taste was that ability to select ideas, to distinguish truly worthy ideas from lesser ones.

In that 1885 note, he suggests that he puzzled over the nature of the philosopher to no avail when he was younger because he had missed an important distinction: that between genuine philosophers and mere “philosophical laborers” (*KGW* VII3 38[13]; see also *BGE* 211). The philosophical laborer is someone who takes inherited sets of values and uses them to summarize the world. The true philosopher is a legislator of values; the true philosopher creates new values. Additionally, these genuine philosophers are also free, just as he had said earlier. The freedom of these “free spirits,” he realizes, is bittersweet, and makes them ultimately solitary (*BGE* 44). But this solitude is necessary, since only thereby will they attain their own truths (*BGE* 43). And their freedom extends to a freedom from fear and worldly concerns. These genuine philosophers are willing to take risks (*BGE* 205), “philosophers of the dangerous perhaps” (*BGE* 2), that “love to experiment in a new, perhaps broader, perhaps more dangerous sense” (*BGE* 210). Most prominently, they are effective and potent commanders who can deliberately shape the future, who can end the “gruesome rule of chance and nonsense that has passed for ‘history’ so far” (*BGE* 203), and “whose conscience bears the weight of the overall development of humanity” (*BGE* 61).

On the other hand, Nietzsche is very clear that this is definitely a philosopher of the future, many generations into the future: “The preparatory labor of many generations is needed for a philosopher to come about” (*BGE* 213). Walter Kaufmann used the

description of the genuine philosopher as the sole standard of the revaluator and, based on the fact that this is such a distantly future figure, concluded that the revaluation, at least as it is being carried out in the present, is only a critique of current values, not the creation of new ones (*Nietzsche* 111). Thus, according to Kaufmann, the immediate revaluation will simply be a criticism of current values and reversion to ancient values, but the task of truly creating new values, the creative side of the revaluation, will only come about with the emergence of these future philosophers.

Such a multi-stage process, in fact, seems consistent with the description of the “Three Metamorphoses” from *Zarathustra*. The creation of values in *Zarathustra* is first spoken of with the example of the child from the “Three Metamorphoses.” The three metamorphoses are the spirit becoming camel, the camel becoming a lion and the lion becoming a child, representing stages of morality. The lion, correlative to the critical stage Kaufmann speaks of, does battle with the dragon, who is covered in scales of “thou shalt,” a symbol of contemporary morality, but the lion cannot create values. Only the child, the third metamorphosis, can create values because the child is capable of innocence, forgetting and yes-saying. The qualities of innocence and forgetting suggest an ability to ignore traditional ideas or values. The yes-saying is a complete opposition to pessimism, embracing reality and accepting everything, not considering anything worthy of disdain: “Nothing in existence should be excluded, nothing is dispensable” (*EH* “Birth of Tragedy” 2), even the unpleasant parts. In short, the yes-saying is a valuing of the whole of existence. Presumably since these three metamorphoses represent three stages, we could see the lion as representing the earlier critical stage and the child as representing the distantly future creative stage.

This connection is plausible, since the child is explicitly connected with the correlative idea of the “creator” in *Zarathustra*, a figure which presents another possible model of the reevaluator. Nietzsche writes: “In order for the creator himself to be the child who is newly born, he must also want to be the birth-giver and the pain of giving birth”(Z:2 “Blessed Isles”). In short, the ideas of the “genuine philosopher,” “the child” and “the creator” appear to be interchangeable ideas.

The connection of the three metamorphoses to Zarathustra himself may also be implicit.¹⁴ Zarathustra himself may be a genuine philosopher and creator. Higgins argued that Nietzsche’s choice of Zarathustra as his spokesman was because the historical Zarathustra performed a revaluation before the Christian revaluation of ancient values, by devaluing the deva worship of his day—rejecting many of the gods and rituals of his day (*Comic Relief*, 161). Thus, the characteristics of the creator may be mirrored in the characteristics of Zarathustra.

This creator is the creator of values (Z:1 “Thousand & One Goals) and this figure is mentioned a number of times throughout *Zarathustra*. This creator is described in *Zarathustra* as hard and unpitying (Z:2 “Pitying,” Z:3; “Old & New Tablets 29”) and quite independent and solitary, even selfish and lonely (Z:1 “Way of the Creator,” “Flies in the Marketplace”; Z:4 “Higher Man” 11), and this leads the creator to stand out (Z:1 “Way of the Creator). These creators are also fighters (Z:2 “Bestowing Virtue” 2), and since creating new values requires destructing, they are destroyers (Z:2 “Blessed Isles,” “Self-Overcoming,” Z:3 “Old & New Tablets” 26).

¹⁴ Robert Gooding-Williams argues that the Three Metamorphoses mirror the plot structure of *Zarathustra*, and that Zarathurtra himself passes through these metamorphoses in the course of the book (31).

Most importantly, as has been the case with the genuine philosopher and Nietzsche's description of the lawmaker quoted above, the creator must be authoritative. In Zarathustra's speech "On the Way of the Creator," Zarathustra asks: "Are you a new strength and a new right? A first movement? A wheel rolling out of itself? Can you compel even the stars to revolve around you?" This makes sense as being a necessary condition for creators, since they would have to compel people to adopt their values. And in several places throughout Nietzsche's career where he speaks of the changing/creation of values, customs, tastes, and the like, he speaks of the figures that can lead such changes as powerful, authoritative, influential and commanding (*D* 9, *GS* 39, *BGE* 211, *KGW* III4 19[39], VII2 26[243] & VIII1 2[131]).

Critique of the Genuine Philosopher as Revaluator

When we add up all of these characteristics, the character we get is quite an exceptional figure, perhaps even a bit unrealistic. In other words, we're not going to find a person like this around nowadays. This is why Kaufmann thought that the revaluation was not for many generations hence, since only by that time might such a person be possible.

Unfortunately, this runs into a problem when we look at what Nietzsche says. As I will elaborate, Nietzsche is explicit that the revaluation is something that is either just beginning or just about to happen, but the philosophers of the future that Kaufmann argues are to be the reevaluators are clearly figures of the far future. Kaufmann reconciles this by separating the revaluation into two stages, a critical stage in the present day, which will involve critiquing and undermining current values, followed by a genuinely creative stage in the future, conducted by the genuine philosophers of the future.

Unfortunately, it seems pretty clear that the revaluation cannot be separated into two stages like this. For one, Nietzsche is insistent that creation and destruction of values are closely linked. Nietzsche says several times that one cannot create new values without destroying old values: “Change of values – that is the change of creators. Whoever must be a creator always annihilates”(Z:1 “1001 Goals”; see also *GM* II:24). And in at least one place, he had said it works the other way too, one cannot destroy old values without creating new ones: “Only as creators can we destroy!”(*GS* 58). And it makes sense that we wouldn’t be able to create new values without destroying old values since Nietzsche had earlier argued that we can’t live without valuing (“if only it were possible to live without evaluating”[*HAH* 32]).

Also, the absence of values that would be left after the destruction of all values would lead to a state of nihilism (as a belief in the absence of values or that nothing has value), which Nietzsche describes as a danger that the revaluation is supposed to address. If the present revaluation is only destroying values, then it would seem that the revaluation is just as much responsible for creating nihilism as it is for rectifying it. But Nietzsche nowhere speaks of revaluation in this way. In short, we can’t have a separate critical stage of destroying current values. The creation and destruction of values must occur both at once.

This must mean that when Nietzsche speaks of the revaluation going on, he is not just speaking of criticism of current values, he is also speaking of the creation of new values. But if the unrealistically high and lofty figure of the revaluator is not possible in the present world, how are new values to be created?

To reconcile this issue perhaps the rather high level of exceptionalness of these philosophers and creators is not a minimum condition for creating values. These genuine philosophers definitely are capable of creating values, but are they the only persons capable of creating values? If there is a whole rank order of higher persons with figures such as the philosophers of the future and the overman occupying one extreme end, then perhaps there are other more modest persons also capable of creating new values.

In fact, how could it be that neither the philosopher of the future nor its like has ever yet existed (he doesn't explicitly answer his question, "Have there ever been philosophers like this?"[211]¹⁵ but seems to imply that the answer is "no") but that there have been reevaluators in the past? It must be that the philosopher of the future is not the only person capable of creating values. Nietzsche speaks of the revaluation of all ancient values (*BGE* 46); he describes the Renaissance as an attempt at revaluation of all Christian values that was halted by the Reformation (*A* 61); and in his description of master and slave moralities, he describes the noble type as capable of creating values (*BGE* 260 & *GM* I:2). If such revaluations without the presence of the philosophers of the future or true creators were possible, then it's possible that lesser persons are capable of revaluation.

Nietzsche, in fact, suggests that a revaluation would create the possibility for such higher types as these genuine philosophers: "the probable paths and trials that would enable a soul to grow tall and strong enough to feel the compulsion for these tasks; a revaluation of values whose new pressure and hammer will steel a conscience and transform a heart into bronze to bear the weight of a responsibility like this"(*BGE* 203).

¹⁵ Kaufmann interprets Nietzsche as answering in the negative (*Nietzsche* 108)

In short, we'd need a revaluation with its own revaluator to make the philosopher of the future possible. The idea that the current revaluation, which is meant to correct the problems of current values, will eventually lead to philosophers of the future that will also create values in the distant future implies that the current revaluation may not be the last and doesn't represent some definitive solution. But the point for us here is that the current revaluation will not be a revaluation performed by these philosophers of the future.

The case is similar with the overman, who bears enough similarity to tempt us to think of him as also a model for the revaluator (despite the fact that the overman is not explicitly spoken of as creating values). But, like the genuine philosophers, the overman is also clearly a figure of the distant future. And Nietzsche is also explicit that the revaluation would facilitate the emergence of the overman, just as with the genuine philosopher. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Nietzsche writes in his notebooks that a “new movement,” a movement opposed to previous moralities, would lead to the overman, whereas our current moralities would lead to the last man (*KGW* VII1 7[21]). Nietzsche seems to continue to hold to this idea even as late as 1887, writing in his notebook in an entry titled “The Overman”: “it is *not* my question what man displaces: but which character of man according to higher values should be chosen, wanted, *bred*” (*KGW* VIII2 11[413]). That is to say, a revaluation, by someone who is not a genuine philosopher or an overman, would create values that would make possible the overman or the genuine philosopher someday.

More Modest Models of the Revaluator

This leaves us to consider the remaining higher persons—noble persons, Dionysian persons, immoralists, and free spirits, the four examples of higher figures that are possible in the present day—all more modest than the overman and genuine philosopher in the rank order of persons. Among the four of these, all are spoken of in connection to the revaluation, and thus probably serve as useful models for the revaluator. Though it is the noble person who is our strongest candidate, since this character is spoken of most explicitly as creating values.

If we look first at the figures of the Dionysian person and the immoralist, though neither is spoken of as creating values, they both are connected with the revaluation. Concerning the Dionysian persons, Nietzsche does, at least in two of his plans for “The Revaluation of All Values,” have a section titled “Dionysus” (*KGW VIII2 11[416]* & *VIII3 22[14]*), and he does appear to suggest Dionysian values as higher values (*EH BT 3, Z 8, KGW VIII3 16[32]*). Similarly, with the immoralist, which is the name of a section in three of his plans for “The Revaluation of All Values” (*KGW VIII2 11[416]*, *VIII3 19[8]* & *22[14]*). He also speaks of himself in *Ecce Homo* as both the first immoralist as the person in which the revaluation of all values will be first enacted (*EH Destiny 1*). The “immoralist” is a term he primarily uses to refer to an underminer of morals, “the *destroyer par excellence*” (*EH “Destiny” 2*), but he also elsewhere says that a creator of values has to be a destroyer (*Z:2 “Self-Overcoming”*).

The free spirit Nietzsche describes as a person who thinks differently than one would expect (based on origin, environment, class profession, the dominant views of the age) (*HAH 225*), one who is defined by self-determination and freedom of will (*GS 347*),

and one who lives experimentally and adventurously (*HAH* P 4). As for free spirits, one of Nietzsche's plans for the "Revaluation of All Values" includes a section called "The Free Spirit" (*KGW* VIII 319[8]), and he does describe one of the characteristics of the philosophers of the future as being a free spirit (*BGE* 211). Free spirits are also cryptically described as revaluing values by their very nature in *Antichrist*: "we free spirits, already constitute a 'revaluation of all values', a living declaration of war on and victory over all old concepts of 'true' and 'untrue'" (*A* 13).

Noble persons, as described in the *Genealogy of Morality*, are the powerful, aristocratic rulers, who, by their own standards, believe in the value equation: "good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = blessed" (*GM* I:7). The noble morality, in Nietzsche's description, says yes to itself (*GM* I:10), namely the noble persons affirm themselves as models, ideals, exemplars. The noble persons are confident and frank with themselves (*GM* I:10). They are more complete (*BGE* 257) and are people of instinct. They can't account for why they act the way they do (*BGE* 191) since they are their own standard of goodness, and thus don't need any other justification beyond simply that what they do is good because it is what they do. They would be able to create values for society out of their personal autonomy and command, and this belief in oneself as a standard or exemplar. The noble person wants to create new values "The noble person wants to create new things and a new virtue" (*Z* I "Tree on the Mountain"). These noble persons are creators of value, judging "what is harmful to me is harmful in itself" (*BGE* 260), using their own instincts and their own judgments as the standards of value. This noble type of person Nietzsche sees exemplified in the Ancient Greeks and Romans.

