

**ROUSSEAU AND NIETZSCHE: TOWARDS AN AESTHETIC
MORALITY**

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Towards an Aesthetic Morality

by Katrin Froese

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I link Rousseau's moral philosophy with Nietzsche's aestheticism through the concept of self creation. Rather than espousing a categorical moral system, these philosophers impute to human beings a responsibility not only for creating their own identity but for shaping the world of which they are a part. The activity of self creation is fuelled by the tension between the need to distance oneself from one's environment and the need to integrate oneself into it. According to Rousseau, these tendencies should always be reconciled to each other. Nietzsche, on the other hand, insists on vividly experiencing the contradictions between the two and fears that the kind of reconciliation advocated by Rousseau would diminish the intensity of both.

I argue that for Rousseau morality is a process by which human beings try to "replicate" the harmony of the pre-human state of nature, while at the same time recognizing that it can never be recaptured. I examine his account of the failure of bourgeois society as well as the solutions he proposes for catapulting human beings beyond it in order to realize his moral vision. Nietzsche, on the other hand, stresses the more chaotic aspects of nature, maintaining that individuals must alternate between establishing the boundaries that define the self, while also succumbing to forces which collapse them. This "artistic" approach would allow them to participate more fully in the flux and rhythm of life. He is extremely critical of the influence of Judeo-Christian religion because it

attempts to obstruct this process of becoming. Nietzsche insists that human beings must learn to accept their own limits and recognize that destruction and creation are interdependent.

Finally, I will argue that both Nietzsche and Rousseau spurn attempts to grasp the essence of reality, insisting that human beings are both created and creative beings. They extol reciprocal relationships both between individuals and between human beings and nature. Each person has a responsibility towards the realms beyond her "self" because she is both separated from and part of her "external" world.

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INTRODUCTION

Rousseau and Nietzsche are two thinkers who not only lived in different centuries, but who have been relegated to opposite poles of the political spectrum. Rousseau is often considered to be the father of the "collectivist" ideal which inspired some of the worst excesses of the French Revolution and brutally sacrificed the individual at the altar of an abstract general will.¹ Nietzsche's apparent anti-moral posture combined with the high premium he places on self overcoming is said to have provided the intellectual backbone for Nazism. He is accused of a radical individualism, which equates self overcoming with mastery and therefore easily slides into a brutal totalitarianism.² However, such analyses constitute a gross distortion of the thought of these writers, and ignore completely the paradoxes and the ironies which ripple through their works. Rousseau is neither an unrelenting collectivist, nor Nietzsche an unrepentant individualist. If their work has been subjected to these kinds of interpretations, it is due to the often trenchant language they use in order to jolt readers out of their complacency.

A study of Rousseau and Nietzsche proves to be fruitful because they stand among the most poignant voices of modernity, expressing both its most profound fears and its

¹see Peter Gay, 'Introduction,' *Basic Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1987), p. vii.

²An analysis which charts a direct path from Nietzsche to Nazism is that of J.P. Stern in *A Study of Nietzsche*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

highest hopes. Their criticisms of the pervasive conformity which characterizes their own era are still relevant today, when economic globalization has resulted in an increasing homogenization of culture. The schisms between the rich and the poor inveighed against by Rousseau and the cultural uniformity which angered Nietzsche have become even more pronounced at a time where no one escapes the clutches of the global market. At the same time, both Rousseau and Nietzsche point to the virtually unlimited potential that modernity offers because of its refusal to prescribe fixed individual and social roles, inviting individuals to remake the world as their own.

What makes both of these thinkers decisively modern is their propensity to place the "self" at the centre of their philosophical inquiry. Yet, in doing so they also throw into question many of the assumptions that accompany the term. Rather than painting a portrait of a self that is prior to the social order of which it is a part, they describe an individual that is constituted within natural, social and historical structures. In fact, as I will demonstrate, both thinkers point out that even our ability to experience ourselves as individuals is something that develops out of a social process. I cannot think of myself as an individual without being part of a social order that affords me the opportunity to compare myself to others like me. Furthermore, the tension between the customs any social order imposes and my "natural" desires creates a rift between the community and myself. Thus, my separation from the society is in part a response to the society's separation from nature.

The individual both separates herself from her environment, and integrates herself into it. These are processes which are interdependent rather than opposed. I cannot separate myself from something that I am not a part of, nor can I integrate myself into something which completely absorbs me. The tension between these two pulls on the self impels me to engage in a continuous process of self creation in which both my own boundaries and those of the world around me are reshaped on an ongoing basis. I am always at once both *creative* and *created*. I act because I am acted upon and I am acted upon because I act. Of course, this does not imply that I always see the world that I inhabit as a complete entity. The process of individuation and integration occurs at a number of different levels. I may interact with a particular society or an institution within it. I also interact with separate individuals. I engage with the "forces" of "nature", struggling against them or allowing myself to express them. Both the individuals and the "wholes" that I confront are created out of these interactions and in turn create me. While this may sound bewildering, it demonstrates that a myriad of processes form a self that is by no means identical over time. It is in the act of reshaping itself that it becomes what it is.

I will argue that this process of self creation forms the cornerstone of both Nietzsche's and Rousseau's philosophy. What is distinctively modern is not self creation itself, but the conscious participation in it. The identification of self with process rather than with social, cultural, familial, or natural roles is unique to modernity. Nevertheless,

Rousseau and Nietzsche choose different means by which the creative potential of human beings is to be expressed. According to Rousseau, self creation is a predominantly moral exercise while for Nietzsche, it is aesthetic. However, it is too simple to say that Nietzsche sacrifices morality for the sake of art, or that Rousseau sacrifices creativity to suit his moral purposes. If morality depends upon the individual's sense of responsibility for the world "beyond" herself, then both their approaches can be considered moral. If art demands a continuous reshaping and reinterpretation of the circumstances that underlie our existence, then both thinkers celebrate art. By contributing to the creation of the world of which we are a part, and allowing this same world to shape us, we recognize our responsibility to that which lies "beyond" our individual self. Those who inhabit the world with me are not only distinct from me, but make me who I am. I, in turn, participate in the creation of their identity.

The similarity between the approaches of Rousseau and Nietzsche should not blind us to their differences. The fact that Rousseau focuses on morality while Nietzsche focuses on art is not merely a disagreement over the terminology which is used to describe processes of self creation. Rather, it reflects a difference both with regard to the kinds of limits they are willing to impose on such activity, and the conditions which they think are most likely to foster an interactive relationship with "outside" worlds.³

According to Rousseau, ideally, the process of individuating myself should at the

³I use the term "outside" hesitantly because the interactive relationship I have been describing throws into question the notion of a world which is completely external to the self.

same time enable me to integrate myself. For example, I should distinguish myself from other members within a society so that I can contribute to the society rather than undermining it. My attempt to separate myself from nature through culture should provide me with a new means of integrating myself into it, rather than creating a rift between the two realms that is difficult to bridge. Conversely, a society should not squash the individual for the sake of internal unity, but create the conditions in which he can flourish. Individuation and integration should always be in balance.

Nietzsche, on the other hand, would object vociferously to efforts to achieve such a balance between individuation and integration. In his view, this would prevent us from experiencing each of these moments in all its intensity. According to Nietzsche, integration is a kind of disindividuation where we surrender the boundaries that separate us from the "primordial" forces of life. At this moment, we must be willing to forget our own subjectivity and simply allow ourselves to be carried along by these forces, wherever they may take us. Conversely, individuation is a process by which we establish serene illusions that allow us to seek refuge from the chaos of life. By constructing them, we try to avoid being sucked into the vortex of the disindividuating whirlwind. In order to enjoy each of these moments, we must deliberately block out the other, even though they are mutually constitutive. We must experience them as opposites in order to understand the relationship between them. Thus, Nietzsche advocates a movement between individuation and integration, rather than a constant compromise between them.

For Rousseau, self creation requires equality between men, for only those who are on equal terms can engage in the kind of reciprocal relations which would allow each to contribute to the development of others. In Rousseau's view it was inequality that prevented individuals from realizing their creative potential because conditions of domination and servitude cut each off from the possibility of fostering the other's development. A master cannot grow because he is concerned with suppressing his "inferior" and thus does not allow the slave to shape him. The slave's creativity is undermined because he is forced to conform to the dictates of the master. Nietzsche, on the other hand, asserts that the effort to prevent some individuals from exerting too much influence over others easily slides into a dangerous levelling which turns them all into clones of one another. Even so, Nietzsche's own position on equality is not as clear-cut as his anti-democratic tirades suggest. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, like Rousseau, he emphasizes the importance of relationships of reciprocity. However, for him, such reciprocity is only possible among extraordinary individuals who are willing to continually reshape themselves. Most people, he laments, require the comfort of rigidly prescribed roles.

Rousseau and Nietzsche and their interpreters

The similarity between Rousseau and Nietzsche has not received much treatment

in the secondary literature. I would argue that this is in part due to the reluctance to recognize the extent to which self creation, morality and art are intertwined in the works of both writers. In the case of Rousseau, the fact that the "self" is not prior to the "external" world, but rather emerges out of a process of interaction with it, is often overlooked. Interpreters of Rousseau such as Berman, assume that he focuses on the individual as the owner of a unique identity which must be allowed to come to the surface. Unequal social structures have forced individuals to don masks in order to survive, preventing each individual's "true self" from stepping forward. Thus, even though modern human beings are emancipated from traditional social roles, they are nevertheless "always driven from without."⁴ Because the distribution of power is always in flux, they are constantly assuming new roles.⁵ According to Berman, a democratic education would allow these suppressed selves to resurface.

Starobinski, like Berman, assumes that each individual has an inner essence that must be made transparent to others if an authentic society is to be formed. In Rousseau's ideal world, our relationship with others would not have to be mediated, and we could dispense with the veils and masks that we wear in order to be able to interact with others. Yet, he notes that this transparency is not necessarily compatible with equality. Starobinski bases much of his analysis on Rousseau's work *Julie: la Nouvelle Héloïse*, where the

⁴Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity*, (New York: Atheneum, 1970), p. 117.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 118.

images of veils and masks abound. He argues that Clarens represents the attempt to create a society based on transparent relations, but that this ultimately fails because these transparent beings do not do their own manual labour and use transparency to manipulate and control their servants.⁶

Conservative interpreters of Rousseau have been more sensitive to the role that both history and culture play in the constitution of the self. However, they assume that this presents Rousseau with a moral conundrum, for a constantly changing being cannot easily subscribe to the philosophy of the Good, which is necessarily absolute and eternal. Strauss assumes that Rousseau's historicism prevents him from positing a notion of the moral good and therefore he must settle for principles of political right which protect individuals against each other rather than providing them with shared goals.⁷ Bloom, on the other hand, argues that Rousseau does achieve a reconciliation between history and morality and bases his analysis largely on Rousseau's treatise, *Emile*.⁸ Emile's cultural development is manipulated in such a way that he appears to "discover" morality for himself, and therefore it is made compatible with self creation. For Bloom, this constitutes a kind of democratization of the Good, which is recognized by philosophers

⁶ Jean Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 97.

⁷see Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1953) and 'Three Waves of Modernity,' *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays by Leo Strauss*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989).

⁸see Allan Bloom, 'Emile,' *Giants and Dwarfs*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990).

such as Rousseau but must be *made* accessible to the masses. Hence, this democracy depends upon extraordinary figures like Rousseau, who are able to steer human beings in the right direction but convince them that they are making the discovery on their own.

Perhaps it is Horowitz's reading of Rousseau which opens up the possibility for a morality which is not simply reconciled with self creation, but rather is based upon it.⁹ Horowitz's analysis stresses that human nature itself is historical and unfolds only as part of a social process. He argues that Rousseau is opposed to the theorists of natural law who maintain that universal reason constitutes the essence of human nature. Horowitz recognizes that for Rousseau, reason too is historical. Nature and artifice cannot be opposed; even our biology changes as a result of cultural developments. Nevertheless, Horowitz claims that Rousseau imagines a world of nature in which we are stripped of our social attributes. In such a world there would be a complete equilibrium between our needs and the capacities to fulfil them. This harmonious world, while fictitious, also is part of each individual's subconscious, for it is a condition very reminiscent of childhood. Culture thus represents the attempt to reproduce at a social level the equilibrium that existed in the state of nature.¹⁰ I will build upon this analysis to argue that morality is the conscious attempt to reproduce the conditions of the equilibrium which prevailed in the state of

⁹see Asher Horowitz, *Rousseau, Nature and History*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

¹⁰I will discuss the harmony that Rousseau believed existed in the state of nature in Chapter One.

nature while realizing that this equilibrium is lost to us forever. A process of ongoing striving is thus set in motion.

Nietzsche interpreters have been even more resistant to the idea that self creation and art imply a sense of moral responsibility. A commentator such as Stern¹¹ turns a blind eye to the notion of self creation itself, simply equating it with domination and mastery. He sees Nietzsche as the incarnation of evil, who preaches self aggrandizement regardless of the cost. Because he strips us of all moral grounding, no limits are imposed upon human behaviour and thus the actions of a Hitler whose goal was world domination would be considered more exemplary than the actions of a Martin Luther King who "merely" sought reconciliation between racial groups.

Kaufmann, in an effort to defend Nietzsche against such charges of evil, turns him into a rational moralist for whom self overcoming is exemplified by the ability to control and tame one's own passions. He does not deny that Nietzsche celebrates the brutal domination which arouses the ire of Stern and Zeitlin. However, he insists that this kind of domination is a precursor to a more sophisticated form of self control. The ability to force others to obey eventually gives way to the ability to make oneself obey rational and moral imperatives. Kaufmann equates overcoming with self overcoming, which in his view is only meaningful "when the self is analyzed into two forces, such as reason and the

¹¹see J.P. Stern, *A Study of Nietzsche*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1979.

inclinations."¹² Thus, he attributes to Nietzsche a dichotomy between reason and the passions which Nietzsche himself would object to.

More recently, there has been a flurry of post-modern interpretations which draw attention to the fact that the self does not exist prior to its interactions with "other" forces. There is no "originary identity" or "primary foundation" that can be unearthed.¹³ Instead we consist of a plurality of forces and instincts which struggle among each other for a position of priority. The idea of the unified self is a pure fiction. However, such an analysis glosses over the fact that this fiction is very necessary to Nietzsche and that while we deconstruct boundaries, we do so partly in order to be able to reestablish them. We cannot simply revel in a condition of perpetual boundarylessness, for then we could never feel at home in our world. Deleuze, for example, places such a high premium on change and activity, that he downplays the notion that we change not only for change's sake, but in order to make ourselves belong to the world that we inhabit. He distinguishes between active forces, which release energy spontaneously, and reactive forces, which merely adapt themselves to the outside world in order to survive. While he acknowledges that the latter can never be eliminated, he claims that Nietzsche encourages us to privilege active forces over reactive ones. In his view, the eternal return is a metaphor used to

¹²Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist and Antichrist*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 215.

¹³Michel Haar, 'Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language,' *The New Nietzsche*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977), p. 7

weed out reactive forces.¹⁴

Warren also offers what he calls a "postmodern" account of Nietzsche, but concentrates more on the historical processes which are responsible for the constitution of the self. His focus on history sets him apart from other postmodern interpreters, because he recognizes that present stimuli are invested with historical and cultural meanings in relation to which we try to position ourselves. Human beings strive to "experience themselves as agents, as the causes of effects, and therefore as beings who determine their own futures."¹⁵ This means that we must continuously reinterpret our past in order to establish continuity in our lives. We thus become responsible for both our past and our future. In order to experience ourselves as agents, it is necessary that we organize our activity and lend it a sense of direction even if we may change course at some point in the future. Even this demands a reorganization of the past. We cannot simply revel in the play of difference, or engage in a process of continuous deconstruction because this would leave us perpetually alienated. If Deleuze underemphasizes the importance of ordering our environment, Warren's analysis overlooks what Nietzsche refers to as the Dionysian desire to collapse the boundaries that separate ourselves from the world. In order to experience ourselves as subjects who can effectively organize our experiences, we must also be willing to relinquish our own subjectivity and imbibe the pulse of life. To know what it

¹⁴Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la Philosophie*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), p.81.

¹⁵Mark Warren, *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1988), p. 9

means to be a subject, we must also be willing to "surrender" our subjectivity.

The tendency in much of the secondary literature to ignore the interdependence between creativity and morality can perhaps account for the fact that there are not more comparative studies of the two thinkers. Rousseau is often considered a moralist who must somehow reconcile his moralism with the historical nature of humanity, while Nietzsche's praise of creativity allegedly sets him in opposition to morality. Of course, Nietzsche's own anti-moral explosions seem to substantiate the notion that he is an immoralist. However, I would argue that what he objects to is an inflexible morality which posits absolutes that remain unchanged through the course of time and therefore act as impediments to the process of becoming.