What all of these four higher figures—immoralists, Dionysian persons, free spirits, and noble persons—have in common is that they are presently attainable figures. There are identifiable examples that Nietzsche could point to (including himself) in his own day and in the past, unlike the genuine philosopher or the overman, which are definitely figures of the future. Also, compared to the overman and the genuine philosophers, on the rank order of persons, they are certainly not nearly as lofty (the reason that both the overman and the genuine philosopher are figures of the distant future is that it would take many generations of breeding to attain such lofty persons, in Nietzsche's view¹⁶). But these four figures may still be lofty enough to create values. The fact that both genuine philosophers and noble persons are both spoken of as creating values indicates that there may be a range of persons that are capable of creating values. Certain characteristics seem to recur amongst many of these figures—authoritativeness, strength of will, freedom, autonomy—and it may be simply that one, in order to create values, simply needs these traits to a sufficient degree.

Other commentators, like Conway (p 213) have argued that Nietzsche has more in mind for his revaluator a talented and capable artist like Goethe or Dostoevsky. The revaluation is to be initiated by great artists or intellectual leaders, just as the attempt at revaluation during the renaissance (*A* 61), could be attributed to great artists from that time period, like Raphael and Palestrina.

In short, the revaluator is going to be, on the rank order of persons, compared to the great mass of mankind, quite lofty and rare, but need not necessarily be so lofty that

¹⁶ Nietzsche mentions this in numerous places (*BGE* 61, 203, 251, *EH* “BT” 4, *KGW* VII1 15[4], VII3 37[8], VII3 40[48], VIII1 2[74], VIII1 7[64], VIII2 9[8]

they may only be possible in the distant future after many generations. The revaluator is thus a lofty figure, but not quite as lofty as some commentators have assumed.

Nietzsche as Revaluator

Realizing that Nietzsche had a less lofty type of revaluator in mind makes it more plausible that Nietzsche may have genuinely considered himself engaged in the project of revaluation.

Most scholars, generally, do not believe that Nietzsche considered himself as worthy of being the revaluator. Kaufmann, as we have already mentioned, believed that the revaluation was a distantly future event, for which Nietzsche certainly could not qualify. Kaufmann writes: “Nietzsche’s conception of his own relationship to the legislating philosophers is expressed quite clearly in an earlier aphorism of the same work [BGE 44] where he speaks of himself as a ‘herald and precursor’ of ‘the philosophers of the future’”(Nietzsche p 109).

But Kaufmann is mistaken in saying that *Beyond Good & Evil* 44 shows that Nietzsche didn’t consider himself capable of being a revaluator. Nowhere in this aphorism, nor in the entirety of Part 2 where the passage appears, does Nietzsche refer to revaluation. In context, Nietzsche is only referring to the philosophers of the future and thus is speaking of himself and those like him as precursors and heralds of these philosophers of the future. Nietzsche does speak of these philosophers of the future as creating values, but he also speaks of more modest and attainable figures as creating values as well. Since Kaufmann sees these philosophers of the future as the only persons capable of revaluation then his understanding that since Nietzsche is but a precursor of

the revaluator follows. But I have already objected to the interpretation that the philosophers of the future are the sole reevaluators on the grounds that lesser persons than these rather grand philosophers of the future are capable of revaluation.

There's no indication that Nietzsche thought of himself as the overman or the philosophers of the future incarnate. But there is plenty of evidence he thought of himself as an immoralist (*D P* 4, *BGE* 226, *EH* "Destiny" 2–4, etc.), free spirit (*A* 13, 32, *KGW* VII3 37[8], etc.) and Dionysian (*EH* P 2, "Books" 5, etc.). He even, though not quite unequivocally, suggests he is of the noble type (*EH* "Wise" 3). For Nietzsche, this would seem to qualify him for the type of near-term revaluation he is speaking of.

Not to mention that, in Nietzsche's later notes and writings, he explicitly and repeatedly says that he is a person who is attempting revaluation. He speaks of revaluation multiple times in *Ecce Homo*, saying for one that "The task of *revaluing values* might have required more abilities than have ever been combined in any one individual," but "this was the precondition, the lengthy, secret work and artistry of my instinct" (*EH* "Clever" 9). He then says that the revaluation of all values is "an act of humanity's highest self-examination, an act that has become flesh and genius in me" (*EH* "Destiny" 1) and "I have a hand for switching *perspectives*: the first reason why a 'revaluation of values' is even possible, perhaps for me alone" (*EH* "Wise" 1). And then he shortly afterwards further says, first quoting *Zarathustra*, that "a creator of values has to be a destroyer" (*Z*:2 "Self-Overcoming) and then calls himself "the *destroyer par excellence*" (*EH* "Destiny" 2). In *Antichrist* he says that, "*we ourselves*, we free spirits, already constitute a 'revaluation of all values', a *living* declaration of war on and victory over all old concepts of 'true' and 'untrue'" (*A* 13).

Should we read Nietzsche literally in these passages? Is Nietzsche simply employing rhetorical hyperbole? Is he showing the first signs of madness? It certainly is the case that the most explicit evidence that Nietzsche saw himself as a revaluator is mostly confined to his last year of sanity, 1888. Does he have some other philosophical goal other than simply stating his intention of profoundly transforming values?

If so, it's difficult to account for Nietzsche speaking of this not just in his writings but also in his correspondence. Though we can't discount madness, it seems unlikely that Nietzsche would have the same type of rhetorical goals in his letters. In a letter to Reinhart von Seydlitz (2/12/1888)¹⁷ he says that he is engaged in a "relentless and underground struggle against everything that human beings till now have revered and loved," a task which he identifies as the "Revaluation of All Values." He tells Paul Deussen in a letter (9/14/1888) that *The Case of Wagner* and *Twilight of the Idols* were recreations (*Erholungen*) in the midst of his decisive task of revaluation, adding: "Much is already astir in this most radical revolution that mankind has known."

Nietzsche apparently had a significant plan how his revaluation was supposed to unfold in his published work. *Ecce Homo* was meant to be a sort of preface to "The Revaluation of All Values,: in which he would lay out the development of his philosophy up until then. He explained in a letter to Gast, "I want to present myself before the uncannily solitary act of [revaluation]" (10/30/1888). Thus, Nietzsche's planned but unwritten work, "The Revaluation of All Values" was meant to perform this act of revaluation.

¹⁷ Quotations from Nietzsche's letters in English come from Middleton, *Selected Letters*.

Nietzsche certainly speaks of this planned book as being world-changing and earth shattering. He speaks on several occasions of how revolutionary “The Revaluation of All Values” and its only completed book *The Antichrist* (which he also refers to as “The Revaluation of All Values”) will be. He speaks of the “Revaluation” as “a book that will rack the earth with convulsions” (*EH* “Wagner” 4) and of himself as “dynamite” (*EH* “Destiny” 1). He similarly speaks in such terms in his correspondence, saying that he is “shooting the history of mankind into two halves” (letter to Overbeck, 10/18/1888), and the book will shock everything in existence (letter to Constantin Georg Naumann 11/26/1888). In a letter to Peter Gast (10/30/1888), he mused that *The Antichrist* is so dangerous it ought to be confiscated and tells Georg Brandes “in two years we shall have the whole earth in convulsions” (11/20/1888).

And this shouldn’t come as a surprise. If we had expected the “Revaluation of All Values” to simply be a book describing the process of revaluation, this expectation would be dashed by reading its first book, *The Antichrist*. The book has a strong rhetorical style. It is written as a polemical attack on Christianity. The subtitled “Curse on Christianity” is meant to make people consider it “indecent” (*unanständig*) to be a Christian (letter to Paul Deussen 9/14/1888). It is an attack on Christian values and even on the value of Christianity itself. It shows that Nietzsche, in his “Revaluation of All Values,” was not simply planning on describing the process of revaluation but was actually planning on doing it. The attack on Christianity is clearly part of the critical side of revaluation, of destroying old values. It’s not unlikely that other parts of the book would provide the creative side of creating new values.

Many commentators have been reluctant to assign the role of revaluator to Nietzsche because they have over exaggerated the characteristics needed for a person to be a revaluator, associating it with great and lofty figures like the overman and the philosophers of the future. This makes it possible to dismiss these many statements as either insane hyperbole or ironic bombast. In fact, it's hard to know what to make of Nietzsche titling a section of his autobiography "Why I am a Destiny?" Yet he does tell Meta von Salis in a letter (11/14/1888) that the last section of *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am a Destiny" is precisely written to prove that he is a destiny and straightforwardly says to Georg Brandes (11/20/1888): "I am a man of destiny." It may be that he is presenting an earnest and carefully considered position. If we consider that the revaluator doesn't need to be so grand and superhuman, then Nietzsche's statements don't seem quite as exaggerated. Though his ambitions are lofty, they are not so unrealistically lofty as some commenters have thought. Nietzsche believes himself to be initiating a process of reshaping the values of Western society.

Some commenters have agreed that Nietzsche is engaged in revaluation himself. Heidegger had argued that Nietzsche was acting as revaluator and intended to perform the revaluation (*Nietzsche* vol 3, p 176). Conway similarly argues that the process of revaluation as it has been portrayed as the great task of distant higher figures is not what Nietzsche had in mind. As mentioned, Nietzsche frequently idolized artistic leaders, like Goethe, Raphael, and Dostoevsky (Conway p 213), who are more humanly possible reevaluators than the unrealistic super beings like the overman and philosopher of the future. Nietzsche saw himself, like them, engaged in the process of fighting nihilism in many of his writings (Conway p 220). Though he does speak, at least in *Ecce Homo*, as

quoted above, as if he is the sole figure capable of revaluation, his constant reference to “we free spirits” (*A* 13) suggests that he considers himself as one among several other like-minded individuals engaged (consciously or unconsciously) in the process of revaluation. Nietzsche speaks as if he is only one among many of these “‘no-sayers and outsiders of today,’ these ‘last idealists of knowledge in whom, alone, intellectual conscience dwells and is embodied these days’” (*GM* III:24).

We only find passages where he explicitly acknowledges his role as revaluator late in his career since only then did his project of the revaluation of values start to develop into a fuller theory. Clearly in many of his writings, even before he began to recognize the importance of values to morality and human activity (as early as *Human, All too Human* and *Daybreak*) Nietzsche seems to have been engaged in the undermining of values. As already mentioned, Nietzsche would later call his 1872 book *The Birth of Tragedy* his first revaluation of all values (*TI* “Ancients” 5) and also said (perhaps contradicting himself) that his “campaign against morality” began with his 1881 book *Daybreak* (*EH* “Daybreak”). But the idea of the “Revaluation” grew later out of these ideas, and his role in this revaluation emerged even later.

Additionally, you can see some of the traits of the revaluator reflected in Nietzsche’s own situation, most particularly the loneliness that accompanies the freedom of the revaluator. Nietzsche had left behind the scholarly community, had even “slammed the door on the way out” (*Z*:2 “Scholars”) as Zarathustra says in what is meant as an autobiographical speech.¹⁸ He too loves freedom and identifies himself with other free spirits.

¹⁸ The parallels in this aphorism to Nietzsche’s own life (of being a professor in academia

Nietzsche may have had unrealistic expectations of the ultimate effects of his attempt at revaluation (though perhaps he was just being colorful), but I certainly think that he wanted his work to have those effects. He wanted the revaluation to be earth shattering and he was attempting to make that a reality with his book, “The Revaluation of All Values.”

Kaufmann claimed that, according to Nietzsche’s plan for his unwritten book the “Revaluation of All Values,” it would contain no value legislation: “Three of the four parts of the Revaluation were meant to be critiques” [...] “the projected fourth book would not have included any new value legislation either”(114). This may not be entirely accurate, since Nietzsche’s plans were constantly being revised, and Kaufmann doesn’t seem to be looking at all of them. One plan for “*The Will to Power*: Attempt at a Revaluation of all values” starts with an opening section titled “critique of values” and then is followed by a second section titled “The New Principle of Value. Morphology of the Will to Power”(*KGW* VIII3 14[136]). Nietzsche describes a little further what he plans on including in this section, and it is still sketchy, but he does say: “we had a principle, that of considering right those who hitherto succumbed, and wrong those who hitherto prevailed: we have recognized the ‘real world’ as a ‘false world’ and morality as a form of immorality. We do not say ‘the stronger is wrong’”(*WP* 401; *KGW* 14[137]). This suggests that he will be describing a new system of values based on the will to power in this second section. Also, he has a couple of plans, including the last two plans, titling the fourth book “The Eternal Return”(*KGW* VIII1 5[75], VIII3 19[8], VIII3

and leaving it) and the lack of connection to Zarathustra’s life (since he lived in a time before academia even existed), suggest that it is Nietzsche talking about himself and is not about Zarathustra.

22[14]). Such plans could suggest he would be describing new values based on the eternal return. One plan has seven chapters, with the final being titled “We Hyperboreans.” This chapter Nietzsche describes as the “Redemption of *uncertainty*” (*KGW VIII3* 14[156]). Perhaps he was to write a section of value creation built not on the ideas of being and certainty, but built on the ideas of becoming and uncertainty. There is certainly a lot of uncertainty about what Nietzsche intended for the unwritten “Revaluation of All Values,” but there is at least enough to suggest in some of the plans that it may have included value legislation.

If we put these plans for the “Revaluation” next to what Nietzsche said about the book in his letters and published writings, it seems quite likely that he intended the book as an attempt at revaluation and that Nietzsche considered himself to be part of the project of revaluation. Though I don’t think we could say whether Nietzsche considered himself to be the sole revaluator (he does use a lot of “we” language), he certainly saw himself as part of the process, as part of a revaluation that would realign our values and set the stage for the future development of the overman and/or the philosophers of the future.