Nietzsche assumed that Rousseau was such a rigid moralist who resented the movement of history and time. He repeatedly purported to be writing "against Rousseau"(WP 99). I will not devote much attention to Nietzsche's critique of Rousseau because it reflects only a very superficial understanding of his predecessor's works. Nietzsche inveighs against his "opponent" for clinging to the kinds of moral absolutes which stymie human creativity. He claims that Rousseau exhorts us to return to the "natural goodness" of the state of nature, which we have buried under the layers of a corrupt and polluted civilization: "*Rousseau*: the rule based on feeling; nature as the source of justice; man perfects himself to the extent to which he approaches nature..he *needed* God in order to be able to cast a curse upon society and civilization; everything

had to be good in itself because God had created it; *only man has corrupted men*"(WP 100). For Nietzsche, this was an expression of profound resentment against time and the process of human history. He objects vociferously to the alleged polarity Rousseau establishes between a "natural goodness" and an "evil civilization"(WP 765). In his view this is an example of the kind of hubris that "invites the individual to play the judge of everything and everyone"(WP 765) and forces people to conform to a single standard which is established "against everything temporal and conditioned"(WP 765). Nietzsche assumes that the kind of thinking advanced by Rousseau is directly responsible for the excesses of the French revolution, where the desire for egalitarianism was achieved through murder and violence.

There is no doubt that Nietzsche greatly oversimplifies Rousseau's account of history. Rousseau, like Nietzsche, recognizes that there is no turning back to the state of nature and maintains that morality too is historical, demanding a continuous readaptation to the environment in an effort to recreate an equilibrium that constantly eludes us. Furthermore, Nietzsche overlooks the fact that political reform for Rousseau must take into account the mores and customs of the existing society and cannot simply impose abstract rules and regulations.

Ansell-Pearson is the first to engage in an extensive comparison of the two thinkers, identifying in their works a common approach to history. He recognizes that Nietzsche's attacks on Rousseau are superficial and crude. Yet, like Nietzsche, he

identifies in Rousseau a resentment against the very historical processes which Rousseau himself recognizes as inevitable: "Man's humanity is the result of a historical process, but the product of this process fills Rousseau with both revulsion and despair. Rousseau may have written the second discourse in order to arouse modern men out of their complacency and stir them to action; but equally, the effect of this reading and teaching could be to fill men with loathing and contempt for humanity, leading them to engage in a bloody politics of revenge and resentment."¹⁶ Ansell-Pearson considers it absurd that the state of nature, which is pre-human, should be used as a "norm for judging humanity."¹⁷ However, he ignores the fact that for Rousseau this pre-historical moment is the motor of history which provides us with an equilibrium that we can strive to reproduce but will never realize. Rousseau does bemoan the fact that the harmony within the state of nature is lost to us forever, but he also celebrates this loss, since it ensures that we will always continue the process of self perfection. Morality is not antithetical to history but emerges out of a historical process.

A note on method

I have chosen to organize this study by offering separate accounts of Rousseau and

¹⁶Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche contra Rousseau*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 77.

¹⁷*Ibid*, p. 76.

Nietzsche and weaving their work together in my final chapter. I realize that such an approach risks leaving the reader unclear as to the connection between the two thinkers until the end, but I believe that my comparison will be more effective once I am able to relate their works to each other as a whole. I have found that the complexity of their arguments can be lost by engaging in a constant interplay between them. Thus, I will reserve this exchange for the end when the reader is familiar with all the arguments on which I base my comparison. In a previous draft, I did try to use thematic categories to explore each thinker's position on a certain topic, but found this to be ineffective because the same categories did not apply equally well to both thinkers and forced me to gloss over many of the nuances for the sake of such a structure.

The major works by Rousseau which I will focus on are: *A Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, *On the Social Contract*, and *Emile*. My discussion of Nietzsche will concentrate on *The Birth of Tragedy*, *The Will to Power*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. While I shall refer occasionally to other works, these are the body of writings which I have found to deal most directly with the themes of self creation, morality and art.

I will begin in Chapter One by providing an account of the morally neutral state of nature around which Rousseau develops his ideas of morality. It is characterized by an equilibrium between the needs of the proto-human and its capacity to fulfill them. I will trace the social process of its separation from nature, underlining the central role played

by language and labour. I will argue that morality is a means by which we try to replicate the equilibrium that prevailed in the state of nature at a social level. Then, I will examine Rousseau's depiction of the Golden Age where human beings came closest to preserving such an equilibrium.

In Chapter Two I will examine Rousseau's critique of bourgeois society, arguing that the birth of property set in motion a process whereby human beings increasingly distanced themselves from the community at large. This erosion of the community, coupled with a division of labour, resulted in a widespread inequality separating the propertied from the propertyless. Because of this inequality, the quest for property becomes all consuming since people try to avoid servitude. Individuals find it impossible to integrate themselves into a social order that no longer exists because relationships between individuals are predicated on opposition. Furthermore, the fear of being undermined by other individuals also prevents them from individuating themselves, since this could put them at a competitive disadvantage. Consequently individuals are neither at home within the society nor in their own skin.

In Chapter Three the solution which is offered by Rousseau to catapult human beings beyond the impasse of bourgeois society will be discussed. Despite Rousseau's distaste for bourgeois society, he recognizes that it prevents human beings from taking the community for granted. This meant that if individuals were to reintegrate themselves into a public order, they would have to do so deliberately and consciously. Each individual

would have to participate in the formation of the general will which would legislate for the entire community. No one person would be subordinate to another, and in this way Rousseau hopes to ensure that the individual is neither subsumed by the community, nor opposed to it. The kind of balance that existed in the Golden Age would be recreated consciously. I will argue that the tension between the individual's need to distance himself from the community, and the desire to integrate himself, is both a threat to the community and keeps it alive. Yet, at the same time, Rousseau acknowledges that the task of reconstructing a community out of the ashes of bourgeois society is a difficult one, since individuals who are not already part of the community would have difficulty in legislating as members of it. Thus he is forced to resort to an extraordinary figure such as the Legislator who will somehow generate community spirit.

Chapter Four deals with the sequel to the *Social Contract*, *Emile*. I suggest that in the absence of a balanced community, Rousseau insists that we must return to nature in order to find the equilibrium that is to be recreated at the social level. Emile develops cultural norms that always at the same time reintegrate him into the natural world and thus he becomes aware of the interconnection between the two realms. Yet, Emile is not ready for the community until he has experienced love. Through love he will learn not only to live in harmony with another being, but to experience another being as part of himself. In order for this relationship to strengthen rather than erode social bonds, public responsibility must be instilled in him through his beloved, Sophie, who makes Emile's

duty a condition of her love. Yet, I will argue that because the norms which she inculcates in Emile are simply imposed on her, the kind of community that they help to build can only be a very fragile one.

With Chapter Five I begin the section on Nietzsche starting with one of his earlier works, *The Birth of Tragedy*. In fact, I will use the *Birth of Tragedy* to help orient my entire discussion of Nietzsche. It is here that Nietzsche begins to develop the notion of life as a process of constant change and becoming and insists that our conceptions of reality are interpretations that do not capture the reality, but rather emerge out of our interaction with it. Not only can we never grasp life, but eventually we are forever cut off from it in death. He sees art as a means by which life can be affirmed in spite of the suffering involved. He hails Greek tragedy for recognizing both the Apollonian and Dionysian aspects of our existence. I will examine the process of integration and individuation which are symbolized by these Greek gods, looking at their opposition and also their mutually constitutive nature.

Chapter Six examines Nietzsche's concept of the will to power which becomes a metaphor for the process by which the self is constituted. He demonstrates the interconnection between bodily and mental drives, protesting against the separation of these aspects of our being. In the second part of the chapter, I examine the master-slave dialectic which portrays the kinds of social processes which in Nietzsche's view account for the birth of consciousness and morality. I interpret the dialectic not only as a political

relationship, but as descriptive of a process by which human beings extricate themselves from nature. Finally, I examine Nietzsche's objection to the absolutization of culture which he argues is endemic to morality. A rigid morality suffocates life and cuts us off from the will to power both by preventing us from creating new interpretations and by denigrating the sensual aspect of our existence.

In Chapter Seven, I discuss the "alternative" to morality which Nietzsche presents in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, focusing on the central concepts of the *Übermensch*, the eternal recurrence and redemption. Through these symbols, I argue that Zarathustra exhorts us to accept our finitude and to recognize that the interactions of finite beings create the eternal rhythm of life. I then criticize some of Nietzsche's overt political views by arguing that they seem to contradict the lessons learned by Zarathustra.

In Chapter Eight, I argue that Nietzsche's positions regarding the interdependence between nature and culture, integration and individuation force him to reconceptualize the role of woman. I use Nietzsche's master-slave dialectic to provide an account for the resentment against woman, which I argue has prompted men to drive a wedge between nature and culture. A similar resentment poisons the thought of Nietzsche, who overestimates rather than underestimates women's powers and thus excludes them out of fear. In so doing, I argue that he drives the same wedge between nature and culture that he had railed against.

Finally, in Chapter Nine, I bring Nietzsche and Rousseau together by pointing out

that Nietzsche's approaches to aesthetics and Rousseau's approaches to morality are very similar. Based on these similarities, I suggest that their philosophies provide a way of recognizing the importance of aesthetics to morality and that of morality to aesthetics. Nevertheless, I maintain that the fact that they choose different mediums for engaging in self creation is significant. While art and morality cannot be disentangled, they also should not be reduced to one another, since a certain degree of tension must necessarily exist between them.

PART I ROUSSEAU

CHAPTER ONE: ROUSSEAU'S MORAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Rousseau's proto-human

Rousseau burst onto the European scene, offering a scathing criticism of the institutions and psychology that underpinned bourgeois society. He condemned a hypostatization of human nature which held that greed, egoism, insecurity, power-mongering, and deception were indelible features of the human psyche. Using the "state of nature", he took it upon himself to prove to his readers that their conceptions were misguided. Rather than holding up a purely hypothetical model, he was the first thinker to take the state of nature seriously and examine our pre-social origins. Instead of simply imagining his contemporaries deprived of the control of social institutions, he maintained that prior to the existence of society, humans were fundamentally different in their psychological make-up. Rousseau was the first son of the Enlightenment who refused to take the origins of the self for granted and prevails upon his readers to keep these beginnings in mind when chiselling out an identity for themselves.

Leo Strauss, one of the foremost conservative interpreters of Rousseau, underlines the important role that historical process plays in his thought. Rousseau's sweeping criticism of modern institutions elicits the admiration of Strauss who points out that he

"protested in the name of virtue, of the genuine, non-utilitarian virtue of the classical republics against the degrading and enervating doctrines of his predecessors."¹ However, Strauss implies that Rousseau is forced to undermine his own moral project because he cannot determine the highest ends of human beings while upholding the notion that human nature is infinitely malleable: "man's nature is wholly insufficient to give him guidance."² Horowitz provides us with a way of overcoming the conundrum that Strauss has identified. Like Strauss, he avers that Rousseau challenges preconceptions of a static human nature, suggesting instead that it undergoes constant evolution.³ However, unlike Strauss, he suggests that the cultural remaking of the self is always at the same time a return to and a recreation of nature, thereby drawing attention to the mutually constitutive relationship between the two realms.⁴ Strauss on the other hand, maintains that history is the process by which human beings extricate themselves from nature. Thus, he upholds the dualism which had divided nature from culture and history and is unable to find in Rousseau a secure foundation for the moral order. For Strauss, freedom and morality

¹Leo Strauss, 'Three Waves of Modernity,' in *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), p. 89.

²*Ibid.*, p. 90.

³Asher Horowitz, *Rousseau, Nature and History*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 52.

⁴ Asher Horowitz, *Rousseau, Nature and History*, p. 60-61. Horowitz points out that biological and cultural evolution are intertwined, since humans "evolve biologically through the development of a cultural existence." At the same time he maintains that cultural development is dependent upon certain biological conditions.

become too difficult to reconcile.

The dialectical relationship between nature and culture which Horowitz's analysis elucidates will enable us to make the link between freedom and morality that Strauss believed to be so tenuous in the thought of Rousseau. In fact, I will argue that Rousseau's investigation of the process of human "self-making" itself becomes a moral imperative. Secondly, I will maintain that it is the pre-human "natural" self that becomes the basis for a new morality by providing us with a goal and a direction for our striving. Cullen, another conservative interpreter of Rousseau also makes the claim that the foundation for Rousseau's moral system was to be found in the state of nature. However, for Cullen, freedom in the state of nature consists primarily in the absence of interference by others and is thus negatively defined.⁵ For this reason he asserts that Rousseau's political order tries to establish a dynamic whereby the influence of others is minimized and we approximate as much as possible the "pure" independence in the state of nature. He ignores the importance in the state of nature of being integrated with one's surroundings.

In order to be moral we must acknowledge that we can never return to the state of nature while at the same time imitating it. Our freedom is thus negative as well as

⁵"Natural freedom is a negative condition of independence characterized by an equilibrium of power and desire. Freedom depends on a carefully structured environment, for which the pure state of nature constitutes the paradigm. ..Freedom consists in avoiding the domination and even the assistance, of others, and natural man is insulated from other wills, be they benevolent or hostile. His freedom is therefore best construed as negative freedom." Daniel E. Cullen, *Freedom in Rousseau's Political Philosophy*, (De Kalb, Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), p. 8.

positive, because our inability to return to our origins enables us to continue striving. Morality is not a condition but rather a process. Burgelin aptly characterizes the ambiguity of a process whereby we are asked to return to nature, but in doing so cannot help but stray from it. He points out that it is impossible to follow nature, but also impossible to divorce ourselves from it.⁶ It is this relationship which for Burgelin constitutes a kind of Rousseauian metaphysics. Our freedom is given to us by nature in order to demonstrate nature's necessity.

Thus, Rousseau is no moral relativist, and he aims to encourage a particular kind of human remaking. Rousseau's vision may seem paradoxical, since it orients social behaviour according to a pre-human and pre-social condition which can never be returned to. Yet, the impossibility of the return makes morality possible since we have to continue to reintegrate ourselves into our existing environment. Each time we do this, we create new tensions which must be resolved and so this process of integration is an ongoing one.

I will begin my account of Rousseau's state of nature by briefly differentiating it from that of his predecessor, Hobbes, in order to underline the novelty of his approach. Ansell-Pearson notes that Hobbes's depiction of human behaviour as "naturally wicked" would "pose a major challenge to Rousseau's belief in man's natural goodness."⁷ It is

⁶Pierre Burgelin, *La Philosophie de l'Existence de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952), p. 212.

⁷Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche contra Rousseau*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.56.

perhaps more accurate to refer to Hobbes state of nature as morally neutral rather than wicked. Hobbes professes to strip human beings of all their moral and cultural pretensions and expose a selfish power hungry animal with insatiable appetites and drives. If unchecked by a coercive apparatus, Hobbes claims that our ceaseless quest for power over others would eventuate in a state of war of all against all. For Hobbes, human beings are not naturally social, but are motivated primarily by self preservation: "Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and such a warre, as is of every man, against every man."⁸ Eventually, we come to the rational realization that the endless pursuit of power is counter-productive and that a sovereign power is the sole means of providing peace and security. The most basic law of nature impels us to seek peace and do unto others as "we would be done to"⁹, a law which must be buttressed by instruments of enforcement. It is thus meaningless in a state of nature and only has clout within the political order where coercive tactics are used to maintain peace. Laws can only seem natural in an unnatural setting. For Hobbes, morality is a convention that cannot be rooted in the nature of humanity.

While Rousseau, like Hobbes, looks to humanity's pre-moral state to discover the basis of morality, he does so in the hopes of grounding morality in nature itself. He goes

⁸Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), ch. 13.

⁹*Ibid.*, ch 14.

further than Hobbes does by exposing a self that is stripped of all social influences, including the egoism which Hobbes insisted was intrinsic to human nature. Rousseau's proto-human is therefore more neutral than that of Hobbes. He examines what Dent refers to as the "self in isolation."¹⁰ Dent insists that Rousseau is stripping human beings of their social characteristics, not because the unsocial man is ideal, but because he wants to make us aware of the pernicious effects of socialization. By depicting a human being that is not subject to the influence of domineering wills, Rousseau wishes to provide a basis for expunging the social toxins that lead to the incessant grasping for power described by Hobbes. According to Dent, "the study of man alone can only ever be *part* of the study of the total constitution and expression of what is 'natural' in man."¹¹

The fact that Dent concentrates his analysis on the psychological and moral implications of Rousseau's theory is significant for he maintains that politics is judged not on its own terms but rather according to the impact it has on individual experience. He insists that this natural "substratum" in human beings persists underneath all the social layers that we have superimposed on ourselves throughout the course of history. Thus, I would argue that for Rousseau, the history of human beings is embedded in each individual's psyche.