If Nietzsche considers himself to be a revaluator and creator of new values, then this means that Nietzsche believed that the historical revaluation of all values was to be an imminent event. It was not going to be broken up into two stages, with an undermining of values in the present day and then the creation of values far into the future. The revaluation as I’ve argued, is a process of destruction and creation of values, both occurring at the same time.

Values after the Revaluation

If we now understand the type of person that will undertake the revaluation, then perhaps we can also look at the character of the values that will emerge after the revaluation.

Thomas Brobjer says that there are four different interpretations of the revaluation of all values that have been presented by commentators:

- 1) The revaluation will lead to entirely new values, fundamentally different from ancient and Christian values.
- 2) The revaluation is just a criticism of current values, making us aware of and diagnosing our current values.
- 3) The revaluation will be a simple reversal of current values
- 4) The revaluation will be a return to ancient values. (342–43).

To decide among these interpretations, I think we can start by eliminating the interpretations that seem to fall short. Interpretation #2, that the revaluation is simply a critique we have discussed above in critiquing Kaufmann's interpretation. The basic problem is that the creation and destruction of values are intimately linked. This interpretation of his also doesn't seem to agree with the radical and revolutionary nature of the revaluation as Nietzsche describes it. As already noted, Nietzsche predicted that *The Revaluation of All Values* would "rack the earth with convulsions" (*EH* "Wagner" 4), and spoke of it as revolutionary. Just criticizing current values doesn't seem to qualify as revolutionary.

I equally think that interpretation #3 also falls short. As mentioned, Deleuze was an advocate of the idea of the revaluation being a reversal (171). The interpretation of the revaluation as a simple reversal of values relies on the assumption that values are a

simple dichotomy of good and bad or higher and lower. In the previous chapter we talked about how Nietzsche, at least in his early critiques of morality, thought that good and evil are not different in kind but rather differences of degree (*HAH* 107). Additionally, when we are talking about a rank ordering of values, then the idea of inversion doesn't seem to apply. As I have been arguing, the values really are relative scales of values, tables of values, with many values hierarchically arranged. In a revaluation, some values will be raised up, some lowered, but this could hardly be described as inversion. Nietzsche himself does use the language of inversion in many places, for example calling the Jewish revaluation of ancient values an "inversion of values" (*BGE* 195), but in these cases, he is speaking of a return to ancient values. In other words, if we're talking about inverting the "anti-life" character of modern Christian values to more "life-promoting" ancient values, then let's not call it an "inversion," but a return to ancient values.

Thus, the most plausible explanations are that the revaluation will lead either to #1, some set of entirely new values, or #4, will lead to the return of ancient values via a reversal of the Christian revaluation of ancient values.

Brobjer sides himself with the latter option, that the revaluation will lead to the return to ancient values, and there are good reasons for favoring this interpretation. Nietzsche does extol the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome at great length and favors life-affirming values, which he associates with the Greeks. I, on the other hand, prefer a compromise position, values that are both like the ancient values that Nietzsche frequently extols, but are also new, though, not *entirely* new. Brobjer does define these new values narrowly as, "entirely new values, fundamentally different from ancient and Christian values," which I agree is too narrow since, as I will argue, I think the values

after the revaluation will be a lot like ancient values. Thus, I would say it would be a mix of ancient and new values.

In the next section I will present the reasons why I think the values will represent or largely resemble the values of the Ancients, and then in the section following I will present reasons I think the values will be, at least in part new. As I said, I think both arguments have merit, and that what Nietzsche is imagining after the revaluation is a combination of new and ancient values, but I am more in favor of the latter interpretation.

Ancient Values

We will, first of all, look at the allusions to ancient values and the evidence that the revaluation was meant to return to ancient values. These allusions suggest that the values after the revaluation are meant to bear some significant resemblance to the values that Nietzsche attributed to the Ancients.

The first explicit mention of the revaluation of all values in any published work occurs in *Beyond Good and Evil* 46, where Nietzsche describes the original revaluation as the Christian revaluation of ancient values. It was a revolt of the slave class against the noble class, a reversal of the previous order. This leads to a plausible interpretation that the current revaluation that Nietzsche calls for will be a reversal of this ancient misstep, to restore the proper hierarchy. As Walter Kaufmann says, “Nietzsche’s revaluation is meant to undo the damage done by a previous revaluation: values have been stood on their head and are not to be turned right-side up again” (*Basic Writings*, p 789, fn 2). In other words, Kaufmann is arguing that the ultimate revaluation will return us to the

ancient values (though, as mentioned, he thinks the immediate revaluation is simply a critique of current values).

As Nietzsche describes the formation of our current morality under the valuation of the enslaved Jews in *Genealogy*, he is very explicit that it is a process of transition from a noble morality to a slave morality. He calls the ruling class variously “the rulers,” “the masters,” “the aristocratic,” as well as the “noble.” And he writes that, “Israel, with its revenge and revaluation of all former values, has triumphed repeatedly over all other ideals, all nobler ideals” (*GM* I:8), repeating the point from *Beyond Good & Evil*, that there was a Judeo-Christian triumph of values over previous nobler values, the values of the ancient world. He’s elsewhere clear that the values of the ancient world were “aristocratic values” (*KGW* VIII1 2[128]).

When Nietzsche writes *The Antichrist*, the first and only completed book of his planned “Revaluation of All Values” project, he talks about the Renaissance as an attempt to replace Christian values with “noble values” (*A* 61). It seems pretty clear here that he is referring to “noble values” in the same way as he was before in *Genealogy*, namely the values of the dominant persons, which are opposed to the values of the subject peoples. He defines noble values elsewhere in *Antichrist* as opposed to *ressentiment* (*A* 25) and as regarding pity as weakness (*A* 7), both of which (pity and *ressentiment*) he associates with subject peoples. Christian values, on the other hand, are described as a rebellion of the lowly and ordinary against the lofty and extraordinary (*A* 43) and as a set of values that destroyed noble sensibility (*A* 51). In short, the Renaissance attempted to return to the noble values that had been upturned by the earlier

revaluation. This process was brought to a halt by Luther and the Reformation, but perhaps another attempt can be made in Nietzsche's day.

The fact that the values that Nietzsche imagines after the revaluation are to be noble values clearly suggests that the values after the revaluation are going to be more like ancient values than they are going to be like Christian values. There are a number of elements of Christian morality that Nietzsche outright rejects, such as its tendency towards democratic leveling, utilitarianism, and pity. The noble values, on the other hand, extol pride, power, and self-determination. In short, what we should expect of the revaluation is that it's going to lead to a set of new values which are, like ancient values, noble values.

Nietzsche is quite explicit that he views the current Christian morality as antagonistic to life (*GS* 344, *GM* II:11,24, *A* 7, *EH* "Destiny" 7). In the previous chapter, I talked about what Nietzsche means by life-promoting (things that promote healthy human activity) and life-denying (things that lead us to favor a nonexistent other world over this life). And he also believes that Christian morality inevitably leads to immorality, namely that it is beset by internal contradictions that lead a person abiding by Christian morals to violate other moral rules. He even presents the revaluation as the end of Christianity (*A* 62). The ancient values, in contrast, are presented as pro-life, as healthy, and he certainly never indicates that he thinks they'll lead to contradictions.

Hence, from the above, we can conclude that there is strong reason to favor the idea that the revaluation will lead to ancient values or values that largely represent values. Nietzsche contrasts ancient and Christian values, speaks approvingly of ancient values and disparagingly of Christian values, thinks Christian values are beset with internal

contradictions, and predicts the revaluation as the end of Christianity. In this next section we will look at reasons why these values will also be new values.

New Values

Nonetheless, as I have already said, I don't believe that Nietzsche is advocating simply for a return to ancient values. I think there are a few reasons for this: Nietzsche makes a number of references to "new" values and to the creation of values, the argument seems to assume there are really only two types of values; it proposes that ancient values represent a set of eternal values; and the revaluation depends upon the free and creative activity of the revaluator, which by its nature would tend to create new values. To be sure, as argued in the last section, the new values that Nietzsche advocates will bear some resemblance to ancient values, but they will not represent a simple reversion.

First, we should look at the numerous references to "new values" (in German: "*neue Werthe*," "*neue Werthschätzungen*," "*neuer Werthtafeln*") in Nietzsche's writings. We find at least seven clear references in his published writings to new values (*BTP* 6, *Z:1 P 9*, "Three Metamorphoses," "Flies in the Marketplace," *Z:II* "Great Events," *Z:III* "Old & New Tablets" 26, *BGE* 253). These are mostly in *Zarathustra*, but the dozen or so references in his notebooks appear over a broader time period (*KGW V1 5[25]*, VI 10[B53], V2 21[3], VII1 4[36], 4[268], 7[268], VII2 25[307], 26[243], VII3 35[47], 38[13], 43[3], VIII1 6[25], 7[6], 7[64], VII2 11[411]). The repeated usage of such language suggests that there will be something significantly new in the values after the revaluation and that they're not just old values revived.

Additionally, the revaluation is repeatedly spoken of in the context of the creation of values. (see, for example, *KGW* VII2 26 [284] & VIII3 14[136-37]. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he speaks of, “The conditions that would have to be partly created and partly exploited for [the new type of philosopher] to come into being [...] a revaluation of values whose new pressure and hammer will steel a conscience and transform a heart into bronze”(*BGE* 203). And of course, there are numerous times when he speaks of “creating values” and “value creation” and “creators of value.” The idea of creating values certain *implies* the creation of new values.

Also, since it is up to certain individuals, certain reevaluators and free spirits and higher individuals, to do the revaluation and such individuals are defined by individuality, independence, and freedom, it would seem a bit surprising for us to assume that their independent, free-spirited value-creation will lead back to ancient values. The independence of the reevaluators will lead them into new directions with the revaluation. They are creator of value, after all. He calls his “new philosophers,” “strong and original enough to give impetus to opposed valuations and initiate a revaluation”(*BGE* 203). In other words, the revaluation is actualized by the originality of the value creators. Nietzsche also writes: “*values and their changes* stand in relation to the *growth in power of the value-positer*. The measure of *unbelief*, of ‘freedom of the mind’ that is admitted, as an *expression of the growth of power*”(*WLN* p148, *KGW* VIII2 9[39]). In short, as reevaluators grow stronger, so do they grow more independent, more free and individual, and less restricted by some pre-determined formula of what the new values are supposed to look like. If such reevaluators, such “free spirits” as he also calls them, are free to create values in their own image, why will they simply recreate the values of the Ancients?

The idea that Nietzsche is simply returning to ancient values would make sense if we assume there are only two types of values: the superior noble values and the inferior Judeo-Christian/Slave values that have come to dominate since the ascendancy of Christianity. As I said before, the values as Nietzsche presents them seem to be more complex, a hierarchical set of values, not just an either/or, higher/lower dichotomy. Though the way Nietzsche speaks of values and makes distinctions as anti-life vs. pro-life, no-saying vs. yes-saying implies that there are broadly-speaking two types of morality, this overlooks the variety of different sets of values within each of these broad categories. For example, Nietzsche acknowledges both Christianity as well as Buddhism as two different versions of the anti-life. Similarly, there may be many different ways a set of noble values could be constructed. In short, the new values that will emerge after the revaluation will be some variation of these noble/higher/pro-life/yes-saying values that Nietzsche praises, though not necessarily a return to ancient values.

The idea of ancient values being the correct values also seem to imply some idea of them being “eternal values”(see *BGE* 203; see also *KGW* VII2 25[307], 26[407], VII3 38[14]), which Nietzsche despairingly associates with god and religion (*KGW* VII2 26[407], VII3 37[14], VIII1 5[71] 1). That is to say, Nietzsche is critical of the idea of values that are true for all time. The idea of eternal values only makes sense if there is an eternal value-legislator, like God (see *KGW* VII3 38[13]; WP 972). If our revaluation is to return to ancient values, doesn’t this mean that the ancient values are the always-true values? It’s not even clear that the immediate revaluation Nietzsche foresees is meant to be the last revaluation (especially if we consider it plausible that Nietzsche thought there would be an immediate revaluation, conducted by persons like himself, that would pave

the way for future higher figures that would also be capable of creating new values).

Jaspers had argued that Nietzsche believed that there would never be a final set of values but that new values must always be created (154). And presumably any subsequent revaluations after the first revaluation will lead to values even more radically different from the ones we are familiar with.

New and Ancient values

Despite the fact that Nietzsche frequently speaks of values in terms of newness, and speaks of value creation and free-spirited, independent value-creators, he rejects a simple dichotomy of two types of values and disparages eternal values, I still think that he expects the values to at least partially resemble ancient values. As I argued in the first section, Nietzsche praises and extols the ancient values and thinks they do lead to a healthy culture, and he speaks of the first revaluation (the Christian revaluation of ancient values) as inverting those ancient values. For these reasons, it wouldn't be surprising if these new, better values are largely like the values Nietzsche regards as superior: ancient values.

Also, I'd like to argue that saying these new values would be like ancient values is not an example of eternal values or of constraint on the free independence of the revaluator, if we assume that there are certain qualities that will lead one to be a revaluator. In other words, since not everyone can be a revaluator, the revaluator must have certain traits that make it possible for him or her to create and revalue values. Those traits may lead a person to favor certain values. And in fact, the traits of the revaluator, as spoken of in the first section of this chapter are traits Nietzsche associates with noble

persons: strength, independence, self-confidence, and self-determination. And these are also the traits that he associates with ancient values, the contrast to the Christian values of pity, selflessness, humility, devotion, and so on. Hence, the reevaluator type, the higher person—the free-spirit or Dionysian person or noble person or future philosopher or overman—will have values that resemble ancient values as a condition of being such a reevaluator type. And for this reason, the new values will also be much like the ancient values.

CHAPTER 3

TWO VERSIONS OF THE REVALUATION

There are two ways that we can interpret the scope of the revaluation. First, Nietzsche generally presents the revaluation of all values as a great society-wide revolution performed by some highly unique revaluator who will completely transform the values of Europe. In short, the influence of the revaluator will change things so that all people's values are changed by the event. As already mentioned, Nietzsche speaks of the planned book *The Revaluation of All Values* as having a revolutionary role, as if its effects will be felt all across Europe. At the outset, it should be noted that this society-wide revaluation is the more plausible interpretation of the two simply by dint of quantity: Nietzsche speaks of the revaluation in these terms more often and in more direct and unambiguous terms.

Second, as will be shown below, Nietzsche speaks of the revaluation and value estimates, at other times, in a very personal and individual way, as if it is a call for individual persons to reevaluate their personal value estimates. In short, he speaks as if he is simply directing his books to his reader and asking the reader to perform a personal revaluation on his or her own values and nothing more. For example, Nietzsche a few times speaks of the concept of *amor fati*, the love of fate, as being his own personal principle, and speaks of individual values, as if he is merely trying to persuade his readers to change their own values and correct an individual problem (not trying to diagnose and correct a society-wide problem).

To be clear, there are two ways we might think of the difference between these two interpretations. First of all, there is a difference in who is responsible for the revaluation. In the case of a society-wide event, it is clearly something promulgated by influential individuals, who use their influence to change the great mass of society. In the individual case, individuals change themselves. Second of all, we might also compare the two interpretations in terms of what level the problem that the revaluation is supposed to cure is at. If the revaluation is at an individual level, then the proposal is more a matter of individual self-improvement, something along the lines of, “if you reevaluate your values, then your life will be improved.” Whereas if it is society wide, then Nietzsche is diagnosing a problem that is endemic across society and is saying that one needs to remedy this problem to improve everyone’s life. In the former case, one can improve oneself without changing the whole society, whereas in the latter case this may not be possible. Also, in the former case, there are only some few select individuals capable of revaluation; in the latter case, self-revaluators may not be such a narrow group.

These two interpretations of the revaluation of all values may seem incompatible: Nietzsche is either predicting and/or trying to effect a Europe-wide revolution or is trying to persuade his readers to change their personal values. But this is not necessarily the case. These two interpretations of the revaluation are not mutually incompatible interpretations, but may simply be two parts of the revaluation. As we will see, the interpretation of the revaluation as individual can be used to add to our interpretation of the revaluation as society wide. Nietzsche is actually addressing himself to potential value-legislators, to true individuals, to those who will have influence and shape the values of the society, and he is trying to persuade them to reevaluate their values in a life-

affirming way, and he is also predicting the result of the revolution wrought by these individuals. In other words, he is both writing a theory of history (describing broad historical trends from the past and projecting them into the future), and he is also trying to compel his readers to reform their values, perhaps in the hope that they will take part in that historical change.

In this chapter, we will be looking at both the individual and the collective side of the revaluation, both showing how the revaluation is directed at individuals and asking them to change their values, and how Nietzsche advocates a great society-wide revaluation led by and promulgated by certain influential individuals. We will first present evidence that the revaluation was meant to be for the whole of society and then present evidence that it was meant to be for individuals, and then discuss the way that these two sides of the revaluation work can be integrated. In fact, the integration of these two interpretations will lead to a third interpretation, which I think is superior to both. I will be arguing that, in terms of this question, what Nietzsche is describing is that for certain capable individuals who will be responsible for the society-wide revaluation, a personal revaluation is a necessary precursor, an idea that is not incompatible with the two interpretation and in fact adds to them. Hence, when Nietzsche is advocating to his readers individual revaluation, he is addressing the select few who are capable of it, and he thinks that a society-wide revaluation will occur thanks to the influence of some of these individuals.

Revaluation as Society-wide

We will begin by looking at the revaluation as a society-wide event performed by some few influential individuals. This has been the leading interpretation of Nietzsche's revaluation, as far back as Ludovici (58–59) and Jaspers (251) and is more recently advocated by Slienis (11, 202) and Reginster (7–8). We can consider this to be the default interpretation, as it is generally implicit or explicit in most other interpreters. Not much argument is presented to defend this position. Because Nietzsche sees the problems that the revaluation is supposed to be addressed as endemic throughout Europe and because the need for revaluation is connected with the spread of Christianity throughout Europe, it makes sense to most interpreters that the revaluation would not be an individual remedy for an individual problem. We will go through the arguments in favor of this position merely in order to refute the position that the revaluation is meant to be only directed to individual readers. We will go through the reasons only briefly, because the main arguments have been presented before in earlier chapters in other contexts. Here, we'll give a summary of the arguments.

First, Nietzsche presents the revaluation, especially in his last few works from 1888, as a cataclysmic and revolutionary event that is quite imminent. I had argued earlier that I thought Nietzsche believed himself to be contributing to the revaluation because he predicted that his upcoming book, "The Revaluation of All Values," would have a huge impact upon its publication. He predicted, in numerous letters to friends, that the book would be epochal and earth shattering. It's quite difficult to imagine how the revaluation could be purely personal and yet have such a broad impact.

Second, if we look at his models for previous revaluations, these are as well society-wide events. As has already been mentioned before, there are two examples he gives: the “revaluation of all values of antiquity”(BGE 46) and the unsuccessful attempt of the Renaissance at a “*revaluation of all Christian values,*”(A 61). He describes both of these events as changes that affect the whole of society. Values were transformed all across Europe due to the Christian revaluation, and presumably the Renaissance attempted, unsuccessfully, a similarly society-wide revaluation.

Third, the revaluation is described in many places as an antidote to the problem of nihilism, which itself is frequently described as society-wide. He uses the phrases “European Nihilism” on seven different occasions,¹⁹ several of these being from plans for books on the will to power, eternal return, and revaluation of all values, not to mention other cases where he speaks of nihilism in the context of Europe or Christendom. Additionally, the whole problem of nihilism, as a problem of the loss of values, is described regularly as a problem for society as a whole, as something that will doom our society and mar our future.

After laying out these arguments, if we accept that the revaluation is society-wide, one implication is that such changes in value will be due to the influence of certain authoritative persons who the great majority of society will fall in step with. Nietzsche does not tend to view change as occurring from the bottom-up (that is, great social upheavals being created by the actions of the masses; or the actions of the masses influencing those in power). Influence, for him, is primarily top-down. Hence, it seems

¹⁹ GM:3 27, KGW VIII1 5[75], 6[26], VIII2 9[1], 11[150], VIII3 14[114], 18[17].

unlikely that he is trying to change values by simply persuading the masses to reevaluate their own values.

We can look at the way Nietzsche perceives how a society is influenced and transformed first by looking at some early comments Nietzsche makes on the nature of language. In a very early essay “On the Origin of Language,” Nietzsche explained the relationship between the individual and the collective in the formation of language, writing: “*Language is neither the conscious work of individuals nor of a plurality.* [...] Language is much too complex to be the work of a single individual, much too unified to be the work of a mass; it is a complete organism”(209). As he later explained in his lectures on *Rhetoric*: “Language is created by the individual speech artist, but it is determined by the fact that the taste of the many make choices”(25). In short, language is a dialogue between individual speakers and the collective of other speakers; with individual speakers essentially nominating different speech patterns, conventions, idioms, and so on, and the rest of the community voting them up or down by their own usage.

Presumably this is how Nietzsche believes that the formation of values also works. Just as individual speech artists play with and modify their own language, individual people may adopt their own individual values, and those values are in a dialogue with all others. Individuals project their values through what they say and do, and then the community votes on those values with their own actions, approval, tolerance, disapproval, and so on.

Though he doesn’t speak in terms of the differing influence of different speech artists in this early lecture, Nietzsche would start to believe, as his philosophy matured, that not all individuals have equal influence on the values of the collective. Some

individuals have disproportionately more influence than others. Nietzsche wrote of this in several places. To give some examples, Nietzsche wrote in *Daybreak*, “every alteration effected to this abstraction [‘man’] by the judgments of individual powerful figures (such as princes and philosophers) produces an extraordinary and grossly disproportionate effect on the great majority”(D 105); he wrote in his notebooks: “Custom is created through the *example of individual powerful personalities*”(WEN p106, KGW III4 19[39]); and he wrote in *Human All too Human*: “Men traffic with their princes in much the same way as they do with their god, as indeed the prince has been to a great degree the representative of the god,”(HAH 461). This means that the changes in values and this dialogue of nomination and voting are not egalitarian. Some individuals are much more influential than others.

For most people, Nietzsche seems to believe, their values, as well as their thoughts, tastes, and habits, are shaped by imitation of more authoritative and persuasive individuals. For a revaluation to take place, Nietzsche recognized that if people were persuaded to adopt a new set of values, it wasn’t going to be by philosophical argument. People are swayed by the authority of authoritative individuals, people who are, in Nietzsche’s view, high in the order of rank of individuals. And one of the consequences of the influence of these individuals is to create a revaluation that is felt across society.

Revaluation as Individual

Now we will look at the reasons why it seems plausible that Nietzsche thinks the revaluation he describes is actually meant to be merely an individual process, namely that

Nietzsche is addressing himself to individual readers and asking them to reevaluate their own personal values for their own personal benefit.

Kathleen Higgins, for one, sought to emphasize the individual side of the revaluation in her article “Rebaptizing our Evil.” In her interpretation of the revaluation, she argues that we should focus on “individual reassessment” as part of the revaluation (Higgins 405). She highlights the idea expressed in *Beyond Good Evil* that “The great epochs of our lives come when we gather the courage to reconceive [*umzutaufen*]²⁰ our evils as what is best in us”(116). Though Higgins doesn’t deny that Nietzsche may have viewed the revaluation as influencing great historical epochs, she thinks Nietzsche’s main focus is on the individual: that Nietzsche is addressing individual readers and asking them to remake their values. Nietzsche may be predicting great changes or great society-wide changes of value, but he wants the reader to emerge with the lesson: *I need to reevaluate my values*. Higgins writes: “I am convinced that Nietzsche’s authorial strategies quite often aim to prompt individual reconsiderations on the part of his readers”(405).

There are a number of reasons why we might find this interpretation to be valid. First, Nietzsche, throughout his writings, seems to place great value on individuality and people acting as individuals. In one aphorism of *Daybreak* he writes that the Greeks were defined by genuine individuality and genuineness. He writes, “these actions [actions stamped with genuine individuality] are precisely those which alone possess value for good and evil” and goes on to say that the Greeks were a culture defined by such “a shimmer of honesty, of genuineness in good and evil”; last of all, he writes that this type

²⁰ Higgins uses Kaufmann’s translation, which translates “*umtaufen*” more literally as “rechristen,” though it could also be translated “rebaptize.”

of individuality is what makes the Greeks so notable and memorable, since any society that imitates them, “will continue to shine on for many millennia after they have perished”(D 529). In short, Nietzsche is saying that the Greek culture has had a lasting glory that resonates throughout history because the Greeks acted with genuine individuality. A society that is more un-herd-like will be more glorious and memorable. Also, in *Gay Science* he advocates laughter as the remedy for the proposition, “The species is everything, an individual is always nothing,” since “an individual is always an individual, something first and last and tremendous; for him there are no species, sums, or zeroes”(GS 1). The actions of a society are dependent upon the actions and values of the individuals, who will collectively do the actual activity of the society. As he would write a few aphorisms later: “What is, therefore, first really praised when virtues are praised is their instrumental nature and then the blind drive in every virtue that refuses to be held in check by the overall advantage of the individual – in short, the unreason in virtue that leads the individual to allow himself to be transformed into a mere function of the whole”(GS 21). The importance of the individual is a theme repeated throughout Nietzsche’s writings on morality in the early 1880s. It makes sense that, if he is extolling individuality, values that are the result of individuality would be preferable to values derived from some society-wide revaluation.

Nietzsche, in fact, emphasizes in a few places the idea that things that are shared are of a less value. For example, he writes in *Gay Science*: “it is selfish to consider one’s own judgement a universal law” selfish, that is, to propose the idea “here everyone must judge as I do”(GS 335). As he laid it out a bit more explicitly in *Beyond Good and Evil*, he writes: “And how could there ever be a ‘common good’! The term is self-

contradictory: whatever can be common will never have much value [...] all in all, everything rare for those who are rare themselves”(BGE 43). From these passages, Nietzsche seems to say that, if we are asking (as Nietzsche does in *The Genealogy of Morality*), “what is the value of a set of values?” the answer is that sets of values that are exclusive to fewer individuals are of greater value. If values broadly held are of less value, then it suggests that individuals should seek to create their own values. Such values would be more valuable than ones adopted from some grand revaluator.

Third, adding on to the last point, Nietzsche doesn’t just say that people should hold unique values, but that one should specifically create tables of value that are personal and one’s own. For example, in the fourth book of the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes, “Let us therefore *limit* ourselves to the purification of our opinions and value judgements and to the *creation of tables of what is good that are new and all our own*” [...] “We, however, want to *become who we are* – human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves!”(GS 335). Nietzsche also speaks about giving “style” to one’s character based on one’s personal strengths and weaknesses (GS 290). Around the same time in Book III of *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche writes: “But he will have discovered himself who speaks: “This is *my* good and evil.” With this, he has silenced the mole and dwarf who says: ‘Good for all, evil for all.’”(Z:3 “On the Spirit of Gravity” 2). It makes sense that, if one wants to have values that are entirely unique to oneself, then one is going to have to create them for oneself (one can’t borrow them from someone else), and these passages emphasize that point.