¹⁰N.J.H. Dent, *Rousseau: An Introduction to his Psychological, Political and Social Theory*, (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 88

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

Rousseau contrasts the contentment of natural man with the tormented soul of "civilized" man, indicating that for Rousseau, morality and happiness are closely intertwined. In fact, morality can be interpreted as the attempt to reinstitute the harmony of the proto-human. I will examine the tortured soul of the bourgeois in the next chapter. For now, I will concentrate on Rousseau's proto-human and the state of nature. The ambiguity surrounding the state of nature, which is presented as both imagined and real, is deliberate. Since the boundaries that encompass the self undergo constant modification, it is impossible for Rousseau to pinpoint the precise moment of human origins. He is delineating a period in time which precedes our historical memory and thus can only sketch out its features by abstracting from traits that are the products of our social development such as the capacity for language, emotion and reason. Although partially fictitious, such an account "provides a means of judging the present condition."¹² However, the inability to project a truly "objective image" of this creature furnishes Rousseau with the flexibility he needs to sculpt a figure that suits his own purposes. The story of our origins that Rousseau recounts is sketched out most fully in his work *A Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*. The panacea for the ailments of modernity are to be found by reflecting on the past: "Dissatisfied with your present state for reasons that portend even greater grounds for dissatisfaction for your unhappy posterity, perhaps you

¹²Ronald Grimsley, *The Philosophy of Rousseau*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 30.

would like to be able to go backwards in time. This feeling should be a hymn in praise of your first ancestors, the criticism of your contemporaries, and the dread of those who have the unhappiness of living after you"(DOI 39). The journey through time is to provide the impetus for creating the future, since it brings us to the awareness that our present misery is neither an indelible nor inevitable feature of our existence.

The proto-human represents an undifferentiated relationship to our surroundings, reminiscent of childhood, that we aspire to return to, albeit at a different level. Rousseau begins his story with the image of a self bereft of boundaries, stripping it of "components and structures that involve response to the feelings and attitudes of other people."¹³ He then traces the trajectory of a being that continually reconstitutes itself by setting up new boundaries while at the same time aiming for a return to the "boundarylessness" that is etched into its psychological memory: "Nature is a type of substratum that already exists but may not be known."¹⁴ Morality in Rousseau becomes a socially and culturally mediated attempt to recapture the harmonious existence of the proto-human. It is the desire to reexperience the harmony of the proto-human that impels Rousseau to refer to this creature's natural goodness. Nature and morality are not opposed in his view but are inextricably intertwined. By reflecting on and experiencing the harmony of the natural world, we can learn to recreate and imitate such harmony in the social world. It is the

¹³N.J.H. Dent, *Rousseau: An Introduction to his Psychological, Political and Social Theory*, p. 91.

¹⁴Ronald Grimsley, *The Philosophy of Rousseau*, p. 32.

cultural recreation of this natural harmony that accounts for man's goodness. "Natural goodness" becomes the basis for social goodness. Leo Strauss claims that "man is by nature good because he is by nature that subhuman being which is capable of becoming either good or bad. There is no natural constitution of man to speak of: everything specifically human is acquired or ultimately depends on artifice or convention. Man is by nature almost infinitely perfectible."¹⁵ While this aptly characterizes the pre-moral nature of the proto-human, it does not adequately explain why Rousseau goes to such length to emphasize the natural goodness of the proto-human. Rousseau is able to conceptualize "natural man" in this way as a result of having experienced the alienation and divisions confronting a more "civilized" humanity. A burgeoning unhappiness with the present condition induces him to reflect upon human origins in order not only to identify the root causes of this dissatisfaction but also to offer a means of transcending it.

The proto-human that Rousseau sketches is a thought experiment that strips away all social influences in order to conjure up a condition of complete non-differentiation. Because these creatures are not differentiated from each other, they cannot have anything in common.¹⁶ There is no need to unite with others who are exactly alike. The pre-human animal with which Rousseau begins his story is completely immersed in nature and

¹⁵Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 271.

¹⁶Tracy Strong, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Politics of the Ordinary*, (London: Sage Publications, 1994), p. 43.

governed primarily by instinct. Due to an equilibrium between its needs and its capacities to fulfil them(DOI: 40) it enjoys a harmony that is unparalleled in civilized life. It feels neither integrated, nor separated, it simply is. While Rousseau on the one hand is envious of this creature's ignorance of its own limitations, he also realizes that its naïveté is the source of profound limitation. It enjoyed a sense of immediacy, unable to reflect on either its shortcomings or its potential and thus had no need to transform itself. It is this sense of satisfaction and complete integration, rather than its ignorance that is the object of Rousseau's longing. He wants to find a way of returning to the contentment of the proto-human while at the same time enhancing humanity's capacity for perfecting itself. The irony is that the proto-human's "happiness" was due to the fact that it was unnecessary for it to perfect itself. Our quest for the self is at the same time a quest for the loss of a self which separates us from our surroundings.

The continuous process of self transformation, which Rousseau refers to as perfectibility, is spurred on by these dichotomous goals. Only when we become cognizant of our limitations, can we strive to surpass them. This quest is incessant, since we continuously erect new barriers in the effort to dismantle existing ones. A nostalgia for our prehuman innocence acts us a constant catalyst for the process of self creation. Rousseau reconceptualizes the Christian myth of the fall, implying that it may be the endeavour to recapture our innocence that causes us to tumble. The fact that we can recognize such innocence means that we will never be able to reclaim it.

Rousseau uses the term, "*amour-de-soi*" , to refer to the blissful state of the proto-human. Although this is often translated as self-love, I prefer to refer to it as a love of existence, for the pre-human animal has not yet differentiated itself from its surroundings: "His soul, agitated by nothing, is given over to the single feeling of his own present existence, without any idea of the future, however near it may be, and his projects, as limited as his views hardly extend to the end of the day"(DOI: 46). Because it lives a life of immediacy, it does not experience the frustration of having its efforts thwarted. It instinctively knows that it must preserve itself, without yet possessing the concept of a "self" whose survival it is trying to secure.

However, the absence of perceived limitation is due to the fact that the desires of the proto-human are limited and equivalent to its needs, giving it no cause for unhappiness and also no basis for recognizing his self. Here Rousseau is making a tacit link between moderation and happiness, recognizing that freedom and happiness are not always compatible. In order to imitate this blissful state, our desires have to be curtailed. It is important to recognize that Rousseau's portrait of proto-human bliss is also *negative* comment on the chaotic scene he observes in bourgeois society where desires exceed both needs and abilities to satiate them: "The extreme inequality in our lifestyle: excessive idleness among some, excessive labour among others.. are the fatal proofs that most of our ills are of our own making, and that we could have avoided nearly all of them by preserving the simple, regular, and solitary lifestyle prescribed to us by nature"(DOI 42).

The proto-human "individual" does not revel in the harmony it enjoys, since it is not yet *conscious* of it, but at the same time, it is not plagued with the dissatisfaction that infests the souls of modern human beings.

Nevertheless, this solitary creature is the most poorly equipped among animals, for deprived of physical agility and strength, it must find in nature the tools and resources needed for her survival: "Men, dispersed among the animals, observe and imitate their industry"(DOI 41). In this pre-social phase, freedom consists in an "undetermined response to impulses."¹⁷ Horowitz explains Rousseau's distinction, differentiating between the 'open' instincts of humans which involve a degree of learning and the closed instincts of animals "where learning plays no part in development."¹⁸ Nature's "neglect" is responsible for freedom, the hallmark of humanity itself. Our shortfalls force upon us an independence from nature that other animals do not share, but in these incipient stages, we are not yet attuned to this fact. As long as our needs are satisfied, there is no reason to be conscious of either an opposition or schism distancing humans from their natural roots.

Thus, Rousseau's thought marks a radical departure from Hobbes and Locke. The truly atomic human being, in Rousseau's view, is not fearful of others but oblivious to them. Since it has been granted the capacity for attaining what he needs, there is no need for the eruption of a "war of each against all.": "His desires do not go beyond his physical

¹⁷Richard Noble, *Language, Subjectivity and Freedom in Rousseau's Moral Philosophy*, (London: Garland Publishing Inc, 1991), p. 71.

¹⁸Asher Horowitz, *Rousseau, Nature and History*, p. 69.

needs. The only goods he knows in the universe are nourishment, a woman and rest; the only evils he fears are pain and hunger. I say pain and not death because an animal will never know what it is to die; and knowledge of death and its terrors is one of the first acquisitions that man made in withdrawing from the animal condition"(DOI 47). Here Rousseau repudiates one of the central tenets of Hobbes's theory, which claims that the avoidance of death is at the forefront of our concerns. The preoccupation with death requires an imagination which projects an image of the future, going beyond the immediacy of the proto-human. The desires of this primitive human being remain static, and it modifies its actions in order to satisfy them. The action leaves no lasting imprint on its psychological constitution and it is its "free agency and not his understanding that separates man from beast."¹⁹ Because the adoption of new skills by this pre-human animal do not effect changes in its psychic make-up, this is also an era which is pre-historical. Consciousness is a prerequisite of history. In this pre-conscious stage the proto-human is unconsciously rather than consciously circumventing its limitations since it is not yet cognizant of them.

The dawn of self consciousness: tools and language

Like Hegel, Rousseau insists that the movement to self consciousness requires a

¹⁹Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, p. 265.

process of interpenetration between one's self and one's surroundings.²⁰ The capacity for abstraction which propels rational thought develops out of a social interaction that emerges in tandem with the invention of tools and language. According to Rousseau, human beings were *forced* into closer contact by natural calamities and rapid population expansion. Threats to survival necessitate increased cooperation(DOI: 47). Social behaviour emerges as a means of *adapting to* a less congenial natural environment. The development of tools and the need to pool resources in order to hunt marks the genesis of primitive society. By coordinating such activities, human beings begin to assume an active rather than a reactive posture towards nature. Anticipating Marx, Rousseau suggests that the process of labour sets the stage for self consciousness, since it is a process of self objectification in which permanent changes are made to the environment. Traces of one's own activity are carved into the environment, furnishing human beings with the materials necessary for self reflection. Starobinski suggests that the active confrontation with inert matter stirs the awareness within the proto-human that he is separate from objects he produces and that this accounts for the prominence of instrumental relationships.²¹ It is true that by acting *on* something, the awareness of a subject-object relationships is born. One witnesses one's

²⁰see G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1967). Hegel traces the dialectic of consciousness, arguing that our awareness of objects is always selective. Immediate consciousness does not constitute knowing, since our knowledge of objects is always mediated through concepts.

²¹Jean Starobinski, 'Essays on Rousseau,' in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, (Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 296.

own agency, and the product that is created is merely the outcome of activity. The material is passive, while I am active. Yet, at the same time, Starobinski underestimates the extent to which labour at this stage is a social process, wherein people interact with each other to create the tools that are at their disposal. Thus, subject-object relationships are also always at the same time subject-subject relationships. It is the interdependence between subject-object and subject-subject relationships that distinguishes Rousseau's account of labour from that of Locke who maintains that in the state of nature, labour is individual and that property is therefore also individual. In this stage of human development there is no reason to assume that human relationships are necessarily instrumental. Activity marks the beginning of the process of self-differentiation but at the same time asserts our links with others. Integration and separation are not yet divided in the manner that Starobinski suggests. Thus, like Marx, Rousseau insists that it is creative activity, rather than rational thought processes that make possible the first experiences of selfhood: "Labour, is in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates and controls the material reactions between himself and Nature. He opposes himself to Nature as one of her own forces... By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature."²² The opposition against nature is nevertheless only affirmed within the community.

²²Karl Marx, *Capital* in *The Marx Engels Reader*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company: 1978), p. 344.

Rousseau's emphasis on the importance of labour implies that our "humanity" partly inheres in the ability to maintain a distance from nature. We are human insofar as we are *not* as tightly bound to nature: "In any animal I see nothing but an ingenious machine to which nature has given senses in order for it to renew its strength and to protect it to a certain point from all that tends to destroy or disturb it. I am aware of precisely the same thing in the human machine, with the difference that nature alone does everything in the operations of an animal, whereas man contributes as a free agent, to his own operations. The former chooses or rejects by instinct and the later by an act of freedom. Hence an animal cannot deviate from the rule that is prescribed to it, even if it would be advantageous to do so, while man deviates from it, often to his own detriment"(DOI 44). Culture is thus both a means of adapting to nature, and a means of distancing ourselves from it. While culture grows out of nature, it also develops as a reaction against nature, interposing itself between ourselves and the natural world. We are human because we can wait out a storm in shelters that we have built, and therefore are not buffeted about in its winds. Culture manifests an internal division, for it represents a simultaneous need to both flee from and adapt to nature. We are the only creatures that are not at home in the natural world but rather are forced to *make* a home for ourselves within it.

Language is also a necessary precursor to the development of self consciousness. Rather than accounting for the origins of language in terms of our ability for reflection,

Rousseau claims that language and rationality are tightly intertwined and cannot be so easily disentangled: "I leave to anyone who would undertake it the discussion of the following difficult problem: which was the more necessary: an already formed society for the invention of languages, or an already invented language for the establishment of society"(DOI 51). Language represents the movement from the particular to the general and therefore is a process of conceptualization. With the development of language, the process of self transformation begins to assume a much more frenetic pace since it "freed human consciousness from its effective determination by nature."²³

The invention of tools establishes a more stable realm of objects which increases the level of linguistic sophistication. Repeated use of the same or similar items sparks a process of evaluation and comparison. Thus, language is the fruit of social labour, since the repetitive experience occasioned by such activity allows individuals to observe relations. At first, mobile objects are represented by "means of gestures"(DOI 49) and audible ones by "imitative sounds"(DOI 49). Eventually everything is articulated vocally and verbal substitutes are agreed upon as symbols for various objects, a task which necessitates "common consent"(DOI 49). Thus, social cooperation makes abstraction both possible and necessary. A common system of signs is crucial for coordinating activities such as the hunt.

Language develops in tandem with the tools that are the fruits of humanity's

²³Richard Noble, *Language, Subjectivity and Freedom in Rousseau's Moral Philosophy*, p. 50.

labour, facilitating the propensity for abstraction and classification. For example, two slightly different tools constructed for a similar purpose would share the same name, due to their common function. An ever increasing array of objects would become subject to such classification, spurred on by the concomitant growth of language. Thus, Rousseau maintains that "general ideas can be introduced into the mind only with the aid of words..every general idea is purely intellectual"(DOI 50). Language is thus both the result of abstraction and its precondition.

While the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* provides a historical materialist account of the development of language, the *Essay on the Origins of Language* links language more closely to the passions. This is a work that is often ignored in the secondary literature. However, its significance should not be underestimated for it points to a more immediate connection between human beings which is not based primarily or exclusively on instrumental relations. The strong ties that Rousseau envisions between social organization and the type of language that emerges is maintained, but his account of language here is much less rationalistic. According to Rousseau, the earliest languages were immediate expressions of feelings such as anger, pity and fear. Rather than reading the essay as a contradiction of the *Second Discourse*, it is perhaps more appropriate to view it as complementary. The more visceral and emotive connection to other human beings cannot simply be reduced to the functionalist and rationalist approach highlighted in the *Discourse*. Cohabitation allowed affective ties to develop between people and they

begin to see themselves as part of a whole. Thus, self consciousness is not only a separation of oneself from one's surroundings but also involves a social integration which closely parallels the feeling of *amour-de-soi*.

Primitive languages were more musical and untainted by the rigidity of grammatical rules, attempting to translate emotions into sounds, and unveiling internal feelings rather than merely representing objects: "This lead me to believe that if we had never had physical needs, we would not never have spoken and would make ourselves understood through gesture alone"(EOL 63). The medium of expression transforms the passions themselves, elevating them to a higher level and taking them beyond the immediate moment. Once passions are embodied in the symbols of language, we can put these symbols together in new ways and are thereby able to cultivate the imagination. This extricates us from a condition of living purely in the present.

Rousseau claims that early language conveyed feelings directly without the interference of our reflective or rational capacities. However, the sharp distinction Rousseau appears to be making between the passions and reason is deceptive. His praise of the passions manifests his objection to their domination by reason. Yet, it is reason that makes us aware of the separation from our surroundings. The longing to be re-integrated into these surroundings is expressed through passions which cannot simply be reduced to reason, but at the same time, are dependent upon it. The passions react to the disintegration produced by reason on behalf of an *amour-de-soi* which is embedded within

us. Reason stirs within me the longing for the complete integration of the pre-human animal. Yet, without a preconceptual sense of "oneness" with my environment, I could not experience such a longing. Thus, Strauss, who argues that passion usurped the place of reason²⁴ is overlooking the inextricable connection between the two. Rousseau is not exhorting us to favour the passions over reason, but rather to recognize the entanglement of reason and the passions.²⁵

Before delving further into Rousseau's philosophy regarding the origins of languages, it is important to examine pity, since this is not only an example of the type of emotion that language would convey, but also partially explains the process by which passions emerged. Pity is pre-reflective and is characterized by an "innate repugnance to seeing his fellow men suffer"(DOI 53). According to Rousseau it prevents the mutual destruction of human beings in the state of nature and moderates their actions: "It is therefore quite certain that pity is a natural sentiment, which, by moderating in each individual the activity of the love of oneself, contributes to the mutual preservation of the entire species. *Pitié* is what carries us without reflection to the aid of those we see suffering. *Pitié* is what, in the state of nature, takes the place of laws, mores, and virtue.