Fourth, Nietzsche is clearly opposed to any set of absolute values. He means by absolute values, values that are always the highest in all cases, “an unrestrictedly highest

value”²¹ as he calls it (*KGW V1 3[37]*), or a value that is self-justified. As he explains in a note from 1880: “One can only determine the value of morality by *measuring* it with something, for example with its utility (or fortune); but then that utility must also be measured with something – always in relation – absolute value is absurd” (*KGW V1 4[27]*).²² In other words, one can only measure the value of something with a separate measure, but then one needs yet a second measure to measure the first measure, and a third to measure the second, and so on *ad infinitum*. Nietzsche is clear that the idea that there are absolute values is erroneous, listing among the four errors that have contributed to the development of morality the most: “the apparent absolute value of certain actions”²³ (*KGW V1 3[37]*). That there can be no absolute values upon which to measure other values presents a huge and well-known problem. If we are to reevaluate values, what values can we base it upon? It’s not clear that Nietzsche answers this, perhaps because he believes that it is up to certain individuals, certain reevaluators and free spirits and higher individuals, to simple decide what is valuable based on their own experience. In short, the solution to the problem of how one grounds or rationalizes a revaluation is simply that the individuals he is addressing in his writings ground the values in their own selves and create sets of values that are personal.

That the revaluation is individual might also give some reason for the vague nature of his description of the results of revaluation. As we’ve discussed before, the prescription for how values are to be reshaped in the future is, at best, vague and

²¹ My translation of the German: “eines unbegrenzt höchsten Werthes.”

²² My translation, of the German: “Man kann den Werth der Moralität nur bestimmen indem man sie an etwas *mijßt* z.B. am Nutzen (oder Glück); aber auch den Nutzen muß man wieder an etwas messen — immer Relationen — absoluter Werth ist Unsinn.”

²³ My translation of the German: “der Anschein eines absoluten Werthes gewisser Handlungen.”

schematic and at other times ambiguous. Such vagueness is unsurprising if we think that the revaluation may be the work of individuals reevaluating in ways that are uniquely individual. If the revaluation were meant to be more society-wide, Nietzsche would be able to describe it in more detail, since it would be the result of social forces, and not so much of idiosyncratic individual choices. To describe the revaluation and lay out its details would make it common and thus less valuable. We discussed earlier how there are multiple conflicting interpretations on what the values will look like after the revaluation. This may be the result of Nietzsche simply running out of time before he had a chance to elaborate, but I think it is more plausibly the result of Nietzsche not knowing clearly what will happen because the results of the revaluation will undoubtedly be, at least to some degree, surprising.

Integration

Now if these reasons why the revaluation would be higher, more valuable, perhaps even more genuine if performed at an individual level are compelling, then we are presented with a problem when we want to reconcile these ideas with the frequently repeated notion that the revaluation is going to be some earth-shattering society-wide event that will change things for everyone. For this reason, I will discuss here ways both of these interpretations can be integrated into a single interpretation.

First off, the idea that the revaluation is individual leads to some unresolved problems, such as the question that if Nietzsche expects individual persons to reevaluate their own values, are all persons really capable of this? That is a basic idea behind this idea, but as we have been discussing in previous chapters, it seems like there are unique

individuals that are capable of this and a great many persons that are not. Also, we should note that Nietzsche's notion of individuality is different from ours. Dombowsky describes (criticizes) Nietzsche's individualism as an "Aristocratic Liberalism," which is opposed to the atomistic individualism of egoistic private interest and equality (120). Nietzsche extols certain rare persons who are apart from the herd and are genuinely able to become individual. These individuals are more important and should devote themselves to higher goals and value legislation (121-22). In short, Nietzsche's praise of individualism is not really a call for all of us to set ourselves apart for the crowd, but is only meant for those uncommon individuals who are genuinely able to do this. Instead, what Nietzsche is doing when he is at times appearing to present the revaluation as individual is actually addressing the members of his audience that he thinks may be capable of leading the society-wide revaluation. The interpretation that Nietzsche's writings were not written for a general audience but are for certain higher persons goes as far back as Ludovici (73-4). Thus, Nietzsche's advocacy of individualism is not for the great masses, but simply for those few, rare persons capable of individuality.

If such is the case, then Nietzsche is saying to those rare individuals that they must reevaluate their personal values, that they must go through a personal revaluation. Only after they have reevaluated their own values can they attempt a society-wide revaluation.

With this possibility in mind, I think there is some textual evidence we can present to defend the idea that those reevaluators who wish to transform society must go through an antecedent personal revaluation. There are some passages that we can cite to

show that what we are presenting can be grounded in some of his writings and is not purely a speculative interpretation.

The first passage we'll look at appears in 1873, well before Nietzsche ever mentions the revaluation in any of his writings and doesn't appear to have any parallel in any of his published work; nonetheless, it does hint at the idea. There he writes: "The philosopher's product is his *life* (first of all, before his *works*). That is his work of art. Every work of art is turned first toward the artist, then towards other people"(WEN p. 182; KGW III4 29[205]). There is no reason to think that Nietzsche didn't maintain this idea throughout his philosophy, and he certainly did think of a revaluator as being a creative person, an artist. If we were to apply the idea to the revaluation, it would follow that reevaluators also apply first their art of revaluation towards themselves, then towards other people, namely towards society at large.

Looking at some passages that were written a bit later, when Nietzsche was beginning to develop the idea of the revaluation, he mentioned at least in a few of his notes the question of how the legislator of values will have to be constituted. And in these passages he speaks of the legislator in a dynamic way, as if such persons have to *become* legislators (not just that they are born legislators) as if they have to make themselves into legislators. In one plan for a work titled *The Will to Power: Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values*, he plans on devoting the third book to "The problem of the legislator" and asks "How would men have to be constituted whose evaluations would be the reverse? – Men who possess all the qualities of the modern soul but are strong enough to transform them into pure health?"(WP 905; KGW VIII1 2[100]). The critical concept is that of legislators *transforming* the qualities of their soul into pure health. Shortly afterwards, in

a sketch of a plan for a work titled *The Eternal Return*, Nietzsche describes the third book—titled “Whose is the hand for this hammer?”—as being about, among other things: “How those men would have to be constituted who would accomplish this revaluation in themselves [*Umwerthung an sich*]”(WP 69 fn; *KGW* VIII1 2[131]).²⁴ It’s the critical phrase, “revaluation in themselves,” that is the most suggestive. The phrase again implies that such individuals capable of holding the hammer for smashing old ideals will perform a personal revaluation in themselves before they take on a society-wide revaluation.

When we start to look into Nietzsche’s published works, we find further evidence. For one, since the process of creating values is apparently quite involved, the value legislator cannot possibly be born with these new values, but has to actually create them. As Nietzsche describes the activity of the philosophers of the future in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

Perhaps the philosopher has had to be a critic and a skeptic and a dogmatist and historian and, moreover, a poet and collector and traveler and guesser of riddles and moralist and seer and “free spirit” and practically everything, in order to run through the range of human values and value feelings and *be able* to gaze with many eyes and consciences from the heights into every distance, from the depths up to every height, from the corner onto every expanse. But all these are only preconditions for his task... to *create values* (211).

In this passage, as in others, what Nietzsche seems to be describing is a very personal process of the creation of values by higher persons that are capable of value legislation. And if we think of this in terms of the other passages we’ve cited, it seems plausible that this process would precede the society-wide value legislation. In fact, as he continues a

²⁴ Kate Sturge translate this passage: “How the men undertaking this revaluation of themselves would have to be constituted”(WLN p 87)

bit further down in the same aphorism, speaking again of these genuine philosophers, he writes, “their creating is a legislating”(*ibid*).

Looking at it from another perspective, we might also add Nietzsche’s discussion of the individual as a non-singular multiplicity. This idea bridges the gap between society-wide and individual revaluation. In one notebook entry he says explicitly that, “man is a multiplicity of forces which stand in an order of rank, so that there are those which command.”(*WLN* p8; *KGW* VII3 34[123]). This passage precedes and is probably a precursor to the discussion of thinking, willing and the ‘I’ in aphorisms 16–19 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. Nietzsche writes there that “our body is, after all, only a society constructed out of many souls” and that when we will something, “what happens here is what happens in every well-constructed and happy community: the ruling class identifies itself with the successes of the community”(*BGE* 19). In short, individual persons aren’t really individual or singular, but are in fact a collection of “under-souls” and “under-wills,” which contribute to action. Persuading all these many under-souls is akin to persuading the many individuals in a society, which highlights the difficulty of any sort of revaluation, personal or society-wide.

The hard labor of such an individual revaluation, which will only occur in the face of resistance, is perhaps necessary because of the resistance of society to such society-wide changes. At times the revaluation is described adversarially, as a conflict between individual and society. Society, for the sake of its cohesion and strength resists the strong individuals and tries to keep them in check, even when they are not attempting to reevaluate values. In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche describes the general reluctance that society has towards accepting any individual who stands apart:

When the highest and strongest drives erupt in passion, driving the individual up and out and far above the average, over the depths of the herd conscience, the self-esteem of the community is destroyed – its faith in itself, its backbone, as it were, is broken.[...] A high, independent spiritedness, a will to stand alone, even an excellent faculty of reason, will be perceived as a threat (*BGE* 201).

In *Daybreak* he writes: “it is impossible to compute what precisely the rarer, choicer, more original spirits in the whole course of history have had to suffer through being felt as evil and dangerous”(9). With such strong and difficult resistance, we might think of the difficult process individuals go through to coerce and command their various wills into changing values as practice before the real battle of society-wide revaluation.

CHAPTER 4

IDEAS BEHIND THE REVALUATION

Since we have here been arguing that Nietzsche himself was engaged in the project of revaluation, I will next be trying to show some of the ways that Nietzsche was trying to actually perform this using some of his key ideas. Part of Nietzsche's attempt at revaluation came through direct attack; for example, as already mentioned, Nietzsche engaged in direct attack against Christianity, most notably in the *Antichrist*, the first and only completed work of his “Revaluation of All Values” project. But he also attempted revaluation through the promotion of ideas that had the effect of undermining current values. The ideas of the will to power, the overman, *amor fati*, and the eternal return of the same will be focused on here, to show how such ideas undermined values that Nietzsche believed himself to be battling against. I pick these ideas not because I think they are the only examples, but rather because they are prominent ideas that are significantly developed and thus give us good material for use.

Whether such ideas were advocated simply for the purpose of revaluation or whether they were advocated because Nietzsche believed they were in fact true descriptions of the world is not something that needs to be addressed. They are perhaps interpretations of the world that have value but cannot be demonstrated (just as Nietzsche would describe mechanical necessity, as quoted below). About the best that can be said is that, based on Nietzsche's notes and writings, all of these ideas appear to predate the idea of revaluation. The first time the phrase “will to power” is used is in an 1880 note (*KGW*

V1 4[239])²⁵ and appears first in a published writing in *Zarathustra* I (1883, “Thousand & One Goals). The overman first appears in a note from 1882 (*KGW* V1 3[1] 385) and also first appears in published writings in *Zarathustra* I in 1883. The phrase “*amor fati*” is first used in an 1881 note (*KGW* V2 15[20]), and first appears in a published writing in *The Gay Science* (1882, *GS* 276). The eternal return is first spoken of in a series of notes from 1881 and also first appears in a published work in *The Gay Science* (285, 341). In short, all of these ideas are first mentioned in his notes from 1880-82 and first appear in published writings from 1882-83. The phrase “Revaluation of all Values,” on the other hand, isn’t spoken of directly until 1884 in his notes (*KGW* 26[284] & 26[259]), and doesn’t appear in published work until *Beyond Good & Evil* (1886, *BGE* 46 & 203). If the chronology of these writings accurately reflect the chronology of Nietzsche’s thought, then it suggests either: 1) that these four ideas were independently proposed (for whatever reason) and then later co-opted into the revaluation, or 2) perhaps that Nietzsche was engaged in revaluation all along, though it took him a while to articulate the idea (as already mentioned, more than once, Nietzsche described the *Birth of Tragedy* [1872] as his “first Revaluation of All Values” [*TI* “Ancients”]), and that he originally formulated these ideas to serve his not-yet-articulated concept of the revaluation of all values.

Whatever the case may be, these ideas were clearly useful for revaluation and Nietzsche does indicate that these ideas are closely linked with the revaluation. For one,

²⁵ Though there is one appearance of the phrase earlier, in 1876 (*KGW* IV2 23[63]), it’s not clear if this is a reference to the idea, since the phrase doesn’t reappear until 1880, and in earlier writings, Nietzsche exclusively uses similar, but not quite identical concepts like “lust for power” (*Machtgelüst*, D 93, 113, 199, 204; *GS* 110), power-seeking (*Herrschsucht*, HH 137, 142; *WS* 6, 10; D 68, 242, 245; *GS* 1, 72) and “love of power” (*Liebe zur Macht*, D 262).

looking through Nietzsche's notes and his plans for the *Will to Power/Revaluation of All Values* project, we see that the will to power and the eternal return of the same were meant to play a central role in revaluation, as I demonstrate below. In addition, though the evidence for the utility or importance of the concepts of the overman and *amor fati* to the revaluation is not as explicit, Nietzsche does make clear connections between these ideas and the revaluation, which we will explore. Thus, in this chapter, we will give a very brief summary of each of these four ideas (insofar as they are relevant for revaluation) and an explanation of how they connect to the revaluation, in an effort to try to show that these ideas were meant to be used by Nietzsche in his active project of revaluation.