²⁴Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, p. 252.

²⁵If Rousseau seems to privilege the passions over reason, it is because he argues that within civil society, the disintegrative function of reason and *amour-propre* has blinded us to its integrative aspect. The passions, however, even in bourgeois society are still recognized as playing an integrative role and therefore he wishes to reignite them in the service of the community.

with the advantage that no one is tempted to disobey its sweet voice"(DOI 55). There is an instinctive sense of integration with all other beings that impels the proto-human to "participate in the pain of others."²⁶ The undifferentiated sense of being characterized by *amour-de-soi* ensures that the pre-human animal has not yet distinguished the suffering of others from her own, because the very idea of "her own" is foreign to her. Nevertheless, it is the failure to separate her own suffering from that of other beings that prevents her from taking actions to alleviate their suffering because she does not yet have a sense of her own agency. If my experience of your suffering is immediate, my response to your suffering is also immediate, namely to flee from the pain that your suffering engenders.

At the same time, Rousseau acknowledges that the experience of pity demands a comparison with another human being whose misfortunes are similar to our own. Even though we perceive her as separate, we recognize the parallels in our condition and therefore feel closer to her.²⁷ Pity is at once pre-reflective and post-reflective. It becomes an essential component of our goodness, because through pity, we enter into a relationship with another that is non-threatening, offsetting the vicious power struggle described by Hobbes: "So it is through this that an 'image' of others may gradually be built up which

²⁶Asher Horowitz and Gad Horowitz, *Everywhere They are in Chains*, (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1988). p. 25.

²⁷ for a more detailed discussion of pity, see Chapter Four

promises the possibility of constructive, collaborative relations of trust, support and aid."²⁸

Thus, Rousseau's dual account of the development of language indicates that one cannot disconnect our reflective from our passionate aspects. Indeed, the *Second Discourse* suggests that the passions and reason are interconnected, implying that we use our newly acquired capacity for language in order to recapture the sense of harmony lost in the movement away from *amour-de-soi*. As soon as I give voice to my pity, I am tacitly acknowledging both the integration I feel with another human being, and at the same time my separation from her that I strive to overcome by expressing it. It is the simultaneous feeling of both oneness, and the loss of this oneness that motivates me to relieve the suffering of another human being.

Paradoxically in order to feel part of the world, one must have achieved a degree of distance from it, since the idea of belonging would be meaningless if I did not differentiate myself from the whole in the first place. While the survival instinct does partially account for the coordination of human activities, there is also an emotional need for a sense of oneness that transcends the need for mere self preservation. Our sense of separateness makes us crave the integration of *amour-de-soi*. In fact, the craving for oneness would not exist if the equilibrium of the proto-human had remained unshaken. Passion is thus the expression of a need to reintegrate ourselves with nature and with other

²⁸N.J.H. Dent, *Rousseau: An Introduction to his Psychological, Political and Social Theory*, p. 121.

human beings. Not only the capacity for reflection is absent in the proto-human; he is also devoid of passion, since he has not yet differentiated himself from his surroundings. Thus, a solely instrumental explanation cannot account for the development of language.(EOL 108)

However, this emotional need for integration is articulated more forcefully and is provided with an outlet for expressions once language has taken root. The aptitude for abstraction provided by language catapults humanity from the natural into the moral realm. The comparative evaluation of objects is soon applied to human beings as well as to things: "People become accustomed to consider different objects and to make comparisons. Imperceptibly they acquire the ideas of merit and beauty which produce feelings of preference"(DOI 63). Such comparison signals the dawn of self consciousness, for both the differences and similarities between myself and others impel me to reflect upon myself. Self consciousness is thus an upshot of social interaction. I begin to acknowledge my subjectivity at the same time that I recognize that of others. However, I experience my subjectivity as both an absence and as potential, since others are endowed with attributes and talents that I do not share. Unlike the proto-human, the social individual begins to feel incomplete and longs for the "restoration" of harmony. Only when my sense of harmony is shattered do I begin to covet it.

Rousseau uses the term "*amour-propre*" to refer to this comparative assessment of oneself and others. The second aspect of *amour-propre*, namely the need for recognition

by others, stems directly from the first. Language is simultaneously an expression of my proximity to others, but also marks my separation from them, so I seek the esteem of my peers in order to restore a sense of integration and completeness: "As soon as men had begun mutually to value one another, and the idea of esteem was formed in their minds, each one claimed to have a right to it, and it was no longer possible for anyone to be lacking it with impunity"(DOI 64). Therefore, *amour-propre* is not exclusively a disintegrative force as some analysts have claimed,²⁹ but represents a longing to enter the fold of the community. It is also a testament to the interdependence of reason and the passions since it is an emotional longing that would not exist were it not for our capacity for comparison that drives a wedge between us. Tracy Strong points out, passions and not needs are the source of social institutions.³⁰ The desire for recognition is a socially mediated substitution for *amour-de-soi* since I now depend on others for a sense of wholeness.

Paradoxically, the wider the range of my experiences, the more acute my sense of limitation becomes, making it impossible for me to relapse into the comforting arms of *amour-de-soi*. Yet, while proto-humans do not experience the anguish of absence, they do not enjoy the rapture of harmony either, because they were not forced to extend the boundaries of the self by merging with others. I would argue that the activity of *extending*

²⁹ Horowitz maintains that the term "shares a fundamental similarity with the picture of social relations drawn by Hobbes." *Rousseau, Nature, and History*, p. 125.

³⁰ Tracy Strong, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Politics of the Ordinary*, p. 44.

the borders of the self is what gives us the sense of merging with others and also becomes the basis for a Rousseauian morality. Thus, belonging is a *process* rather than a static condition. The anguish that my limitations generate is the prelude to the sentiment of belonging. *Amour-propre* anticipates the recognition that in order to enjoy a sense of harmony and completion, one has to become a part of something beyond the self. For Rousseau, this is a type of homecoming that recalls but does not replicate *amour-de-soi*.

Perhaps one of the most powerful social bonds according to Rousseau is human sexuality, for it is the "most natural indicator that we are meant to depend on one another."³¹ In the state of nature, sex was devoid of any social or moral associations since sexuality is inconceivable without the "creation of social ties and psychological dependence."³² For Rousseau sexuality is not merely physical since the desires are linked to particular human beings, acting as a bridge between the natural and the moral realm. His account of sex in the state of nature is somewhat questionable since he claims that the weakness of male sexual desire accounted for his absolute independence. Women were able to singlehandedly care for their young and Rousseau completely ignores the inconveniences of pregnancy(DOI 42). Moreover, the bond that is formed between a mother and her child is purely instinctive and does not survive the separation of parent and

³¹Joel Schwartz, *The Sexual Politics of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1984), p. 4.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 12.

offspring.

Sexuality is a fusion of physical need and the desire for the esteem of others. It thereby assumes a moral dimension, especially when it is particularized and a single person becomes the focus of this desire³³: "The physical aspect is that general desire which inclines one sex to unite with another. The moral aspect is what determines this desire and fixes it exclusively on one single object, or which at least gives it a greater degree of energy for this preferred object"(DOI 56). For Rousseau, sexuality is of great importance because it can constitute a powerful awareness of the "other" as a subject, rather than as an alien object. Thus, it provides a foundation in the passions for the respect of the subjectivity of others introducing what Noble refers to as the "intersubjective dimensions" of human experience.³⁴ It provides a challenge to the notion that instrumentality is the main impetus for cementing social relations. Rousseau emphasizes that the conception of others as subjects must be based on the emotional recognition that this is the case. The direct experience of another's subjectivity precedes the conceptualization of another's subjectivity. This differs significantly from a Kantian or even an Hegelian understanding of the subject, where I abstract from my own rational subjectivity and thereby assume that other "subjects" share my identity as a rational agent. Such an understanding does not presuppose the direct experience of another's subjectivity since we derive it from an

³³I will discuss this process in the following chapter.

³⁴Richard Noble, *Language, Subjectivity and Freedom in Rousseau's Moral Philosophy*, p. 102.

abstract thought process. For Rousseau such a conceptual leap is too weak to act as the basis for a strong community. The sexual experience is a more direct encounter with another subject that is vital for consolidating any community.³⁵

In his *Essay on the Origins of Languages* Rousseau describes the transition from conjugal to romantic love, insisting that romantic love entailed an intensification of the experience of the other and therefore set the stage for the solidification of the community. Again this should be read metaphorically rather than for the anthropological assumptions that can be gleaned from it. According to Rousseau, the first communities were familial in a broad sense: "In primitive times, men who were scattered across the face of the earth had only the family for their society, only nature for their law.. they were fraternal communities"(EOL 91). The psychological need for integration was met within the family. However, as communities became more sedentary, young people would encounter others while collecting water over wells and solicit the recognition of individuals that existed beyond the confines of the family. Rousseau uses the example of the well to point to the fusion between economic and emotional needs, refusing to prioritize one or the other. The need to cooperate in order to sink wells brought together youth from different families who would engage in erotic conversations: "The heart was moved by these new 'objects', a new trait rendered them less wild; they felt the pleasure of no longer being alone"(EOL

³⁵I will address this theme in more detail in Chapter Four. For Rousseau, the sexual union between man and woman is not only an important part of the political order, but becomes the foundation upon which it rests.

106). As a result interfamilial communities are strengthened. Although this account of the consolidation of community ties is very murky, it does underscore the notion that it is not only need that precipitates the development of social formation. Thus, Rousseau's account is only partially an economic one.

Amour-propre is an important element in this relationship, and therefore one should beware of overemphasizing its negative potential since the thirst for completeness that animates human behaviour also develops and stimulates the passions. Reason and passion are therefore not in a dichotomous relationship, but are part of a single continuum. Desire cannot exist without the sense of incompleteness that reason alerts us to. Cullen asserts that the absence of passions accounts for the fact that natural man has no "metaphysical or moral personality."³⁶

Before the fall: the Golden Age of "primitive" communities

In primitive communities, society already mediates between human beings and nature, both separating and uniting the two realms but averting a direct encounter with nature. Human desires are no longer coeval with needs which are now culturally determined within the community. Horowitz argues that in primitive communities there is no "separation between social life and politics, between society and state" and that the

³⁶Cullen, Daniel E. *Freedom in Rousseau's Political Philosophy*, p. 45.

"tension between "man and citizen has not yet been felt."³⁷ The desire for recognition has also taken root and a competition for such recognition has been unleashed. Yet, the struggle for recognition takes place within the narrow confines of the family and contact with outsiders would have been perceived as threatening, giving rise to warfare: "Each family became a little society all the better united because mutual attachment and liberty were its only bonds"(DOI 63). Because the clusters of families were separated from each other and there was no desire to extend the frontiers of the community, the potential for warfare was forestalled and a golden age of peace prevailed: "These primitive times were the Golden Age, not because men were united, but because they were separated. It is said that each, considered himself the master of all; this could be true, but, everyone knew and desired only that which was present: he needed only that which was at hand.. If men encountered each other they would attack, but they encountered each other only rarely. Everywhere the state of war reigned, but everywhere peace prevailed"(EOL 93). The emotional and affective ties between family members secured a strong sense of integration and while *amour-propre* had begun to replace *amour-de-soi*, its demands were satisfied, since each member held the recognition of everyone else within the community. Respect for human dignity and even a notion of common humanity were conspicuously absent, since this required a level of abstraction not available to people who could not identify with those outside of the family unit: "They had the idea of a father, a son, a brother but

³⁷Horowitz. *Rousseau, Nature and History*, p. 91.

not of man. Their hut contained only their kin; strangers, beasts and monsters were the same thing for them: beyond their own kin the universe was nothing to them"(EOL 93). Nevertheless the ability to conceptualize a universal humanity at a later stage in our history would grow out of the strong emotional attachments that cemented family members together.

The families Rousseau is referring to were not nuclear families rather "plural husbands and plural wives, plural parents and plural children."³⁸ The habit of "living together gave rise to the sweetest sentiments known to men: conjugal love and paternal love. Each family became a little society all the better united because mutual attachment and liberty were its only bonds"(DOI 63). The boundary between nature and convention is blurred, since the custom of cohabitation was adopted when natural calamities forced human beings into closer cooperation: "Human associatian are to a large extent the result of natural disasters, floods.., volcanic eruptions, giant earthquakes"(EOL 101). Eventually, an integrative feeling approximating *amour-de-soi* was transferred to the familial community.

Within primitive communities, emotions, although filtered through language, were expressed much more directly. Indeed, one could argue that emotion could not exist without language precisely because language differentiates us, giving rise to the longing for union. Rousseau refers to the melodic quality of early languages which constituted a

³⁸Asher Horowitz, *Rousseau: Nature and History*, p. 98.

more accurate representation of emotions and were used to convey the inner passions to other members of the community: "Human beings started to feel before they started to reason. We pretend that men invented language to express their desire; this opinion seems unlikely to me. The first needs tended to separate men rather than to unite them"(EOL 66). Rousseau distinguishes between languages of passion characteristic of warmer climates, and languages of need in harsher climates, maintaining that the former were more authentic and passionate. In warmer climates, where shortages were not as acute, it was easier to concentrate on the emotional ties within the social whole. The preoccupation for survival in the harsher climates overshadowed the emotional needs that developed from community living.

Nevertheless, no community is immune from competition. Rousseau points out that at social gatherings each one "began to look at the others" and wanted "to be looked at himself, and public esteem had a value"(DOI 64). Vanity is born and the seeds of the egocentrism that would eventually unravel the community are sown. Yet, the means of granting the recognition that was sought is decisive and elicits Rousseau's admiration. In these early communities, the divisive strains of *amour-propre* were curtailed, allowing its integrative component to dominate since recognition was granted in a public setting: "People grew accustomed to gather in front of their huts or around a large tree; song and dance, true children of love and leisure, became the amusement or rather the occupation of idle men and women who had flocked together."(DOI 64). People would compete for

the esteem of the community and thus social activities provided the setting in which these competitive instincts could be discharged. The seams of the community were tightened rather than being unravelled, since individual expression took place through the community rather than against it. Furthermore, increased recognition did not eventuate in material rewards or political power, thereby translating into social inequality. Instead, increased recognition was dissolved in the unity of the group. Pride was swallowed up by a unity that approximated *amour-de-soi*. Thus, the self stood out only in order to be absorbed by the community, and therefore was engaged in a process of self overcoming. The joy in gaining recognition was not to be gleaned from dominance, but in the process of dismantling the boundaries of the self and being fully embraced by the group. This is why competition strengthened rather than enfeebled the community. Individuation and integration were mutually dependent on each other.

Furthermore, the boundaries between individuals that were accentuated in competitions for public esteem were collapsed at the very moment that the esteem was granted, since the individual was then wholeheartedly embraced by the community. Integration was therefore the outcome of separation and part of the joy of competition was the dismantling of individual barriers that ensued from it. Thus, while the community distances and separates us from nature by destroying the condition of non-differentiation, it also returns us to this state at a different level. The ecstasy in non-differentiation is intensified as a result of having experienced differentiation. It is through the process of

self-overcoming that nature and society are reconciled.

The modes of production within this society also precluded the escalation of selfish conflict. Labour was social rather than individual and the concept of ownership was noticeably absent. There was no division of labour, except that between the sexes. Women tended to the huts and men gathered food. Although Rousseau does not offer much information regarding the relationship between the sexes, there is nothing to indicate that such a division of labour in itself created inequalities. Both women and men were fully incorporated into the community while performing their respective tasks. Because human beings were not dependent on each other, the possibility for inequality was offset: "anyone should see that, since the bonds of servitude are formed merely from the mutual dependence of men and the reciprocal needs that unite them, it is impossible to enslave a man without having first put him in the position of being incapable of doing without another"(DOI 59). Individuals were, however, *personally* dependent on the community as a whole, in the same way that the proto-human was dependent on nature. Here we have hit upon the essence of Rousseau's Golden Age. The community in this period assumed the role that nature held in our proto-human stage and therefore acted as nature's social substitute. It was a social and human utopia that mimicked the relationship to nature enjoyed by the proto-human.

Thus, the primitive community enjoyed a kind of balance between the disintegrative and integrative aspects of social organizations. This is why there is no split between man

and citizen as Horowitz pointed out. Divisive tendencies were absorbed into the unity of the community and therefore did not pose a threat to it. While the competition for recognition singled out individuals, this separation was dissolved by embracing the individual and returning him to the social fold. Thus, differentiation was in some sense a means for achieving integration. The dangerous potential of *amour-propre*, which will receive greater elaboration in the next chapter, was thereby curtailed. Integration and individuation existed in a healthy equilibrium.