Overman

Basic Summary

The overman was the concept of a higher person that Nietzsche focused on during the writing of *Zarathustra*. Almost all references to the overman in Nietzsche's published writing can be found in *Zarathustra* and in the notes leading up to and during the writing of *Zarathustra*.

The overman, as already mentioned, was very explicitly a figure of the future. Current humans were merely a stepping stone on the way to the overman: "Mankind is a rope fastened between animal and overman" (Z:I Prologue 4), and humankind is, "a bridge and not an end" (Z:III "Old & New Tablets" 3). This current state of humankind is something that must be overcome (Z:I Prologue 3; Z:III "Old & New Tablets" 3), and

Nietzsche, through the mouth of Zarathustra, encourages such overcoming since it is by no means inevitable. Evolution is not an upward progress, and Nietzsche explicitly says in a note that he rejects the idea of progress (*KGW VIII3* 15[8]). He writes that mankind does not represent a development for the “better,” “stronger,” or “higher,” and that Europeans of the Renaissance were worth more than the Europeans of his day (*A 4*). There are individual cases of success and development, and the overman would be the result of compounding this success by breeding such persons (*KGW VIII2* 11[413]).

In fact, the work of creating the overman will be the work of many generations: “you could recreate yourselves into fathers and forefathers of the Overman” (*Z:II Blessed Isles*). The metaphor of the way to the overman as a rope suggests that it is a path that is narrow and precarious and that must be followed precisely. In a note already mentioned, Nietzsche says that there are two movements, one that will lead to the overman, and one, of the previous moralities, that will lead to the last man (*KGW VII1* 7[21]). Nietzsche describes the last man in *Ecce Homo* as a person who is morally virtuous, the “‘good’, herd animals,” the “benevolent ‘beautiful souls’” (*EH* “Destiny” 4), the completely ordinary and unextraordinary and equal to everyone else; he elsewhere calls the last man the opposite of the overman (*KGW VII1* 4[171]). In *Zarathustra*, he describes the last man as only aiming for happiness and no longer striving to be better (“when human beings no longer launch the arrow of their longing beyond the human,” [*Z:1* “Prologue” 5]). To take the path to the overman and avoid the path that leads to the last man is apparently not easy.

We should also admit that Nietzsche believes that part of the idea is that the cultivation of the overman is a process of many generations of breeding. He mentions

breeding several times in his notes, connected with the overman (*KGW VII1 15[4]*), in plans for works on *The Will to Power* (*KGW VIII1 2[74]*), and in a book on values (VIII1 7[64]). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, during an extended discussion of the “genuine philosophers,” he tells us that we need a “wholesale attempt at breeding and cultivation” so as to “teach humanity its future as its *will*, as dependent on a human will” and “to put an end to the gruesome rule of chance and nonsense that has passed for ‘history’ so far” (*BGE* 203). He also seems to be speaking of the idea in *Zarathustra*, writing that “You lonely of today, you withdrawing ones, one day you shall be a people: from you who have chosen yourselves a chosen people shall grow —and from them the overman” (*Z:I “Bestowing Virtue” 2*). The only thing he appears to say in the way of detail on this breeding program is that it requires “breeding by selection of location, sex, food, etc.” (*KGW VII1 15[4]*), and that the idea of the eternal return may be useful for breeding and selection, presumably because it will select out those individuals capable of handling the thought of the eternal return (*KGW VIII2 9[8]*). But, apparently, the basic idea is modeled after the selective breeding used to produce modern varieties of domesticated plants and animals: just as many generations of dog-breeding were necessary to produce the various breeds we have today, so many generations of human-breeding would be necessary to produce the overman. In other words, the overman is something that a society needs to work towards, something that provides a multi-generational goal for society to aim towards.

Its Role in Revaluation

There are no explicit mentions of the overman in direct connection with the revaluation or mentions of it in any of the plans for Nietzsche's "Will to Power" or "Revaluation of All Values" works. On the other hand, the idea is on several occasions spoken of in close connection to the eternal return (*KGW* VII1 10[47], 15[10], 16[54], 16[86], 20[10], VII2 26[283], 27[58]). Namely, the overman is someone that might endure the idea of the eternal return or the idea of the eternal return might pave the way for the overman. Additionally, Nietzsche does seem to argue that the purpose of the revaluation is, as previously discussed, necessary to lay the groundwork for the creation of higher individuals, such as the overman.

Additionally, if we look at the way that the idea of the overman is presented, and the type of ideas that it is used to promote, we will see that it challenges several important contemporary values and ideals.

One of the fundamental ideas behind the overman was to give the course of human events a new goal towards which to aim (see Z:1 Prologue 5, *KGW* VII1 4[75], 4[84], 4[198], VII2 26[232]). As Nietzsche writes in a note from 1887:

as the consumption of man and mankind becomes more and more economical [...] a countermovement is inevitable. I designate this as the secretion of a luxury surplus of mankind: it aims to bring to light a stronger species, a higher type [...]. My concept, my metaphor for this type is, as one knows, the word 'overman.' [...] An aim? a new aim?—that is what humanity needs" (WP 866; *KGW* VIII2 10[17]. See also *KGW* VII1 4[84]).

The overman is useful to provide such a goal because, as mentioned, it would take many generations of breeding to produce the overman. It's not that humanity has tended to lack

a goal (though Nietzsche has said humanity as a whole lacks a single unifying goal [Z:1 “Thousand & One Goals]), it is rather that, as he wrote a number of times in his notes, most moralities have tended to aim at stability and preservation above all else (*KGW* VII1 7[21], 24[15] VIII3 22[25], 14[108]). His published writings have tended to confirm this idea, including *Human, All too Human*, where he writes, “Morality is first of all a means of preserving the community and warding off its destruction; then it is a means of preserving the community at a certain height and in a certain quality of existence” (*WS* 44); in *Daybreak*, he writes, “Everywhere today the goal of morality is defined in approximately the following way: it is the preservation and advancement²⁶ of mankind” (*D* 106); and in *Beyond Good & Evil*, he writes that “the preservation of the community is the only thing in view” for “moral value judgments” (201).

Nietzsche lists one of the main tendencies of the revaluation in a note as, “no longer will to preservation but to power” (*WP* 1059; VII2 26[284]). Thus, the overman gives humanity a goal that goes beyond the preservation of the human, to point “the arrow of their longing beyond the human” (Z:1 Prologue 5). As he says in one note, the road to the overman is contrary to the road of stability and preservation, which leads to the last man, writing:

My demand: to develop beings who stand exalted over the entire species ‘man’ [...] all previous moralities were useful for giving the species primarily stability at all costs [...]

The other movement: my movement: is contrary, the intensification of all oppositions and rifts, elimination of equality, creation of the over-powerful.

The former creates the last man. My movement the overman (KGW

²⁶ Nietzsche clarifies that both this “advancement” and “preservation” are just empty words here, since they don’t specify “advancement to what” or “preservation of what.”

VIII1 7[21]).²⁷

In short, in so far as the overman is a goal worthy of aiming for, we will need to overcome and eliminate the value of stability and preservation.

The concept of the overman is also meant to undermine the value of equality, and the ideal of humans as all equal. Nietzsche writes: “For thus justice speaks to me: ‘humans are not equal.’”(Z:II “Tarantulas”). The concept of the generations of breeding that will lead to the overman, just as with the breeding of plants and animals, depends on selecting out, generation after generation, what are considered the best specimens, or, in Nietzsche’s terminology, those who rank highest according to the rank order of persons. Nietzsche speaks in a note of the problem of breeding (“*Zucht und Züchtung*”) as related to the problem of rank-order (*KGW* VII3 40[48], VIII1 1[237]). Nietzsche also writes: “Each individual is a whole line of development [...]. If he represents the ascent of the human line, then his value is indeed extraordinary; and extreme care may be taken to preserve and promote his growth”(*WLN* 242, *KGW* VIII3 14[29]). He writes in his notes that the movement leading to the overman involves, among other things, “elimination of equality”(*KGW* VII1 7[21]).

As Nietzsche writes a few times, the road to the overman is one of mankind becoming more “evil”(Z:4 “Higher Man” 5). This is meant as a contrast to the road leading to the last man, who is the person who represents goodness, the good herd animal

²⁷ My translation of: “M e i n e Forderung: Wesen hervorzubringen, welche über der ganzen Gattung ‘Mensch’ erhaben dastehen [...] Die bisherige Moral hatte ihre Grenze innerhalb der Gattung: alle bisherigen Moralen waren nützlich, um der Gattung z u e r s t unbedingte Haltbarkeit zu geben [...] Die a n d e r e Bewegung: meine Bewegung: ist umgekehrt die Verschärfung aller Gegensätze und Klüfte, Beseitigung der Gleichheit, das Schaffen Über-Mächtiger. J e n e erzeugt den letzten Menschen. M e i n e Bewegung den Übermenschen.

(*EH* “Destiny” 4). As Nietzsche explains in *Ecce Homo*: “The word ‘overman’, as a designation for a type that has the highest constitutional excellence, in contrast to ‘modern’ people, to ‘good’ people” (*EH* “Books” 1). The persons that are called evil are those that deviate from the prescribed morality. Nietzsche is here being quite explicit that the concept of the overman challenges accepted morality. This morality is, as explained, a morality of stability and equality. It seeks the stability and preservation of mankind, and seeks a leveling of mankind, whereby all persons are equal. These ideas of stability and equality are both interrelated when applied to the overman, since it is by the abandonment of the ideal of equality, by assuming that there is a rank order of persons and not all persons are equal, that we can cultivate and breed humans to create the overman, by selecting amongst the best.

Hence, I perceive that Nietzsche uses the concept of the overman to try to undermine and reevaluate the ideas of equality and stability. These ideas are at odds with the overman and, if society were to regard the overman as a goal worth seeking out, it would have to abandon and replace those values.

Eternal Return of the Same

Basic Summary

The inspiration for the eternal return appears early in Nietzsche’s philosophy. It’s an idea he derives from the later Pythagoreans. He speaks of it both in *History in the Service and Disservice of Life* (HL 2, p 97) and in the lecture on the Pythagoreans from his *Pre-Platonic Lectures*, attributing to the Pythagoreans the idea that “Whenever the stars once

more attain the same position, not only the same people but also the same behavior will again occur (*PPP* p 139). For reasons different from the Pythagoreans, Nietzsche proposes the idea that perhaps they are right, that the course of time is circular and that the same succession of all events will eventually lead back to a previous event, from which everything will happen again as it had before, all over again. And this recurrence has been going on and will go on eternally.

Nietzsche does not simply assert this idea without argument. He lays out his reasoning. Most of the argument appears explicitly in the following passage from *Zarathustra*, where he writes:

From this gateway Moment a long eternal lane stretches *backward*:
behind us lies an eternity.

Must not whatever *can* already have passed this way before? Must not whatever *can* happen, already have happened, been done, passed by before?

And if everything has already been here before, what do you think of this moment, dwarf? Must this gateway too not already — have been here?

And are not all things firmly knotted together in such a way that this moment draws after it *all* things to come? (Z:3 “Vision & Riddle” 2).

The passage captures most, but not all of the argument, which is fully elaborated in more detail in his notes (see *KGW* V2 11[148], 11[202], 11[245] and VIII3 14[188]). These notes allow us to flesh out the logic of the argument, which appears to rest on three key assumptions:

- 1) That there is a finite set of possible states of the universe, “a calculable number of combinations” (*WP* 1066; *KGW* VIII3 14[188]),
- 2) That time stretches infinitely into the past and there is no beginning of time (“behind us lies an eternity”).
- 3) That there is an absolute determinism of cause and effect. In Nietzsche’s words:

“all things firmly knotted together in such a way that this moment draws after it *all* things to come” (*KGW VII1* 12[8]).²⁸ In other words, for any given state of the universe, x , a state of the universe, y , must necessarily always follow.

If we were to just take assumptions 1 alone (assuming also the conservation of matter and energy), three possibilities follow: a) time will end before all set of possibilities are exhausted, b) the universe will reach some sort of equilibrium²⁹ in which change ceases and the universe remains eternally the same, or c) eventually some previous state will recur.

As soon as we introduce assumption 2, then possibilities a) and b) are eliminated. A) is eliminated because, if time stretches into the past eternally, then all possibilities must have already been exhausted, not just once but an infinite number of times. And B) is eliminated, similarly, because, since time stretches back eternally, an equilibrium must have happened by now: “The world of forces suffers no cessation: otherwise this would have been reached, and the clock of existence would have stopped” (*Nietzsche Reader*, p 240; 1881 V2 11[148]). If the universe had reached the equilibrium state it would still be there now, and, since things still are changing, which Nietzsche calls “the sole certainty we have in our hands” (*WP* 1066; *KGW VIII3* 14[188]), then it must never have been reached and can never be reached. This leaves only possibility c), that events will recur. But this doesn’t mean that events will necessarily follow in the same order. Just as if we

²⁸This assumption also is affirmed in *KGW VII1* 18[51], where Nietzsche speaks of, “the whole tangle and knot (*Knäuels und Knotens*) of cause and effect.”

²⁹An example of equilibrium, the heat death of the universe, which Nietzsche correctly identifies as proposed by William Thomson, Lord Kelvin, *KGW VIII3* 14[188]. The idea of the heat death was that in some distant future of the universe, all energy would eventually be so dissipated, due to entropy, that no work would be any longer possible; and thus no motion, no life, no change theretofore.

have a jar of beads and repeatedly draw one bead then put it back in, we will eventually, by dint of probability draw the same bead again. But we won't necessarily draw the same beads one after the other unless they are somehow strung together.