Ancient political orders

Rousseau does not only look to primitive communities for moral guidance in a disturbed modern era, but also casts his sight on the ancient city-states because of their tightly knit political structures. Judith Shklar maintains that Rousseau had set up two conflicting utopias, insisting that he found himself in the position of having to choose between two irreconcilable models. Besides the peaceful tranquillity of the Golden Age, Rousseau presented the Spartan model, which demanded complete absorption of the individual by the political community.³⁹ Shklar implies that politics is antithetical to the community. For her integration outside the family necessarily entails self repression,

³⁹Judith Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 2-3.

insisting that no compromise between self expression and self repression is possible.⁴⁰ Thus, she is forced to set up the kind of polarization between nature and culture that Rousseau himself scorned.⁴¹

The austere "utopia" is elaborated upon in Rousseau's *Government of Poland* and the *Discourse on Political Economy* where he depicts a citizenry that is completely engulfed by the state. The authoritarian practices necessary for the promotion of such ancient virtue cast doubt on the notion that Rousseau is exalting ancient virtue to the extent that Shklar claims he is. Rather, it is more likely that he is using the Spartan example as a foil to the centrifugal tendencies he observes in modern political communities. While he uses the example of the ancient republics to highlight flaws in contemporary societies, the converse is also true: he uses modern concepts in order to accentuate problems with the ancient regimes. It is thus, both a negative utopia as well as a positive one, for unlike the primitive community, it does not provide an outlet for individuation and self expression, but demands an austere integration.

The tightly knit Spartan state was maintained by allowing its tentacles to permeate all aspects of life, therefore ensuring that loyalty was seared upon the hearts of its citizens: "As for Lycurgus, he undertook to legislate for a people already debased by servitude and

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴¹The absence of inequality is the link which Shklar makes between the Spartan republic and the "primitive" community of the Golden Age. Within the Spartan order, equality is enforced in authoritarian ways.

by the vices the latter brings in its train. He fixed upon them a yoke of iron, the like of which no other people has ever borne; but he tied them to that yoke, made them, so to speak, one with it, by filling up every moment of their lives. He saw to it that they never had an instant of free time that they could call their own. And out of this ceaseless constraint, made noble by the purpose it served, was born that burning love of country which was always the strongest-or rather the only-passion of the Spartans and which transformed them into beings more than merely human"(GP 7). Rousseau remarks that a body of laws is not enough to guarantee the devotion of citizens for it fails to stimulate their passions. The poetry of Homer was a much more effective instrument of control than an elaborate table of laws and decrees. Moreover, the identification with the state was too abstract and impersonal. Each citizen is a member of the community because he has imbibed a common set of laws and not due to affective ties between citizens. My relationship with you would therefore be mediated through the laws of the state. The Spartan mother, who calmly accepts that the victory of the city-state is more important than the life of her son is a perfect embodiment of this attitude. The attachment to the state as a whole supersedes personal relationships.

The ancient political communities were dependent upon custom in a way that primitive communities were not. Because primitive societies were smaller familial units, emotional affection was more easily maintained and did not have to be nurtured through artificial means. This was not the case in a city-state such as Athens or Sparta where

continuous repetition of cultural practices was necessary so that an individual could not conceive of his own identity separately from that of the state. Rather than accommodating *amour-propre* and maintaining a relationship of codependence between individuation and integration, the Spartan state tried to eradicate traces of individuality. Integration did not come out of our deepest desires, but suppressed them: "If, for example, they are trained early enough never to consider their own persons except in terms of being related to the body of the state, and not to perceive their own existence except as part of the state's existence, they will eventually come to identify themselves in some way with this larger whole, to feel themselves to be members of the country, to love it with that exquisite sentiment that every isolated man feels only for himself"(PE 125). However, in order to generate such utter identification with the state, the life of each individual citizen must be respected, otherwise the immediate identification between individual good and public good is subverted: "But the Romans were preeminent among all the peoples of the earth for the government's deference toward private individuals and for its scrupulous attention to respecting the inviolable rights of all the members of the state. Nothing was as sacred as the life of the simple citizens...Let the homeland, therefore, show itself as the common mother of all citizens. Let the advantages they enjoy in their homeland endear it to them. ...And let the laws be in their sight merely the guarantees of the common liberty"(PE 124). However, this respect was not predicated on the individuality of the citizens, but demonstrated a recognition that all were subjects of the same code of law, and therefore

no one deserved priority. Once again, this manifests an abstract recognition of the individual, rather than a personal recognition of him.

Nevertheless, *amour-propre* needed an outlet and thus a collective egoism had to be fostered by stirring up hostility towards outsiders, thereby promoting a kind of siege mentality. The need to stand out and be recognized was acknowledged only through the external exploits of the state. Warriors were given the opportunity to shine through their skill in defending the homeland. In this way, ancient states ensured that *amour-propre* would not threaten the unity of the state, and in fact was directly linked to the state's welfare: "All three sought ties that would bind the citizens to the fatherland and to one another. All three found what they were looking for in distinctive usages, in religious ceremonies that invariably were in essence exclusive and national.."(GP 8). In this way, self aggrandizement was made coterminous with the expansionism of the state and competitive drives were unleashed externally rather than internally. A tenuous alliance was thus struck between *amour-de-soi* and *amour-propre*.

However, the very source of the state's cohesion was also the wellspring of its downfall, for it depended upon continuous victory. Once such victories could no longer be secured, the egoistic tendencies would turn inward and gnaw at the seams of the state itself. If a state was plagued with continuous defeat, then the individual lost his only avenue to obtain the recognition of the whole. Laws, unlike more personal ties, lose force when they fail to guarantee the safety of the state. The acceptance of laws is predicated on

their success. Once the safety of the state is under threat, respect for the laws quickly evaporates. Individuals are left with no other bonds to fall back on. Moreover, military defeats shattered the myth that a complete surrender to the state was most conducive to self preservation. In fact, the need for military tactics to give particularity a voice was a testament to the force of particularity, demonstrating that try as it might, the universal could not subsume or squash the particular. An aggressive foreign policy did not represent a victory of the universal over the particular, but rather an uneasy compromise. The tactics which communities such as Sparta employed were thus manifestations of their fragility.

Ancient republics constituted both a regression and a progression from primitive communities. An increased level of abstraction was necessary in order to sustain public zeal. However, because such fervour was based on a collective egoism that revelled in the dominance of foreign political entities, it whetted the appetite for domination that could destroy the very community that gave rise to it if it turned inward. The egoism was not absorbed by the community, as it had been in primitive communities, but rather was given vent to by squashing external opponents. *Amour-propre* was not curtailed by metamorphosing it into a joyous *amour-de-soi*. Integration was maintained at the price of unleashing the most pernicious strain of *amour-propre*, even though it was not permitted to fester within the state. Therefore, the ancient republics were closer to the bourgeois market society than a cursory glance might suggest.

I have chosen to interpret Rousseau's account of the ancient republic in order to demonstrate that equality itself is not the only moral imperative that Rousseau gleans from the state of nature. Interpreters such as Strauss, Cullen and Shklar had focused too narrowly on Rousseau's quest for equality and therefore left Rousseau with alternatives favouring either the individual or the community. Both primitive communities and the Spartan regime were characterized by relations of equality. However, I will argue against Shklar that Rousseau prefers the Golden Age because of the balance that is struck between individuation and integration. This balance provides the cornerstone for a Rousseauian morality. In the state of nature human beings were *both* integrated and yet *also* self sufficient and therefore equal.

However, despite the existence of such a balance within the primitive community, it too had its limitations. First of all, it cannot embrace individuals who are not part of its kinship structure, so that any other community that it comes into contact with becomes an enemy. Furthermore, individuals are not yet conscious of the balance that makes their society function as an integrated whole. It is almost instinctively maintained because human beings have not ventured as far from the bosom of nature. Ironically, it will require a dramatic exit from this state and a disruption of the equilibrium that will make us aware of the necessity for such a balance and open up the possibility for consciously reproducing it. Thus, bourgeois society, while constituting the greatest threat to our nature also provides us with an unparalleled opportunity for recreating it. It is to bourgeois

society, that my analysis will now turn.

CHAPTER TWO: HOMELESS CITIZENS: THE CRITIQUE OF BOURGEOIS SOCIETY

In order to fully appreciate the moral lessons which Rousseau draws from the state of nature, one must contrast it with his virulent critique of bourgeois society. The natural "goodness" of the proto-human is in some sense defined against the backdrop of this degenerate social order. It is by peering through the lens of bourgeois society that Rousseau is able to appreciate the lessons which can be gleaned from the state of nature. If the pre-human animal is characterized by complete integration, the bourgeois individual is always a disintegrated self who has become acutely aware of his "separation" from the world around him. Yet, this schism, in Rousseau's view hampers rather than facilitates self creation. At the same time, it stirs within the individual the awareness that we always retain a degree of distance from the society of which we are a part. Ironically, the lack of community in bourgeois society means that its citizens are completely subjected to its economic and social forces, because they cannot identify the contours of the whole which moulds them. The "system" operates behind the backs of individuals who are then powerless to exert influence upon it.

Interpreters such as Berman and Starobinski have identified inauthenticity as the central problem that plagues civil society. Individuals hide behind multifarious masks and need to recover the sense of self which they have lost. However, Starobinski's analysis in particular ends up positing a kind of dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity which

Rousseau himself would spurn. The social structure has forced individuals to cast veils over themselves, but behind these shrouds "they will discover a forgotten present, a form that remained intact behind the veils."¹ Because people relate to each other through objects, there is no longer "a direct connection of mind to mind."² However, I will argue against Starobinski that for Rousseau there is no inner core that is waiting to be unveiled. The self emerges out of an interaction with its world, which it both defines itself against and integrates itself with.

In bourgeois society the affective bonds between citizens have been eviscerated and therefore there is no larger whole with which the individual can interact and be integrated into. Thus, the self is not buried beneath layers of masks, as Starobinski claims, because it does not even have the opportunity to create itself. If I do not feel part of a community, I will lack the confidence to differentiate myself, because I fear that I will thereby exacerbate the alienation that already paralyses me. This partly explains the profound pressure to conform that is exerted upon individuals in bourgeois societies. Thus, I will argue that there is a misplaced desire for belonging which is endemic to bourgeois society. This coupled with a rampant inequality creates an atmosphere of pervasive distrust where I will always try to assert myself against others. Ironically, I am thereby forced to take my bearing almost entirely from those around me.

¹Jean Starobinski, *Transparency and Obstruction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 19.

²*Ibid.*, p. 23

According to Rousseau, bourgeois society has allowed personal relations to become completely subsumed by economic imperatives. Each views the other as a means to the satisfaction of his own needs which in turn are dictated by the economic structure itself. As Bloom points out the bourgeois "is the man who, when dealing with others, thinks only of himself, and on the other hand, in his understanding of himself, thinks only of others. He is a role player."³ Thus, the bourgeois is the disintegrated self par excellence, who thinks that his subjectivity depends on the objectification of others. Because he is engaged in an incessant struggle to assert his superiority, he is at home neither in his "external" surroundings nor in his own skin.

In the *Discourses on the Origins of Inequality*, Rousseau provides an account of the development of bourgeois society. While *amour-propre* plays a decisive part in this development, it would be a mistake to saddle the concept merely with negative connotations, since its potential for "evil" is no greater than its potential for good. The exacerbation of *amour-propre*, and not *amour-propre* itself is responsible for the cut-throat environment that prevails in bourgeois society. Thus, in order to better comprehend the negative potential of *amour-propre*, and to explain why it spiralled out of control, one must also understand the vital role it plays in the socialization of human beings.

Amour-propre is not simply the bane of our existence, but also a stimulant to our development and perfectibility. By reflecting on our own existence as well as that of

³Allan Bloom, 'Emile,' *Giants and Dwarfs*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 180.

others, we project onto them characteristics which resemble our own. Conversely, the actions of others may impel us to reflect on our own characteristics by suggesting directions that we may not have anticipated. We both step outside the self and return to the self. However, this foray into the "outside" also leaves us vulnerable to the agony of alienation, for a self that undergoes reevaluation and changes in response to new stimuli can never be at peace. For this reason, the propensity to compare stirs within us a desire to solicit the recognition of one's peers. We seek their affirmation, in order to reaffirm our belonging in the world. Our encounter of the unfamiliar in others makes us crave their recognition. Thus, I would argue that the desire for recognition is due to our awareness of both an identity with and a difference from others. *Amour-propre* becomes a social substitute for *amour-de-soi*: the immediate identification with one's surroundings. By soliciting the affirmation of others, we attempt to foster a feeling of belonging.

Amour-propre is an integral part of our freedom, for by alerting us to our separation from the external world and others it forces us to actively *make* ourselves part of this world. We cannot take the recognition of others for granted but must earn it. The need for such recognition acts as a catalyst to continuous striving.

It is this kind of dynamic interplay which Burgelin overlooks in his analysis of the social process of denaturation. Burgelin points out that the need to shape ourselves in order to solicit the recognition of others ushers in a profound inauthenticity. We become

distanced from our natural desires, and are forced to adopt social ones.⁴ However, Rousseau would object to Burgelin's propensity to dichotomize the relationship between individual and society. Burgelin ignores the extent to which social norms are created out of the interaction between individuals who continuously mediate the relationship between "inside" and "outside". Therefore, they do not simply confront "society" as an imposing and alien force. While it does distance human beings from nature, such distance is necessary if we are to make the transition from human beings to animals. Burgelin does not distinguish between the alienation that is necessary to all social orders and the form of alienation which is distinctive to bourgeois society. For Burgelin, integration is always achieved at the expense of individuation.

The fact that *amour-propre* prevents me from attaining the kind of unity I covet is vital if we are to engage in a process of continuous self creation. Without such disunity, we could not exercise our freedom. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, we develop a sense of self because we compare ourselves with others. Integration and individuation cannot be so easily disentangled. I become aware of an identity that is my own, by regarding others who are not exactly like me. An interaction with them prompts me to

⁴"Ce qui en moi s'oppose au groupe, paradoxalement le groupe lui-même en est cause...Personnalité d'emprunt, isolée à la fois de nos exigences naturelles et de celles du groupe, nous nous réservons, nous dérobons au groupe pour nous imposer à lui. Incapable désormais de subsister seul, l'homme, au -dessus de l'être naturel qui subsiste, va constituer l'homme de l'homme. Il se conforme au personnage qu'on lui propose." Burgelin, *La Philosophie de L'Existence de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953), p.253.

extend my own boundaries. Such an awareness can only develop in a social setting, where we interact with each other on an ongoing basis. I do not simply belong, I have to make myself belong. Even if I successfully elicit the recognition of my compatriots, the need for such recognition itself affirms my separation from them. It is because I do not belong completely, that I rely on others to achieve a sense of fulfilment. Ironically, I am separated from them because I interact with them. *Amour-propre* can only ever be a substitute for *amour-de-soi*, because it manifests my awareness of my own incompleteness. My attempts at integration are only partly successful, and I am compelled to live in partial isolation. The social individual is thus always a divided individual, who stands both united and alone.

In bourgeois society, *amour-propre* spirals out of our control and its negative features are accentuated. Dent refers to this phenomenon as "inflamed amour-propre."⁵ As I will point out, according to Rousseau the inequality of property is responsible for this development since it erodes the social bonds that had curtailed *amour-propre*. I remain dissatisfied until I am the main object of public recognition and begin to deceive in order to realize this impossible goal. The recognition of others constitutes a threat to my own identity. My individuality can only be expressed at your expense. We lose sight of the mutually constitutive nature of individuation and integration and the latter is pitted against the former. A zero-sum calculation takes over my thinking. Since others do not willingly

⁵N.J.H. Dent, *Rousseau's Psychological, Political and Social Thought*, p. 57.

surrender to me, I must deceive in order to get my way. Deception becomes so ingrained, that we can no longer successfully peel away the masks that we have grafted onto our personality. Although we continue to seek the recognition of others, such recognition is necessarily false because I am reluctant to expose my "true self" out of fear that this would leave me vulnerable to others. The twin goals of individuation and integration are no longer complementary, as they were in primitive society, but become dangerously divorced from each other. We begin to see them as mutually exclusive alternatives. This split enfeebles both and the individual that remains is but an empty shell.

Rousseau reserves his most strident attacks for bourgeois society, accusing it of extolling the freedom and autonomy of human beings while suffocating the very human attributes it praises.⁶ As it exacerbates the divisive tendencies of *amour-propre*, its competitive strains accelerate to such a degree that they completely outstrip its cohesive forces. Rather than seeking *your* recognition in order to confirm my membership in the community, I demand a recognition that robs you of the very approval I seek for myself. Yet, while encouraging the unabashed pursuit of self interest at the expense of others,

⁶Allan Bloom, 'Rousseau: The Turning Point,' *Giants and Dwarfs*, (London: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 209. Bloom claims that the contempt for the bourgeois was born in the writings of Rousseau: "The word has a strong negative charge, and practically no one wants to be *merely* a *bourgeois*. The artists and the intellectuals have almost universally despised him and in large measure defined themselves against him. The *bourgeois* is unpoetic, unerotic, unheroic, neither aristocrat, nor of the people; he is not a citizen, and his religion is pallid and otherworldly. The sole invocation of his name is enough to legitimate the revolutions of Left and Right; and within the limits of liberal democracy, all sorts of reforms are perennially proposed to correct his motives or counterbalance them."

bourgeois society must maintain a modicum of respect for them, otherwise the drive for personal advantage would rapidly degenerate into warfare. While the dignity and autonomy of individuals are enshrined in the principles of contractual agreements, it is ruthlessly attacked in practice.

Alienation reaches its acme in bourgeois society because of the relentless pursuit of self aggrandizement. One cannot secure one's preeminent position without an excessive concern for the opinion of others. As Dent points out "one becomes, in large part, the puppet creation of their unruly pulling, dancing to their tune even as one tries to lead the band."⁷ He maintains that the goods which are sought are only "positional", aiming at "rendering others servile to or contemptible relative to him."⁸ Anything that is sought for its own sake is denigrated since one would then more easily fall victim to the control of the ubiquitous other.⁹

Once under the grip of market society, we fail to realize that our single-minded race for positions of privilege may represent a misguided attempt to build a nest for ourselves within the community. Mimicry becomes the pale substitute for a sense of belonging as we struggle to conform to external standards in order to "belong." Thus, one cannot simply say that in civil society the community has gone astray, leaving behind only

⁷N.J.H. Dent, *Rousseau's Psychological, Political and Social Theory*, p. 60.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 64.

a bloated and somewhat mean-spirited individual. Because individuality and community are inextricably intertwined for Rousseau, he maintains that bourgeois society destroys both. Civil society is a 'community' of phantoms, who, stripped of all sense of belonging, pursue goals whose source they do not even recognize.

The birth of property

In the *Discourses on the Origins of Inequality*, Rousseau tries to account for the zero-sum approach to identity and the pervasiveness of deception which characterizes bourgeois society. He maintains that the shift is due to a change in property relations, an approach that is consistent with his historical materialism. The delicate equilibrium of primitive society starts to unravel once notions of property become entrenched in the social psyche, as divisive strains begins to outstrip cohesive forces. The seeds of civil society are already sown when the "first person who, having enclosed a plot of land, took it into his head to say *this is mine*"(DOI 60). By identifying territory as one's own, one is simultaneously denying the claims of others to it. "This is mine" also means "this is not yours". By denying you access to *my* land and in refusing to share its harvest with you, I take the first step in fragmenting and splintering the community. Burgelin equates possession with individuation, maintaining that I become the owner of certain attributes

and characteristics once they are recognized by the society as mine.¹⁰ However, this ignores the contention that in primitive society human beings were first recognized for their activity, rather than as owners of attributes.¹¹

According to Rousseau, it was the agricultural revolution that ushered in the kinds of property relations which would eventually culminate in bourgeois society. Farming requires a continuous reworking of the same plot of land, allowing people to identify themselves with a particular geographical area. People become sedentary and established permanent dwellings. A new territorialism is born that separates the inside from the outside, relegating nature and the community to the external sphere. The concept of a private existence, which is hidden from "public view" begins to germinate. Because I am more intimately connected with this sphere, it assumes priority over the larger community. The groundwork is laid for the public/private division. The increase in production as a result of the development of agricultural skills also generates a rise in population. The larger, more diffuse community made it increasingly difficult to maintain close personal ties. Individuals withdraw even further into the private sphere. The weakening of the larger community might also up the ante of property acquisition. Because I am distanced from the community, I use property in order to re-integrate myself by establishing a

¹⁰"L'individualisation suppose qu'on se distingue en s'opposant, ce qui se produira mieux encore dans la sphère du mien que dans celle du moi. Ma fortune, mes titres, ma position sont essentiellement constitués par une reconnaissance de la société qui les respecte ou les méprise...Mes biens s'intègrent à moi." Pierre Burgelin, *La Philosophie de l'Existence*, p. 252.

¹¹see previous chapter

smaller space in which I belong.

The intervention of property adds a new dimension to the comparative assessment of others by supplying a quantitative means for differentiation, which blatantly exposed inequalities. Differences are no longer played out in festivals that were expressions of public spirit, and people begin to relate to each other abstractly through their property. When recognition is dependent on an individual's activity rather than on his or her possessions, the social aspect of individuality is more explicitly affirmed. Activity remains a way of contributing to the whole. One differentiates oneself in order to affirm one's membership in the group. Burgelin maintains that the habit of opposing oneself to the community was nurtured within the community itself, since it encouraged individuals to distinguish themselves from the whole. However, I would suggest that such differentiation was not tantamount to opposition, until inequality cast its shadow upon the community. As long as neither the community nor the individual are threatened by these distinctions, there is no reason for them to precipitate an opposition of interests.

Originally, the community mediates the human relationship to nature; now property mediates the relationship to the community. The division of land into agricultural plots carves out family niches, and therefore the direct experience of the community is somewhat diluted, intensifying the need for social recognition to repatch the severed social bonds. Moreover, such recognition is sought partly *through* property. This is somewhat paradoxical, for we seek to reestablish links through the very property that shattered them

in the first place. The more property one has, the higher the status that one assumes within the community. As long as it is still the community as a whole that grants recognition, the centrifugal forces which threaten it could be slightly curtailed.

Rousseau in contrast to Locke implies that there is no necessary connection between labour (non-agricultural) itself and the appropriation of property. According to Locke, the addition of one's own labour to the fruits of nature marked the birth of appropriation.¹² This presupposes that I have a notion of my selfhood prior to acting upon the environment. For Rousseau, the concept of an individual being the owner of himself was generated out of property relations and did not precede them. I will argue that the linkage made between labour and property was a direct outgrowth of agricultural forms of production. A continuous reworking of the same plot of land gives rise to notions of possession and the subject-object relationship. If I construct tools that help me to hunt or to gather berries, I am still very much subject to the vicissitudes and fluctuations in nature. However, by farming, I increasingly control the land and force it to provide bounty that it did not "relinquish" in its raw, unmediated form. Nature becomes something that is mastered, rather than simply adapted to. Activities such as the hunt do not allow me to dominate nature in the same way, because I must still operate within its limits. As a result

¹²"Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature has provided and left it in, he has mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property. It being by him removed from the common state nature has placed it in, it has by this labour something annexed to it that excludes the common right of other men." John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1952), p. 17.

of agricultural developments, I am no longer forced to integrate myself into the environment in quite the same way. Instead of merely adapting to it, I force it to adapt to me. Rousseau anticipates Marx and Hegel who affirm that through labour the "estrangement between the objective and the subjective world" is overcome and we "transform nature into an appropriate medium for self development."¹³ The agricultural mode of production also produces another change in the mindset of human beings. They begin to recognize that immediate satisfaction could be delayed in order to obtain greater satisfaction later on, reaching a new level of self-control: "Moreover, to devote oneself to that occupation and to sow the lands, one must be resolved to lose something at first in order to gain a great deal later: a precaution quite far removed from the mind of the savage man, who as I have said, finds it quite difficult to give thought in the morning to what he will need at night"(DOI 66). The ability to postpone satisfaction becomes endemic to bourgeois society as the promise of even greater satisfaction impels us to delay immediate gratification sometimes indefinitely.

Nevertheless, the link between the domination of nature and the domination of other human beings is by no means self evident. Treating nature as the material on which I mark my subjectivity does not necessarily impel me to behave in the same manner

¹³ Marcuse makes this argument in reference to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*. Because we shape the external world, it is no longer purely external. Furthermore, by labouring we become members of a community. Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 77.

towards other human beings. As long as the agricultural mode of production remains part of a subsistence economy, each tending primarily to their own needs, social bonds remain intact. Affection, not need, is the cohesive force within the community. People work outside, and the public space although somewhat diminished, is still in place. However, the invention of other forms of production, particularly industry, disrupt this balance, and begin to gnaw at the seams of the community. Even in agricultural communities, the ability to master nature has limits since human beings have to conform to its cycles. The advent of industrial production, takes the ability to master nature to another level, for human beings can produce things without integrating themselves into their environment. Sites of production become segregated and the public space, which had already been contracted through agricultural production, begins to erode at a more rapid pace. It becomes difficult to maintain the emotional bonds which had held the community together.

The division of labour also means that people are no longer self sufficient and now depend on each other to satisfy their material needs. According to Rousseau, when need becomes the social cement, people begin to objectify one another, just as they had already begun to objectify nature. Their relationships became more instrumental, and they see each other as means. Farmers have to meet the needs of industrial labourers as well, and have to extract a surplus from their crop: "The invention of the other arts was therefore necessary to force the human race to apply itself to that of agriculture. Once men were needed in order to smelt and forge the iron, other men were needed in order to feed

them"(DOI 66).

As long as there was a direct reciprocity in the exchange, the objectification of others did not necessarily result in domination. However, the growth of exchange relationships made it difficult to prevent inequality from tarnishing social relations, thereby undermining their reciprocity. First of all, the capacity for work varies between individuals enabling some to accrue more goods than others: "Things in this state could have remained equal, if talents had been equal, and if the use of iron and consumption of foodstuffs had always been in precise balance. But this proportion, which was not maintained by anything, was soon broken. The strongest did the most work; the most adroit turned theirs to better advantage: the most ingenious found ways to shorten their labour"(DOI 67). Moreover, because labour is not always divided in accordance with need, certain products would at times be in greater demand, providing some with the opportunity to reap a profit. In order to secure the goods one desperately needed, one would offer more in exchange for these goods. In this way, human beings stumble upon the ability to make a profit, which thrives on imbalance and inequality: "The farmer had a greater need for iron, or the blacksmith had a greater need for wheat; and in labouring equally, the one earned a great deal while the other barely had enough to live"(DOI 67). Once "one man needed the help of another, as soon as one man realized that it was useful for a single individual to have provisions for two, equality disappeared, property came into existence, labour became necessary"(DOI 65).

The invention of money greatly facilitates profit making since there is no longer a natural limit placed upon accumulation: "It became a great instrument of acquisition which was inaccessible to those who had nothing"(CPC 298). The combination of exchange relationships and the development of money is potent, paving the road towards exploitative social relationships. The attenuation of the community also means that a vital brake on these tendencies was eradicated. The temptation to exploit those with whom one has no immediate connection would be harder to resist.

The finite nature of land, and the ability of some to reap larger profits than others create a wide schism which separate the propertied and the propertyless. Both Locke and Rousseau point to this division, but they would account for the social stratification differently. Locke differentiates those who work from the idlers who are more reluctant to recognize property rights. Laziness and poverty are linked in his view. The propertied are the industrious who provide for themselves and act as the cornerstone for a peaceful and prosperous society.¹⁴ Rousseau sees the friction between the two classes through a different lens. He maintains that the opposition is between the greedy exploitative rich and the poor who are barred from access to property and forced into a new form of slavery: "some could no longer be enlarged except at the expense of others"(DOI 68). Bloom correctly identifies this inequality as the defining feature of bourgeois society according

¹⁴The industrious remain under constant threat by the rapacious poor in Locke's view, and provide the primary motivation for the establishment of a government to protect their rights.

to Rousseau¹⁵. While for Locke, private property is the key to social peace, for Rousseau it lies at the root of modern man's problems.¹⁶

The system of needs: a circle of deceit

Rousseau had made the important point, that it is not need, but rather affection that solidifies communities. Although human beings could not give up their desire for such affection it becomes more difficult to obtain once inequality reigns, for the process of human objectification then assumes a frenetic pace. Those who are deprived of property could not obtain access to it, while those who already hold property could use their advantage to dominate and subjugate the poor. The propertyless are forced to either "receive or steal their subsistence from the hands of the rich"(DOI 68): "Let us summarize in a few words the social part of the two estates. *You need me, for I am rich and you are poor. Let us come to an agreement between ourselves I will permit you to have the honour of serving me, provided you give me what little you have for the trouble I will be taking to command you*"(PE 134). The rich man's position is not dependent on honour bestowed upon him by members of a community. In a society where public esteem depends on social

¹⁵"His great rhetoric was used to make compassion for the poor central to relations among men and indignation at their situation central to political action." Allan Bloom, 'Rousseau: The Turning Point,' *Giants and Dwarfs*, p. 220-221.

¹⁶Allan Bloom, 'Rousseau: The Turning Point,' *Giants and Dwarves*, p. 217.

recognition, one's skills must be manifested in a public setting. Exploitative behaviour is less likely to be condoned when the eyes of the whole community are directed towards the individual, even if the society is stratified along other lines.¹⁷ However, wealth does not require a public space in which to elicit recognition and therefore the competitive element is not balanced by the requirement for public approval. The impersonal form of the new status symbols maims the social spirit and "personality" is "metamorphosed into a form of capital."¹⁸ People still covet recognition, but they are recognized for what they have, not for who they are.

The subject-object relationship which has its roots in agricultural and industrial production intensifies with a burgeoning and seemingly unstoppable inequality. Once inequality is rampant, we begin to see others as a threat and the fight for equality quickly evolves into a contest for domination. We begin to interpret everything negatively. My strengths are your weaknesses and conversely, your strength is my weakness. The need to protect my identity and self esteem demands that I rob you of yours. Thus, it is the combination of property and inequality, rather than simply property that impels us to apply zero-sum calculations to personal relationships. Ironically, my desire for integration

¹⁷One should not overestimate the damaging effect that the gaze of the community can have on the individual since it can enforce conformity. If Rousseau's idealistic portrait of communities sometimes glosses over these difficulties, it is because he is using them as a foil to point out how damaging the absence of a public forum can be. The authoritarian nature of the small communities is a central theme in *Julie: La Nouvelle Héloïse*.

¹⁸Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity*,(New York: Atheneum, 1970), p. 140-41.

becomes displaced, and I rely increasingly on my property to satisfy my need for belonging.

The portrait Rousseau paints of civil society greatly resembles the Hobbesian world. Each Hobbesian individual craves for endless satisfaction but encounters insuperable obstacles along his path. Ironically, it may in part be the inability to satisfy our thirst for integration which fuels this endless cycle of greed. Other human beings are major impediments to self gratification and thus individuals constantly seek to outwit and thwart the plans of others, generating a condition of perpetual conflict. Moreover, they covet the respect and admiration of others, since this "enhances" their power. My own worth is purely relative and is dependent on the advantages I may accrue over others. Since absolute power is always beyond grasp, the struggle for it is incessant.

Despite the spiralling competition, I still find myself in the curious position of needing those that I struggle against since the division of labour ensures that no one is self sufficient. In 'primitive communities' emotional and material interdependence are intertwined. This link is ruptured as people begin to depend on strangers, with whom they have no emotional rapport, for material needs. Such a bifurcation of needs and passions cultivates a growing hypocrisy. The division of labour and the corrosion of the community make personal recognition more difficult to attain. However, the emotional need for such recognition persists and so insincere flattery becomes its pernicious substitute. In some ways, the problem with civil society is not only too much dependence,

but too little dependence. I depend on you and you depend on me as an object, not as a person who is recognized by you. As I will point out in the upcoming chapter, such recognition must be mutual if we are to become truly interdependent.

Deprived of the public forum in which our needs could be met, we retreat further and further into our own isolation. Hence, the most immediate relationships are forged with things rather than people, and due to the alien and impersonal nature of these connections, we begin to absolutize an individual that we do not even know. Ironically, the concept of personhood arises when we behave less like persons and more like the objects we possess. Berman draws attention to the fact that it is under these shifting circumstances that the concept of the self comes to the surface, even though it is still a hollow shell: "The market defined the individual in terms that were purely relative and constantly shifting, as a function of his competitive relations with others: as a rich man or a poor man, as a prestigious or an inexpedient match, as a citizen of a conquering or a conquered nation, as a winner or a loser, as a master or a slave. It thus defined the human *self*-as a constant, underlying force which organizes and unifies all personal experience-out of existence."¹⁹ We begin to think of our "self" in the same way that we would conceive of our property. The less of it that I share with you, the more I have for myself. Yet, ironically this also prevents me from becoming the self that I am even capable of sharing. Nevertheless, Berman argues that the notion of self transformation and self creation is born

¹⁹Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity*, p. 144.

in bourgeois society because we are no longer chained to particular roles. We are free to continuously don new costumes, even if we are not yet free to become ourselves. Rousseau is acutely aware of the link between property and personhood. We attempt to safeguard our persons, in the same way that we endeavour to protect our property by safeguarding it against "external" incursions. Who we are becomes a function of what others can or cannot do to us.