If we add assumption 3) then it means that, single events won't just recur, but the same succession of events will recur. According to assumption 3), as soon as a state of the universe *x* happens, it will be followed by a *y*, and that by a *z*, and an *a*, and so on. In other words, we will have the same succession of states that occurred before (everything repeats itself) in the same order, and that succession of states will also lead back to the original state, and a subsequent repetition and another and again and again indefinitely. Hence, from these three assumptions, the doctrine of the eternal return follows.

Admittedly, we don't have to accept Nietzsche's assumptions, and thereby his conclusions. He does make some attempts to justify these assumptions, for example proving assumption 2), that time is infinite, by saying, "Nothing can prevent me from reckoning backward from this moment and saying 'I shall never reach the end'"(WP 1066; *KGW* VIII3 14[188]). And, according to the scientific theory at the time, assumption 3) was quite reasonable. Nietzsche described the idea of causal determinism as the "mechanistic" way of thinking, and wrote that the eternal return is "the *most scientific* of all possible hypotheses"(WLN p118; *KGW* VIII1 5[71]) because it is "the logical conclusion of the mechanistic [way of thinking]"(*KGW* VII2 34[204]).

On the other hand, Nietzsche himself is critical of this mechanistic way of thinking, writing in his notebooks a section titled "On *combating* determinism," in which he explains: "'Mechanical necessity' is not a fact: it is *we* who have interpreted it into what happens. [...] from the fact that I do a particular thing, it by no means follows that I

do it under compulsion. *Compulsion* in things cannot be demonstrated at all" (*WLN* p 154, *KGW* VIII2 9[91]). In short, the idea of causal determinism is simply an interpretation of events. Without the notion of causal determinism, all we can say is that a given state of the universe x will recur and will have recurred an infinite number of times, but that a particular state y will not necessarily follow; thus a particular state of the universe would inevitably reappear (since there is a finite number and since change can't stop, once all states have been used up a previous state would have to be reused), but the whole procession of repeating states wouldn't follow since any state could follow after any given state; i.e. if the first time state y followed state x , the second time state z might follow state x . This seems unlikely to be the idea of the eternal return Nietzsche is advocating, since he includes the idea of assumption 3 in multiple justifications of the eternal return and says that the Eternal return is the logical conclusion of the mechanistic way of thinking. But Nietzsche's critique of the mechanistic way of thinking does suggest that the theory of the eternal return, like causal determinism, is to him merely an interpretation, a theory, a possibility, and that Nietzsche does not regard it as a truth.

A number of commentators have shown that Nietzsche's argument in favor of the eternal return is fatally flawed (Simmel 170ff; Jaspers 352–55; Danto 185–191), and I don't think it's possible to combat these arguments. Clearly there are a number of problems with his argument, and especially with his three assumptions, but that doesn't mean that Nietzsche didn't take this idea seriously as a scientific or metaphysical thesis or that he was aware of these problems. If we accept the assumptions the argument is coherent, and as noted above, since Nietzsche presents most of the argument in a

published work, *Zarathustra*, he must have given it some credence. The important point, though, is that the reason that Nietzsche proposed and advocated this theory, as we shall explore, is that it was useful for his idea of the revaluation of all values.

Its Role in Revaluation

It is clear that the idea of the eternal return was integral to the idea of revaluation based on Nietzsche's writings and notes. One of the many proposed ideas for books that Nietzsche noted in his notebooks was an 1884 idea of a book titled “The Eternal Return of the Same” subtitled “An attempt at the revaluation of all values” (*KGW* VII2 26[259]). This was one of fifteen separate notes that included a proposed book idea titled or subtitled “The Eternal Return,” mostly from 1884–85 (*KGW* VII2 25[227], 25[323], 26[243], 26[293], 26[298], 26[325], 26[465], 27[58], 27[80], 27[82], 29[40], 34[191], VIII1 2[199] and VIII3 20[167]). Several of these suggest that the idea of the eternal return will have a revolutionary role, and Nietzsche speaks of the eternal return in the context of “the new enlightenment (*KGW* VII2 26[293], 26[298] 27[80], 29[40]), the “new Rank-Order” (*KGW* VII2 26[243], 26[298]), and subtitles works titled “The Eternal Return” as “A Prediction” (*KGW* VII2 27[58], 27[80]). As he started to develop his plans for *The Will to Power* and subsequent *Revaluation of All Values* books, he much more often planned to have the eternal return become the theme of a major part of the book, usually the last part or close to the end (*KGW* VIII1 5[75], 7[45], VIII3 13[4], 16[71], 16[72], 18[17], 19[8] and 22[14]). Clearly the eternal return, as evidenced by these plans, was meant to play a central role in the revaluation. The shape of many of these outlines appeared to take the form of several books of criticism, of undermining current values,

with the last book or books describing the basis of the new values, a place which apparently at some points Nietzsche thought the eternal return would fill.

Whether Nietzsche considered the eternal return to be a true physical fact or simply proposed it as a psychological test to test one's capacity to bear this idea is beyond the scope of this dissertation. That he put so much effort into creating an argument, suggests he wanted it to be a persuasive idea that people accepted as true. In its role of psychological test, it was useful to the revaluation and for at least two main reasons: because it is useful for selecting higher individuals and because it is the ultimate form of life-affirmation.

First, we will look at the eternal return as useful for selection. In an early passage concerning fatalism, Nietzsche had written: "What then grows out of this belief [in fatalism] in your case – cowardice, resignation or frankness and magnanimity – bears witness to the soil upon which that seed corn has been scattered but not, however, to the seedcorn itself – for out of this anything and everything can grow" (*AOM* 363). That is to say, a belief in fatalism could lead to all sorts of beneficial or harmful attitudes, presumably depending on the character of the person (the soil) who believes in fatalism. In *Wanderer*, Nietzsche speaks of "Turkish Fatalism," which is the idea that when certain people come to believe that their fate is predetermined, they resign themselves and give in to this fate, failing to understand that even the resignation and giving in must, according to this belief, necessarily also be fated (*WS* 61). The implication, in this early passage, is that a belief in fatalism will clearly lead to one of these beneficial or harmful attitudes.

This idea is carried forward into the concept of the eternal return, which includes a belief in fatalism. The eternal return, as mentioned above, requires the assumption that events are causally determined. The particular course of events that one is living has, in fact already occurred before, and will recur in the exact same order as before. This means that one has no power or ability to alter this particular cycle of events so that things turn out otherwise than as before. Nietzsche is explicit that belief in the fatalism concept of the eternal return will truly sort out the better from the lesser. In one notebook entry he calls the theory of the eternal return, “a means of breeding and selection”(WP 462; *KGW* VIII2 9[8]). Elsewhere the eternal return is repeatedly described as a hammer (*KGW* VII2 26[298], 27[80], 27[82], 34[191], VIII1 2[129], 2[131], 5[70], 7[45], VIII3 13[3], 13[4]). The significance of the metaphor of the hammer is that it is a force that is both creative and destructive. Just as the creation of new values requires the destruction of old values to create new ones, the hammer can be both destructive and creative, and thus can be a tool of revaluation (he speaks of it in such terms in *BGE* 203 and 211). It can be creative and reveal the statue sleeping inside of a rock (*Z*:2 “Blessed Isles”), and can be used as a tool of destruction (*EH* “Zarathustra” 8); the hammer then can be used to sound whether some idol is hollow (*TI* Preface) and to destroy those idols found wanting. In a section probably referring to the doctrine of the eternal return as “the most death-addicted pessimism,”³⁰ he says that it will produce a selection of the fittest (*KGW* VIII1 2[100]). He says, “Only those who consider their existence to be capable of eternal repetition will remain”(*Nietzsche Reader*, p 241; *KGW* V2 11[338]), and he called the eternal return a

³⁰ The passage, in German, “Der Hammer: eine Lehre, welche durch Entfesseln des todsgütigsten Pessimismus eine Aussicht der Lebensfähigkeit bewirkt.” I translate: “The hammer: a doctrine which through the *unleashing* of the most death-addicted pessimism causes a *selection* of the *fittest*.”

“challenge” [*Probe*], a challenge that will demonstrate who can bear the concept of the eternal return. In at least one outline, he suggests that the eternal return is meant to be a “middle” (*Mitte*), presumably as a doctrine that will serve as a bridge to a better future (1883 VII1 24[4]). In another place, he says that many generations will be necessary for the doctrine to sink in (*KGW* V2 11[58]).

The reason that the doctrine of the eternal return had such selective power was that affirming the doctrine requires one to deny any supreme life-meaning and goals beyond those we give to life (*KGW* VIII1 5[71]). He describes the eternal recurrence as “without any finale into nothingness” and as “nothingness (‘meaninglessness’) eternally” (*WLN* p 118; *KGW* VIII1 5[71]). If existence has no finale it is heading towards, it can’t have a goal, and without a goal or objective, it can’t have any meaning. But meaning is something that humans need to live. Upon learning of the eternal return, a better type of person will be able to supply their life with meaning in this absence, whereas a lesser person will not, and will thereby succumb to suicide or resignation, as with the case of so-called “Turkish Fatalism.”

Accepting the eternal return also requires the denial of salvation (VII2 25[290]) since, if there is no conclusion to time, no End of Days when God passes judgment, how can there be salvation? And how can there be an afterlife if a person is being continually reincarnated in the same life? In one note, Nietzsche writes: “Let us impress the image of eternity on our life! This thought contains more than all the religions that have taught us to despise this life as something fleeting and to look towards an indeterminate other life” (*Nietzsche Reader*, p 240; *KGW* V2 11[159]). The idea appears to be that since we will relive this life again and again eternally, then, we can’t be whisked away to an

eternal afterlife as a reward for our worldly virtue. This means no salvation and no afterlife. If there is no possibility of an afterlife then that means there is no other life to which we can compare this life. One of the problems Nietzsche saw in Christianity was that it viewed the afterlife as better than this life, thereby denigrating this life. Nietzsche viewed this attitude as anti-life. By rejecting this other life, then we are able to affirm this life. Nietzsche called the eternal return, “a pessimism that could result in that type of Dionysian yes-saying to the world as it is”(*KGW VIII2* 10[3]). Only those who can truly affirm life in the most extreme way will be able to bear eternal return, and thus it will have the effect of weakening those that cannot affirm life as strongly.

Nietzsche speaks of eternal return as a concept that will lead to a state beyond good and evil: “In order to bear it, and not to be an optimist, one must *eliminate* ‘good’ and ‘evil’”(*KGW VII2* 27[67]). Without salvation and afterlife, the eternal return is also a concept that will undermine the concept of sin (1881 V2 11[144]). The concept of the eternal return will facilitate the revaluation in this undermining of the concepts of salvation, afterlife, and sin. Eliminating the concept of sin is part of Nietzsche’s project of revaluation, since many of the things he wants to raise in value are considered evil, and thus the concept stands in the way of changing values and morals. Eliminating the idea that sin is inherent in nature also facilitates the idea of individual humans as capable of creating their own individual values, which is necessary for revaluation. And eliminating the concepts of an afterlife and salvation (the latter of which depends on the idea of another world or other being that provides salvation) also facilitates the revaluation since, as he has said elsewhere, belief in another word devalues this world. Thus, it would permit us to raise in value this life.

Amor Fati

Basic Summary

The phrase “*amor fati*” only appears in four places in Nietzsche’s published writings,³¹ and it only appears five times elsewhere in his notebooks.³² “*Amor fati*” translates to “love of fate” and the basic idea behind it seems fairly simple: embrace what is and what is to come; embrace that which is out of your control. *Amor fati* is how Nietzsche describes the reaction of a better type of person to fatalism. It is part of his general concept of life affirmation, which states that we should embrace and affirm all aspects of living. We should even embrace those facets that we might otherwise despise, such as fatalism and the eternal return of the same. His first reference is an 1881 note where he writes “‘Love what is inevitable’—*amor fati*, this would be my moral”(*KGW* V2 15[20]). The first mention in any of Nietzsche’s published writings is in Book IV of *Gay Science*, where he writes, “I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them — thus I will be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love from now on! I do not want to wage war against ugliness”(*GS* 276).

Amor fati seems to have continued to be an important idea in his late thought when Nietzsche was planning his *Will to Power* and *Revaluation of All Values* books. It appears in his 1888 book *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, where he writes: “What my innermost nature tells me is that everything necessary, seen from above and in the sense

³¹ *GS* 276, *NCW* Epilogue 1, *EH* “Clever” 10 & “Case of Wagner” 4

³² *KGW* V2 15[20], 16[22], VII2 25[500], VIII3 16[32], 25[7]

of a *great* economy, is also useful in itself,—it should not just be tolerated, it should be loved... *Amor fati*: that is my innermost nature”(*NCW* epilogue 1; this aphorism is based on *GS* P 1). And he even mentions it in his final notebook from his last month or two of sanity: “I want nothing other, nor backwards,—I *dared* not want anything other... *Amor fati*... Even Christianity becomes necessary”(*KGW* VIII3 25[7]).

Its Role in Revaluation

Just as with the overman, there is no explicit connection with revaluation, and so we have to rely on indirect evidence. And for this all we can point to is its connection with the eternal return. Nietzsche speaks, in one note, of “*amor fati*” as a “Dionysian affirmation,” of existence, “without subtraction, exclusion and selection”(*KGW* VIII3 16[32]). In other words, *amor fati*, is a personal attitude of life-affirmation that one who accepts the eternal return would possess.