Individuals begin to objectify each other, and consequently to gnaw at their own subjectivity. For Rousseau, bourgeois subject-object relationships always dissolve into object-object relationships. One cannot instrumentalize the other, without simultaneously instrumentalizing the self. In a world where each tries to satisfy their own needs, no one freely becomes the instrument of another. Moreover, a thick cloud of mistrust surrounds relationships and I take for granted the ill-will and deceit of others whom I must force to submit to me in the interests of my own survival. In such circumstances it is extremely difficult to find the recognition that I covet. Therefore, I must objectify myself in order to elicit the service of my fellow citizen, and at least appear to serve him in serving myself. I will rarely be able to convince another that altruism underlies my motivation, but I may be able to persuade her that I can offer a fruitful exchange. Paradoxically, the only way for me to connect with another is to participate in a masquerade. Thus, the best way to dominate others is to also become their slave. Bourgeois society, more than any other form of social organization makes the link between domination and servitude clear. The

need to submit to another and the propensity to dominate are part of a single process of objectification: "Citizens allow themselves to be oppressed only insofar as they are driven by blind ambition... domination becomes more dear to them than independence, and they consent to wear chains in order to be able to give them in turn to others"(DOI 77).

As a result of the process of self-objectification, a new territorialism begins to apply to notions of self identity. My gain translates into your loss, and your gain is my loss. However, the irony of this situation is that in the industrial age, the self is defensive about a 'territory' that it no longer recognizes. I have no sense of who I am, other than knowing that I am not-you. I would viciously strive to protect a self whose contours I could no longer discern. Since my identity depends on outdoing you, I am forced to take my cues from outside of myself. However, I am trying to outdo someone whom I cannot get to know, since the fear of inequality encourages all of us to don masks. Thus, I do not know myself because I am orienting myself according to you, but you in turn orient yourself according to me. The result is that neither of us has an identity to speak of.

Starobinski points out that for the "man of appearance there are no ends, only means."²⁰ However, he insists that this feverish hypocrisy is intrinsic to society itself, which, by definition requires a conflict with nature.²¹ Because the relationship with nature must be mediated upon entry into society, we are impelled to take refuge "behind false

²⁰Jean Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, p. 28.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 23.

appearances."²² He insists that inequality is the result of the "vain concern for appearances."²³ I have maintained that the reverse is true, namely that the excessive hypocrisy of bourgeois society is the result of inequality. Moreover, I do not believe that Rousseau equates mediated relations with inauthenticity. In fact, he points out that such relations are necessary to develop a sense of self and also to recover the world of nature one has supposedly left behind. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, all the attributes which we consider to be human, such as language, and the passions are indicative of our mediated relationship to nature. Authenticity cannot be simply associated with nature, as Starobinski's analysis infers since in the passive state of pure nature, the question of authenticity could not possibly arise. A self that is not an agent can neither be authentic nor inauthentic. As soon as one begins to develop language and/or use tools one must relinquish the direct experience of nature, but this is by no means an inauthentic experience.

Starobinski also claims that happiness and agency are mutually exclusive, since true happiness would require an undifferentiated state of oneness. However, for Rousseau, freedom is an integral part of human happiness and only a mediated self can exercise her freedom and maintain the position of distance necessary for the development of self consciousness. We are encouraged to hone our skills and develop as individuals, because

²²*Ibid.*, p. 23

²³Jean Starobinski, 'On the *Discourse on Inequality*,' in *Transparency and Obstruction*, p. 285.

we never feel completely at home in our environment. This is not to deny that the self longs for its prehuman innocence, and that part of the quest for happiness is to mimic this blissful condition. However, as soon as one attempts to go back to this stage, one is also tacitly acknowledging that one has abandoned it forever.

The pervasive sense of uprootedness invigorated and sustained competitive drives. Rousseau's writing suggests that the quest for a home and for a feeling of situatedness has not been abandoned but rather has become distorted in the bourgeois social milieu. The experience of "selfhood" becomes so closely allied to the race for private property which not only precludes enduring ties with other citizens but itself is constantly under threat. Insecurity about one's identity becomes the hallmark of the bourgeois social order. The desire to be part of a whole is metamorphosed into an insatiable drive to have and dominate the whole. Such longings could never be fulfilled, and thus the competitive momentum could be sustained indefinitely. The more I struggle to assert myself, the greater my sense of alienation. According to Noble, the social inequalities resulting from property "remove all natural constraints upon the subject's amour propre."²⁴ My competitive zeal can not be satisfied by your recognition or that of the community since I always doubt the sincerity of such recognition. Therefore, there is no mechanism in place to balance out the competitive aspect of *amour-propre*. Bourgeois society is a social order

²⁴Richard Noble, *Language, Subjectivity and Freedom in Rousseau's Moral Philosophy*, p. 121.

in which the means thwarted the goals that gave rise to them in the first place. People forgot that their yearnings for a home had launched them on their competitive expedition to begin with. Means had completely overtaken the ends that they had originally intended to serve.

Links between the 'inside' and 'outside' could no longer be forged through a process of self-externalization since one simply performed the repetitive tasks which were dictated by the system. To say that one is dominated by the outside in bourgeois society as Starobinski claims is somewhat inaccurate²⁵ and belies the profundity of the alienation experienced in bourgeois society. The term 'outside' presupposes an awareness of an inside that counters it. Rousseau, in my view, suggests that the self has become an empty shell, and it is ironic that the language of 'inner' and 'outer' is in common usage precisely when the 'inner self' is most debilitated. The bourgeois citizen knows that his position is always precarious, and is challenged from all fronts. Thus, he can never enjoy the sense of integration that he nevertheless continues to long for. He assumes that residing deep within the crevices of his soul, is an inner soul, waiting to be unleashed. The need to constantly don masks makes him forget what this alleged inner-self is comprised of. It is no accident that the term "finding oneself" is so pervasive in market societies. We cling to the hope that underneath the layers and layers of appearances lurks the true self, waiting to be unveiled. However, it is precisely the assumption that this inner self is located within

²⁵Starobinski assumes that an inner nature exists and that once human beings re-discover it, they will recognize each other.

us and is best exposed during moments of contemplative solitude which illustrates the depth of the problem. For Rousseau, the resuscitation of the "inner self" is dependent on the revival of the community. Thus, the inner self needs a renewed outer self in order to flourish. The nature of this relationship will be explored in greater depth in the following chapter.

The system of needs, tainted by inequality detracts from the development of individual's agency. Here Rousseau would disagree with Hegel who claims that the system of needs constitutes a stepping stone leading one towards the universal. Hegel suggests that property becomes a way of incorporating what is not I into the I, thereby expanding the horizons of the self, and setting the stage for contractual social relationships: "A person must translate his freedom into an external sphere in order to exist as Idea. Personality is the first, still wholly abstract determination of the absolute and infinite will, and therefore this sphere distinct from the person, the sphere capable of embodying his freedom is likewise determined as what is immediately different and separable from him."²⁶ The freedom of the person is exercised through things, and he thus learns to "alienate" himself: "Mental aptitudes, erudition, artistic skill, even things ecclesiastical...become subjects of

²⁶G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, tr. T.M. Knox, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), sect. 41. Hegel acknowledges that private property has an isolating effect and prevents individuals from having a direct relation to the whole. Unity is only abstractly achieved through a universal legal order. The community which was established through the state would at first also be abstract, and protect property rights.

a contract, brought on to a parity through being bought and sold, with things recognized as things."²⁷ It is this alienation from himself that enables him to forge a connection with other people. By giving up part of what is his, he affirms his association with others. Nevertheless, this can have deleterious effects and result in a renunciation of our own personhood: "By alienating the whole of my time, as crystallized in my work, and everything I produced, I would be making into another's property the substance of my being, my universal activity and actuality, my personality."²⁸ Yet, through the system of exchange, in which I have surrendered what is mine, and given up a part of my identity, relationships of interdependence are created. The pursuit of one's own end indirectly benefits all: "Subjective self seeking turns into a contribution to the satisfaction of the needs of everyone else. That is to say by a dialectical advance, subjective self seeking turns into the mediation of the particular through the universal, with the result that each man is earning producing and enjoying on his own account is *eo ipso* earning, producing and earning for the enjoyment of everyone else."²⁹ The community of our things precedes the community of our persons. Men enter into relations not based on familial or social ties but simply as men: "A man counts as a man in virtue of his manhood alone, not because

²⁷*Ibid.*, sect. 43.

²⁸*Ibid.*, sect. 67.

²⁹*Ibid.*, sect. 199.

he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian."³⁰ The state keeps the warring interests in check, creating an artificial community. Once one recognizes that one's narrow interests and the common interest can be reconciled, one is ready for the highest form of community, namely the state. Thus, according to the path traced by Hegel, the community has first to be recognized as an abstraction before it can be concretized. The state and the community are tantamount for Hegel.

For Rousseau the process occurs in reverse. We relate to each other through our things only because the community has been destroyed. The system of needs which for Hegel is a precursor to the political community, for Rousseau acts as a pale substitute for the community that we have lost. Hegel also maintains that the impersonal relations established through the exchange of things forces people to respect each other's autonomy. Rousseau would maintain that such abstract respect merely cloaks profoundly disrespectful actions. Proclamations extolling the dignity of the individual are fraudulent according to Rousseau, since inequality overshadows any levelling effect the market might have. This inequality is not only an inequality of economic and political power but touches directly on one's personal identity. Because those who are barred from access to property sell their labour, they are forced to relinquish control of their activity. Furthermore, for Rousseau the actualization of Hegel's abstract community is unlikely to occur, because conceptual awareness alone is insufficient. Rather than aiding in the development of closer

³⁰*Ibid.*, 209

ties, it fosters a growing hypocrisy, as people pay homage to the "common good" in order to satisfy their own narrow desires. They couch their particular interests into the language of the universal. As Shklar points out inequality becomes the real "objective of their striving."³¹ The fear of inequality impels me to shape my needs in accordance with those of others. If my neighbour drives a big car, I must also drive one to ensure that I remain on par with him. This homogenizing tendency magnifies the effects of inequality rather than diminishing them. Since skills no longer elicit public admiration, the only method by which I can stand out is through the quantity of my property. The envy of the less fortunate is inflamed and this in turn reinflates the burgeoning pride of the rich: "Finally, I would prove that if one sees a handful of powerful and rich men at the height of greatness and fortune while the mob grovels in obscurity and misery, it is because the former prize the things they enjoy only to the extent that the others are deprived of them; and because without changing their position, they would cease to be happy, if the people ceased to be miserable"(DOI 78). Recognition in civil society is not tied to benevolence but is quite compatible with resentment. The resentment, in turn, fuels the system of needs because it incites people to work harder in order to stay afloat. Thus, Rousseau would argue that Hegel is blind to the interdependence between the system of needs and inequality. He does not examine how the needs are created.

The prototypical bourgeois citizen enjoys neither the simple contentment of the

³¹Judith Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory*, p. 52.

natural man, concerned solely with himself, nor the sense of integration of the patriot who is willing to sacrifice himself to his community. Rousseau insists that the world of the bourgeois is the worst of all possible worlds, since its citizens enjoy neither integration nor independence but rather an isolating dependence. The bourgeois instrumentalizes others as well as himself, making "only calculations of private interest."³² Marx follows Rousseau when he claims that in civil society each "acts simply as a private individual, treats other men as means, degrades himself to the role of a mere means, and becomes the plaything of alien powers."³³ This precludes the possibility of forging personal connections with fellow human beings. Money becomes the new God to which one dedicates one's life and one leads a frenzied existence in constant pursuit of it: "On the other hand, the citizen is always active and in a sweat, always agitated, and unceasingly tormenting himself in order to seek still more laborious occupations"(DOI 80). Thus, he becomes most dependent on a force that cannot even reward him with recognition. He disrespects his fellow citizens but covets their admiration knowing only how to be happy "on the testimony of others"(DOI 80).

Horowitz asserts that civil society is witness to an ever widening schism between man and citizen.³⁴ On the one hand, market relations demand a pursuit of narrow self

³²Allan Bloom, 'Rousseau: The Turning Point,' in *Giants and Dwarfs*, p. 214.

³³Karl Marx, 'On the Jewish Question,' in *The Marx -Engels Reader*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), p. 34.

³⁴Asher Horowitz, *Rousseau, Nature and History*, p. 120.

interest in which my needs are pitted against yours, and I must trample upon my neighbour in order to be the first to capture an elusive prize. On the other hand, I must be loyal towards the state and respect the principles which it 'embodies', namely the autonomy of my fellow citizens. What I am really respecting, according to Rousseau, is the universal right of all citizens to devour each other. Although personality may be fragmented into "antithetical and unrelated aspects"³⁵, the internal division plaguing the bourgeois is both greater and smaller than one might think. Since one's duty to the wider whole does not demand real political action, the citizen can continue his race for self aggrandizement unencumbered by moral or political obligations to the community. As long as he obeys the political authorities and periodically succumbs to the bureaucracy he must not adjust his actions in accordance with principles. Because the devotion to his community is so abstract, he is not faced with a dilemma when contemplating his actions. Although, his identity is split, he does not experience this division with any intensity.

Yet, at the same time, one cannot deny that a large rift separates the ideology the citizen allegedly upholds from his concrete actions. The role of ideology is not to inspire his activity, but to act as an opiate which prevents him from reflecting too deeply on his behaviour. I simply assume that I am part of a whole, without trying to make myself part of one. Increasingly, I fail to both act on my thoughts and think through my actions. Paradoxically, an inflamed *amour-propre* begins to undercut itself. Initially, the capacity

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 120.

to compare oneself to others had stimulated the imagination and facilitated the process of self development, for it provided a perspective from beyond the self which enabled the individual to transform herself. However, when our penchant for comparison becomes extreme, it discourages rather than encourages reflection, and we learn to mould ourselves in accordance with social pressures. I assume that my differences from others might put me at a disadvantage, and thus I parrot the appetites and tastes of others. It is inequality, and not equality which leads to a levelling of interests.

Although we are no longer accountable to personal masters, the faceless despot of bourgeois society tightens the chains which envelop us. Because differences between people dissolve in the indefatigable quest for money, we are deprived of forces which allow us to develop and grow. We all look too much alike for us to be able to encourage each other's development. In such a colourless society, the only distinction between us is based on wealth. We do not have to transform ourselves in order to distinguish ourselves; we only have to accrue more property: "in general, wealth, nobility or rank, power and personal merit are the principal distinctions by which someone is measured in society. I would prove that the agreement or conflict of these various forces is the surest indication of a well-or ill constituted state. I would make it apparent that among these four types of inequality, since personal qualities are the origin of all the others, wealth is the last to which they are ultimately reduced because it readily serves to buy all the rest, since it is the most immediately useful to well being and the easiest to communicate"(DOI 78). The

means engulf the ends, as money not only turns us into clones of each other, but causes us to lose sight of a goal that can lend direction to our striving. Qualities are assessed by the facility with which they can be converted into money and our equality consists in homogeneity. Even our attempts to stand out make us resemble one another more and more.

The state: an illusory home

The social fabric of bourgeois society is inherently fragile, and the wealthy are governed by the constant fear that others will prey on their riches. Since relationships between people are marred by conflict, the possibility of warfare is acute: "Thus, when both the most powerful or the most miserable made of their strength or their needs a sort of right to another's goods, equivalent, according to them, to the right of property, the destruction of equality followed by the most frightful disorder"(DOI 68). Unlike Hobbes, Rousseau does not see this merely as a war of each against all, but rather as a class struggle. The prospect of civil strife prompted the wealthy to institute the rule of law, under the pretence of protecting the property rights of all. As the class with the most to lose, the incentive to establish a social order was strong: "Since the poor had nothing to lose but their liberty, it would have been utter folly for them to have voluntarily surrendered the only good remaining to them, gaining nothing in return. On the contrary,

since the rich men were, so to speak, sensitive in all parts of their goods, it was much easier to do them harm, and consequently they had to take greater precautions to protect themselves"(DOI 71).

To legitimate the institutions of the bourgeois state, the spectre of turmoil must always be brandished before its citizens: "Considerably less than the equivalent of this discourse was needed to convince crude, easily seduced men who also had too many disputes to settle among themselves to be able to get along without arbiters, and too much greed and ambition to be able to get along without masters for long."(DOI 70)

International warfare became an effective means of social control: "the bodies politic soon experienced the inconveniences that had forced private individuals to leave it and that state became even more deadly among these great bodies than that state had among the private individuals of whom they were composed. Whence came the national wars, battles, murders and reprisals that make nature tremble and offend reason, and all those horrible prejudices that rank the honour of shedding human blood among the virtues"(DOI 70).

Moreover, tumult is portrayed as the upshot of natural human traits and therefore the need for the state is continuously reinforced: "I know that enslaved peoples do nothing but boast of the peace and tranquillity they enjoy in their chains and that *they give the name 'peace' the most miserable slavery*"(DOI 72). A false integration is maintained by upholding the threat of further disintegration. Statehood is thus negatively affirmed. Rousseau's bourgeois state resembles that of Hobbes. An artificial unity is constructed that

monopolizes coercive tactics in order to prevent internecine strife from rending the fabric of this fractious "whole". Human beings surrender their authority in exchange for their protection. However, for Hobbes, the community is a group of people who are subjected to the same sovereign authority. Unlike Rousseau, he insists that the community and the sovereign are created in the same act and that there can be no community without a sovereign.