Amor fati represents an extreme of life-affirmation that is connected with the eternal return, since fatalism is also an aspect of that concept. Schacht describes *amor fati* as one aspect of life-affirmation by assigning value to “‘our human existence’ and the world in which we find ourselves”(346). In other words, because our life is deterministic, then to embrace this determinism and valorize it is a form of life-affirmation. *Amor fati* is an embracing of fate and not just embracing, but loving the fact that the future is fated and can’t be changed. It is a standard of life-affirmation that Nietzsche is comfortable saying that he himself has reached, since he speaks repeatedly of *amor fati* in personal terms, as *his own* moral rule as *his own* innermost nature.

What differentiates *amor fati* from the eternal return is that *amor fati* describes a personal state, an attitude that one might have towards the concept of the eternal return or any other type of fatalistic concept. Reginster describes *amor fati* as having two stages: “In the first stage, I come to realize that my existence is a mere ‘accident’: it is not the product of a ‘purposeful creation’ (for example, by God), which would justify it, or give it meaning” and “In the second stage, the thought of the eternal recurrence is supposed to overcome the ensuing nihilistic distress by making me see my existence as metaphysically necessary.... The recognition of this metaphysical necessity is then supposed to usher in reconciliation with my existence, or *amor fati*, by inducing complete resignation or will-lessness” (*Affirmation* 207). Though there is no textual evidence of this first stage as being part of *amor fati*, it certainly is consonant with Nietzsche’s philosophy, and Nietzsche does make the connection to the eternal return explicit in an 1888 note: describing his experimental philosophy as wanting the “eternal circulation” (*den ewigen Kreislauf*) (*WP* 1041; *KGW* VIII3 16[32]). Hence, to have a healthy attitude towards the eternal return one must embrace an attitude of *amor fati*. The eternal return requires the concept determinism, since events are recurring in the same way as they have before. It is this determinism that Nietzsche thinks we should love as our fate.

In *Daybreak*, which Nietzsche completed in 1881, around the time of his earliest notes on the eternal return and *amor fati*, Nietzsche argued that free and unegoistic actions have been overvalued so far and that unfree and egoistic actions have been undervalued (*D* 148). In order to change such undervaluing of the unfree, Nietzsche suggests that we need to abandon the concept of will and embrace the eternal return. In an 1884

note Nietzsche lists two conditions for “My completion of fatalism,”³³ ostensibly referring to what concepts will have to be accepted before the concept of fatalism can be accepted. He lists 1) the eternal return and 2) the elimination of the concept of “will” (*KGW* VII2 25[214]). In another 1884 note, he lists “abolition of the ‘will’” as among the preconditions “to endure the idea of the recurrence” (*WP* 1066; *KGW* VII2 26[283]). Hence, we might describe *amor fati* as the attitudinal side of the idea of eternal return.

Amor fati’s role in revaluation thus overlaps considerably with the concept of the eternal return. On the other hand, the concept itself is a revaluation of fatalism: that fatalism is not something to be dreaded and denigrated but something to embraced. If one can embrace one’s fate, one can accept the even more terrifying concept that not only is everything fated, but everything repeats eternally, leading to the revaluation of other values, as mentioned above.

Will to Power

Basic Summary

The concept of the “will to power” was clearly an important concept, with the number of references to it dwarfing any of the other concepts discussed in this chapter, including the “revaluation of all values.” By my count, there are 186 textual units that explicitly reference “will to power.” Only 22 of these are references to or plans for a book titled “Will to Power,” leaving the remaining 164 as references to the concept, and 36 of these

³³ My translation of: “Meine Vollendung des Fatalismus”

appear in published works.³⁴ It is clearly one of the most (if not the most) important ideas in Nietzsche's philosophy.

Additionally, in earlier works, he had spoken of several similar (and probably overlapping) ideas, including the “desire for power” (*Lust an der Macht* and *Machtgelüst*) and the “feeling of power” (*Machtgefühl* and *Gefühl der Macht*), which both appear prominently in *Daybreak*. The general sense of these early ideas is that there is a certain pleasure in the exercise of power and the feeling of power, which people desire.

The term “will to power” doesn’t completely supplant these earlier terms (which continue to be used, though rarely) but it does eclipse their usage, once Nietzsche starts speaking of the concept, which first appears in his published writing in *Zarathustra* (Z:1 “Thousand & One Goals,” Z:2 “Self-Overcoming” & “Redemption”).

Reginster describes the will to power as “striving against something that resists,” or the “will to overcoming resistance” (*Affirmation* 126). I think this is a good description. In one of his notes, Nietzsche defines the will to power as “an insatiable craving to manifest power; or to employ, exercise power, as a creative drive, etc.” (*KGW VII* 3 36[31]). Elsewhere in his notebooks, he explains will to power as “*resisting what’s stronger, attacking what’s weaker*” (*WLN* p25; *KGW VII* 3 36[21]). In *Beyond Good and*

³⁴ Counting the number of references to “will to power” is not without ambiguity. The phrase appears in a single note in 1876, then in three notes from 1880 before becoming a regular concept in his notes and published writings from 1882 onward. I have decided to include these four references because they seem conceptually similar. Also, in *Antichrist* 51 Nietzsche speaks of “diese will mit dem Christenthum zur Macht,” (translated by Judith Norman: “they want to gain power through Christianity”), which I think is a reference to the “will to power,” on the grounds that Nietzsche is playing on the similarity of “Wille” and “will.” Elsewhere, in an 1887 note, Nietzsche speaks of “des Willens zur Herrschaft,” (*KGW VIII* 2 11[140]) which one wouldn’t be too amiss in translating “the will to power” though it probably doesn’t refer to the concept and I haven’t included it. It is probably better translated as, “the will to rule/command” (or as R.J. Hollingdale translates, “the will to dominate” [*WP* 936]).

Evil, Nietzsche speaks of will to power as the desire to discharge one's strength, and specifically as a principle of life; he says that, "life itself is will to power"(BGE 13). In fact, will to power is an urge that pervades life. As Nietzsche writes in a note, "what every smallest part of a living organism wants, is an increment of power"(WLN 264; KGW VIII3 14[174]). In short, it is a compulsion common to all living things, to try to exercise and expand their power.

In Nietzsche's 1888 notes, he expands the scope of will to power so that it's not just a principle of life, but a physical principle, applying to all of physical objects. Nietzsche calls it "the innermost essence of being"(WLN 247; KGW VIII3 14[80]), and "the origin of motion"(WLN 251; KGW VIII3 14[152]). The reason he calls it a property of all physical matter, is that, "we cannot imagine any change that does not involve a will to power," and thus, "We do not know how to explain a change except as the encroachment of one power upon another power"(WP 689; VIII3 14[81]). Nietzsche asks, "Should we not be permitted to assume [the will to power] as a motive cause in chemistry, too?—and in the cosmic order"(ibid). Based on these notes, it seems the scope of the concept of the will to power expanded over time until, very late in his philosophical thought, he started to imagine it as the all-encompassing principle of the material world.

Its Role in Revaluation

The connection between the ideas of will to power and revaluation of all values is the best attested of any of the ideas mentioned in this chapter. Nietzsche makes numerous references in his notes, as well in as in the *Genealogy of Morals* (GM:III 27) to a book

project called “The Will to Power” which would be subtitled “Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values”(*KGW* VIII1 2[100], 5[75], VIII2 9[164], 11[411], 11[414], VIII3 14[78], 14[136], 14[156], 15[100], 16[86] and 18[17]). The title alone implies that perhaps the book would be using the concept of will to power as a means of revaluation or that he would be writing a book about will to power and that it would effect a revaluation of all values. That Nietzsche changed the title of the book in late 1888 to simply *The Revaluation of All Values*, suggests maybe that the concept of will to power was no longer meant to have such a central role, especially considering his two outlines for this book don’t explicitly mention will to power (*KGW* VIII3 19[8], 22[14]).

The basic way that the theory of the will to power would be used for revaluation seems to be that the creation of a system of values that more closely resembles our human nature would lead to the cultivation of humans that are stronger and healthier, since we are creatures compelled by will to power. The values that are being promoted at present are values of weakness and sterility. Life, according to the concept of will to power, is defined by the constant expansion of a living thing’s power, namely by conquest and domination of others (*BGE* 13, 36; *KGW* VIII1 2[108]). As Nietzsche says, “life itself is essentially a process of appropriating, injuring, overpowering the alien and the weaker, oppressing, being harsh, imposing your own form, incorporating, and at least, the very least, exploiting”(*BGE* 259). Thus, a system of values that is life-affirming would promote such values.

The idea that the will to power is meant as the ultimate basis of the revaluation of all values is probably the most common interpretation of the revaluation, dating back in the scholarship at least as far as Heidegger. The connection of values to life and the

connection of life to will to power led Heidegger to interpret Nietzsche as maintaining that values are determined by will to power. Particularly, the will to power ranks things in accordance with preservation and increase—that which tends to preserve and leads to increase is a thing of value, is value itself (“Nietzsche’s Word” pp. 170–71). Heidegger’s interpretation that the revaluation is meant to replace life-denying values with life-affirming values is a common interpretation³⁵ and seems quite clear in Nietzsche’s writing.

Another way that Nietzsche tries to undermine values is by showing their root or their origin. Values that have ignoble origins (that is, origins that would be considered ignoble by the established values) or are rooted in ignoble drives will be considered of less value when their roots or origins are exposed. In the particular case of the will to power, Nietzsche sees it as the basis all of our drives, including our drive to create morality. If it is the basis of all our drives, then the creation of the concepts of justice, equality, and morality are all driven by this will to power. This creates a contradiction, certainly in concepts like justice and equality, which seem antithetical to the ravenous will to power. It also undermines the value of these values, since it shows they have their basis in a motivation that is considered immoral, unjust, and antagonistic to equality. In a similar vein, Nietzsche once calls cruelty as the mother of unegoistic morality (*KGW* VIII1 8[7]).

The idea of the will to power is thus meant to undermine many key ideas within the traditional morality, such as ideas of selflessness, equality, and humility. Along with the other three concepts discussed in this chapter, as part of its role in revaluation, the

³⁵ For example, Schacht 350; Reginster “Nihilism” 65; Sleinis xiv.

concept of will to power would raise the value of other qualities in place of these, such as the values of egoism and strength.

In conclusion, the will to power, along with the other ideas of *amor fati*, eternal return, and the overman are ideas that clearly could be used by Nietzsche to undermine contemporary values. And Nietzsche does in fact use these on several occasions to attack contemporary values, both by undermining the value of those values and by showing internal contradictions in these values.

CONCLUSION

After surveying the details of Nietzsche's concept of the revaluation of all values, certain conclusions have been reached about this complex idea. For one, the idea evolved over the course of his career and reached its fruition primarily in his last full year of sanity. The idea came to be connected with several other key ideas of his, the eternal return, will to power, *amor fati*, and the overman. Nietzsche thought the historical epoch of revaluation was imminent and that he, along with other free spirits and immoralists like him, would be contributing to this event, as a necessary remedy to forestall the rise of nihilism. He thought that the values that it would lead to would be largely a revivification of ancient values, perhaps mixed with some new values, and he thought that his idea would impact the whole of society, though he may have been mostly directing his writing to higher individuals who he was calling upon to reevaluate their own values before they tried to transform the values of society.

In the end, however, we have to acknowledge that, in a certain sense, the revaluation of all values was an idea that Nietzsche didn't complete. The planned book, *The Revaluation of All Values*, which Nietzsche had devoted years and many notes towards planning and preparing for, was never completed, and certain key questions about the concept were probably lost to us in the absence of this book. To the best of our knowledge, this is the idea of revaluation that comes down to us, Nietzsche's last and greatest (albeit incomplete) intellectual achievement.

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Abbreviations for citations to Nietzsche's Works

Here is a list of all abbreviations used to cite Nietzsche's works, along with where they can be found in the bibliography.

A: "The Anti-Christ." *The Anti-Christ, Ecce homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*. 3-67

AOM: "Assorted Opinions and Maxims." *Human, All too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. 215-299.

BGE: *Beyond Good and Evil*.

BT: "The Birth of Tragedy." *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. 3-116.

CW: "The Case of Wagner." *The Anti-Christ, Ecce homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*. 230-262.

D: *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*.

EH: "Ecce Homo." *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*. 71-151.

GS: *The Gay Science*.

HAH: "Human, All too Human, volume I." *Human, All too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. 1-205

HC: "Homer's Contest." *Prefaces to Unwritten Works*. 81-92.

HL: "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life." *Untimely Meditations*. 59-123.

KGW: *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*.

LR: "Lectures on Rhetoric." *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*. 2-206.

"On the Origin of Language." *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*. 209-212.

NCW: "Nietzsche Contra Wagner." *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*. 263-282.

“Philosopher”: “The Philosopher: Reflections on the Struggled Between Art and Knowledge.” *Philosophy and truth*. 3-58.

PPP: *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*.

PTA: *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*.

SE: “Schopenhauer as Educator.” *Untimely Meditations*. 127-194.

TI: “Twilight of the Idols.” *The Anti-Christ, Ecce homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*. 155-229.

TL: “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense.” *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. 141-153.

WEN: *Writings from the Early Notebooks*.

WLN: *Writings from the Late Notebooks*

WP: *The Will to Power*.

WPh: “We Classicists.” *Unmodern Observations*. 321-387.

WS: “The Wanderer and his Shadow.” *Human, All too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. 301-395.

Z: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*.

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