If the state is to survive it must foment some internal discord in order to establish legitimacy: "One would see the leaders fomenting whatever can weaken men united together by disuniting them; whatever can give society an air of apparent concord while sowing the seeds of real division; whatever can inspire defiance and hatred in the various classes through the opposition of their rights and interests, and can, as a consequence strengthen the power that contains them all"(DOI 79). As a result, we become equals in slavery rather than in freedom: "Here all private individuals become equals again, because they are nothing. ...Here everything is returned solely to the law of the strongest, and consequently to a new state of nature different from the one with which we began, in that the one was the state of nature in its purity, and this last on is the fruit of an excess of corruption"(DOI 79). Because of our fallen nature, we authorize a powerful magisterial class which derives its power from the fractious society it controls. Our equality in baseness becomes the justification for a new servitude: "They all ran to chain themselves in the belief that they secured their liberty, for although they had enough sense to realize

the advantages of a political establishment, they did not have enough experience to foresee its dangers"(DOI 70).

The law of the state also maintained an egalitarian posture, for all citizens were considered juridical equals and had identical rights bestowed upon them. The rhetoric of equality camouflaged the reality of inequality: "Such was, or should have been, the origin of society and laws, which gave new fetters to the weak and new forces to the rich, irretrievably destroyed natural liberty, established forever the law of property and of inequality, changed adroit usurpation into an irrevocable right"(DOI 70). Thus, one of the primary functions of the state was ideological, since it provided an almost supersensible realm in which equality prevailed. Moreover, if the disadvantaged were convinced that equality was within their reach, they were less likely to channel their resentment into revolt but rather would labour more intensively to realize their dreams. If I find myself with little property and at the bottom of the social hierarchy I must be led to believe that only hard work can extricate me from my quagmire. The state inculcates a false hope into the hearts of its poorest citizens. By proclaiming that there is a higher plane on which we are all equal, the fantasies of all citizens are kept alive. Those that are on the lowest rungs of the hierarchical ladder perceive their condition to be a temporary setback since the principles that underpin the entire system contradict their personal experiences. Yet, while the state proclaims that we are all equal, it does not exhort us to treat each other equally. We may be equal before the law, but we are not equal before each other. Ironically, by

absolving the individual of responsibility for the equality of others, and demanding only an abstract allegiance to a principle, the state allows inequality to prevail while upholding equality as sacrosanct. Because the state acts as an insufficient substitute for the community, politics becomes an alien activity, driving an even sharper wedge between the private and public spheres. The despotism of magistrates was not curtailed because citizens had lost interest in the affairs of state: "Moreover, citizens allow themselves to be oppressed only insofar as they are driven by blind ambition; and looking more below than above them, domination becomes more dear to them than independence, and they consent to wear chains in order to be able to give them in turn to others"(DOI 77).

Nevertheless, while the state is a meagre substitute for a genuine community, it does signify a need for at least the limited transcendence of personal interests. In the absence of a real social home, we must cling to the illusion of integration which it offers. Marx, in some sense, echoes Rousseau, when he ascribes a semi-religious role to the state: "The political state, in relation to civil society, is just as spiritual as is heaven in relation to earth. It stands in the same opposition to civil society, and overcomes it in the same manner as religion overcomes the narrowness of the profane world; ie. it has always acknowledged it again, re-established it, and allowed itself to be dominated by it."³⁶ It is no accident that nationalism has accompanied the rise of states, for it is necessary to find a basis for allegiance when the community itself has faltered.

³⁶Karl Marx, 'On the Jewish Question,' in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 34.

In short, the relationship of a citizen to his state is one of impersonal belonging. The need for cooperation becomes clear to us when our personal interests are obstructed and we recognize the need to foster a climate in which we can satisfy these needs: "At first, society consisted merely of some general conventions that all private individuals promised to observe, and concerning which the community became the guarantor for each of them"(DOI 71). I cannot compete with you without subscribing to some framework in which this competition can take place and which lays down rules for its execution. Being subject to the same rules, and paying homage to the same symbols, we find ourselves indebted to an abstraction rather than to other members of the community. Thus, the state is a surrogate that emerges from the ashes of the community that has dissolved itself. Its politicians are necessary when politics has been expunged from the society.

The birth of conceptual equality: towards the *Social Contract*

Rousseau's pessimism and antipathy towards bourgeois society does not lead him to abandon all hope. Despite its shortcomings, the bourgeois order brought the equality of citizens and the priority of the self to the forefront of political debate, sowing the seeds for its own overcoming. Even though inequality and property were linked in Rousseau's thought, he also recognizes his indebtedness to bourgeois society for giving birth to conceptual equality and the notion of self development.

Although property confers political and economic status upon citizens, it is also a great leveller because it is an external adjunct and thus is subject to the ravages of time and fortune. The naked self stripped of property could not be differentiated from others and therefore could also not be considered a legitimate ruler of others. Individuals are preoccupied with their quest for money and property. Because all acting had been absorbed in the quest for acquisition, nothing was left to differentiate one individual from the next, aside from their property. Differences in talent or familial ties had become obsolete: "Pecuniary wealth is purely relative. According to the circumstances (which may change for nay one of ten thousand reasons), one can with one and the same amount of money, be rich for one moment and poor the next"(GP 73). Thus, while property contributed to vast differentials in terms of wealth, it was also a great leveller. Because most individuals subscribe to the logic of the market, they accept the abstract equality that they "enjoy".

In a social system where traditional bases of hierarchy and inequality are delegitimated, a legal order in which all are juridical equals is erected. Property relations are never permanent and therefore one could not institute a stable political hierarchy since those who climb to the pinnacle find themselves under the constant threat of expulsion by the impersonal forces of the market. Formal equality thus becomes ideologically desirable. Property, which to Rousseau is the bane of civilized existence, becomes an ideological leveller: "Let us institute rules of justice and peace to which all will be obliged to

conform, which will make special exceptions for no one"(DOI: 69). Because individuals are forced to play different roles in order to adapt to the demands of the market, the idea that they are masters of their own destiny begins to percolate, since they are not dependent on any particular individual.

Thus, Rousseau thought that in bourgeois society, individuals had reached a new nadir of alienation which would eventually attune these lost souls to the need for integration. He himself had become conscious of the necessity for a balance between individuation and integration by contrasting bourgeois societies with both ancient political orders and primitive communities. Ancient "utopias" had sacrificed individuation to a rigid collectivism which left little room for individual expression. In ancient Rome, only force sustained the whole and therefore it would crumble under the pressure of military defeats. Bourgeois society had tipped towards the opposite extreme, since there was no community which commanded an individual's allegiance. The lack of community stifled individuals because they were thrust into relationships of ruthless competition. Primitive communities had maintained a delicate balance between individuation and integration but they had not been conscious of this balance, and therefore it unravelled easily. Rousseau hoped that his historical analysis would force individuals to recognize that neither individuation nor integration could survive independently of each other. According to Rousseau, the survival of the community and the individual depended on the concerted efforts to achieve a balance between the two tendencies. In his view, this could only be

achieved if equality was restored to the political community. Transforming formal equality into substantive equality becomes Rousseau's project in the *Social Contract*.

CHAPTER THREE: AN ANTI-UTOPIAN UTOPIA: ROUSSEAU'S SOCIAL CONTRACT

In the *Social Contract*, Rousseau struggles to find a way out of the impasse that beleaguered bourgeois society. Individual and community had to be reconciled for he had shown, in the *Second Discourse*, that they could not survive independently of each other. In light of this connection, it is surprising that the debate surrounding the *Social Contract* has often revolved around issues concerning Rousseau's totalitarian¹ or liberal leanings. Such interpretations condemn Rousseau to make a choice between the individual or the community, a choice he consistently refuses to make. Rousseau's use of the language of formal rationality prompts other analysts to stress the liberal foundation of his thought, underestimating the extent to which his work transcends liberal categories. Thus, they consider the *Social Contract* a departure from his previous works because its abstract rationalism stands in stark contrast to the focus on both historical process and the passions of earlier works. For example, Strauss asserts that the accidental nature of historical process "cannot supply man with a standard, and that, if that process has a hidden purpose, its purposefulness cannot be recognized except if there are trans-historical

¹see J. McManners, 'The Social Contract and Rousseau's Revolt Against Society,' in *Hobbes and Rousseau* ed. Maurice Cranston and Richard Peters (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), p. 294. Lester Crocker finds an authoritarian streak in Rousseau, insisting that 'the goal is to make the people think they want what some have decided they ought to want.' Lester Crocker, *Nature and Culture: Ethical Thought in the French Enlightenment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963) p. 476.

standards." ² For Strauss, Rousseau becomes a liberal, albeit a reluctant one, since human beings require the knowledge of the true public right which transcends historical process in order to be able to espouse a moral philosophy at all.³ Strauss insists that Rousseau cannot propound a philosophy of the "good" because this would undermine the radical independence and freedom of the individual which he celebrates. A procedural framework must be established which preserves the freedom of all individuals, by preventing them from interfering with the freedom of others. Rousseau must content himself with the establishment of a political order that protects individuals rather than establishing a community which embraces them. Therefore, Strauss superimposes onto Rousseau's thought his own conviction that freedom and the "good" are ultimately irreconcilable. By espousing a theory of "right" Rousseau finds a means of limiting the insatiable desires of human beings so that they do not undercut the freedom of others. However, he cannot make any claims about the existence of a whole without destabilizing their freedom.

I will argue that Rousseau attempts to collapse the distinction between public right and public good, which Strauss insists that he upholds. For Rousseau, freedom only has meaning within the community's boundaries. The *Social Contract* is not merely about preventing individuals from trampling upon the freedom of others, but about developing such freedom through interactions within the social order. If Rousseau relies heavily

²Leo Strauss, *Nature Right and History*, p. 274.

³*Ibid.*, p. 274.

upon the language of legislation and rights so familiar to liberals, it is because he is using it to push his readers beyond the threshold of liberalism by pointing out that the sanctity of the individual is best preserved within a *community* of equals. The problem that Rousseau faces is that he must somehow create a community between individuals who are accustomed to seeing each other as arch-rivals and between whom all the bonds of affection have been severed.

Interpreters such as Cassirer praise Rousseau for the formal rationality that surfaces for the first time in the *Social Contract*. According to Cassirer, emotions such as happiness are arbitrary and can not become a reliable form of social cohesion: "freedom did not mean arbitrariness but the overcoming and elimination of all arbitrariness, the submission to a strict and inviolable law which the individual erects over himself. Not renunciation of and release from this law but free consent to it determines the genuine and true character of freedom."⁴ However, by affirming the superiority of reason over the passions in this way, Cassirer turns a blind eye to Rousseau's efforts throughout the course of his writing to illuminate their entanglement. While reason can provide the framework for the political order, it cannot supply the content. This problem becomes particularly pronounced at the end of the work, where Rousseau is forced to rely on irrational bulwarks such as the legislator and religion.

⁴Ernst Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 55.

Rousseau reflects upon the stages of humanity's historical development and discovers that the individual's independence could only be fostered within the parameter of a community. His experience of bourgeois society had taught him that the weakest communities did not produce the strongest individuals. Similarly, ancient republics which relied heavily on force to maintain their collective identity did so at the expense of the community. From his investigation, he deduces that the individual had to make himself part of the community which made him. This required neither complete absorption by the community, nor a rigid separation from it. Individuation and integration were interdependent and must be kept in balance. Because these two tendencies are processes rather than conditions, the balance between them must be continuously recreated. I will argue that the general will is an educative device which demonstrates the necessity for trying to achieve a reconciliation between the two. Rousseau hoped to furnish human beings with an objective for their continuous striving, while refraining from predetermining what direction that striving should take.

Rousseau's attempt to set up a political order in which integration and individuation are mutually reinforcing ultimately fails. However, the failure to achieve this reconciliation may also be a testament to its success. We are perfectible beings only insofar as we remain imperfect. In short, it may be the very *process* of trying to effect the reconciliation between individuation and integration, individual and community, rather than the reconciliation itself that constitutes the greatest tribute to human freedom. This

also implies that the tension which separates the individual from the community can never be fully eradicated. Once we have left the state of nature, we can never again experience a condition of undividedness. By forcing each individual to participate in the making of the laws that lend shape to the community, Rousseau is trying to ensure that we must always think as members who are part of a whole, rather than individuals who are merely protected by it. At the same time, if we did not retain a modicum of distance from the whole, there would be no need for us to have to legislate it into existence. Thus, rather than eradicating the tensions between individual and community that had become particularly pronounced in bourgeois society, Rousseau is trying to find a way in which to make them productive.

Horowitz asserts that the piece operates on three interrelated levels. On one level, Rousseau sets out to effect a reconciliation between individual and community, healing the wounds that festered in civil society by setting up a political dynamic whereby each recognizes the other as one's equal. All become equally embroiled in the continuous formation of the community by legislating for the entire social body. On another level, the *Social Contract* appeals to the interests of the bourgeois citizen in order to mitigate some of the more drastic effects of instrumental rationality, using its latent potential to transcend itself. On the third level, the project ends in a recognition of failure, as Rousseau himself elucidates the shortcomings of his approach. On this level the *Social Contract* is a continuation of the critique of bourgeois society that Rousseau had initiated in the

Discourses.⁵ It does not work because of the depth of the problems that plague bourgeois society. One must recognize that Horowitz does not assert that these levels work at cross-purposes. It would be wrong to suggest that Rousseau's new contract does not profess to be a solution at all but is merely a reconstitution of the problem. I have already pointed out that Rousseau uses bourgeois notions in order to transcend them. Furthermore, the problem is part of the solution, for it takes into account humanity's historical and perfectible nature, and encourages us to keep working towards the resolution of our dilemma. In fact, without a recognition of the problems endemic to bourgeois society, we would not have the incentive to overcome them.

Origins of the will

Like most social contract theorists, Rousseau makes the will the cornerstone of his political order. In doing so, he joins an array of liberal theorists since Hobbes who had underlined the conventional nature of political and social relationships. However, unlike his predecessors, Rousseau stresses that such a convention was grounded in nature. Society is not only established against nature but as a way of adapting to and imitating it. As I indicated in Chapter One, Rousseau draws heavily upon the state of nature he sketched out in the *Second Discourse* when formulating his moral and political ideals. I

⁵Asher Horowitz, *Rousseau: Nature and History*, p. 167.

have shown that morality does not inhere in nature itself, but constitutes our attempt to emulate its balance at a social level. This means that morality comes out of the tension between ourselves and nature, while at the same time representing the need to reduce or minimize this tension. Morality is the product of convention which is grounded in but is neither identical nor in strict opposition to nature. According to Ansell-Pearson this "explains why the work is presented in terms of an inquiry into the principles of 'political right', and not into principles of 'natural" right."⁶ Rousseau invokes the story of a beginning which "lacks all human traits" in order to show that "what is characteristically human is not the gift of nature, but is the outcome of what man did, or was forced to do, in order to overcome or change nature: man's humanity is the product of historical process."⁷

While Rousseau wants to fuse the aims of politics and morality, it is nevertheless important to distinguish between the two. Primitive societies had no need of contracts, for the legitimacy of the community never came into question. However, the advent of bourgeois society changed this relationship. The disintegration of the community within bourgeois society meant that it was no longer taken for granted, and the adversarial relationship between individuals made them suspicious of any social structure that was imposed upon them. This is why the political order had to justify itself to the "individuals"

⁶Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche contra Rousseau*, p. 79.

⁷Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 274.

it incorporated, whereas in ancient orders, the individual would have to justify himself to the community. Hobbes and other contract theories struggled to find a legitimate basis for a community that would interfere with the behaviour of individual human beings. For Hobbes it would be the fear of death which would impel individuals to submit to a common sovereign. The very independence and selfishness of individuals made the community necessary, because they would otherwise destroy each other. In a society that functioned on the basis of means-ends relationships, it was no accident that an instrumental justification of political authority was provided.

According to Derathé, Rousseau's justification for civil society is no different from that of Hobbes.⁸ Although he sees the state of nature as one of peace, the friction that beset bourgeois society required the institution of government: "I suppose that men have reached the point where obstacles that are harmful to their maintenance in the state of nature gain the upper hand by their resistance to the forces that each individual can bring to bear to maintain himself in that state. Such being the case, that original state cannot subsist any longer, and the human race would perish if it did not alter its mode of existence"(SC I.6).

⁸Derathé compares Rousseau's bourgeois society to the Hobbesian war of each against all. However, Derathé argues that the conflictual relations which characterize bourgeois society are inevitable once human beings emerge from the state of nature and give voice to their passions. Their natural independence impels them to resist the increased contact with other human beings: "Il faut en effet que les hommes se soient rapprochés et que leurs passions soient devenues actives pour que leur indépendance naturelle engendre parmi eux un véritable état de guerre." Derathé, *Rousseau et la science politique de son temps*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), p. 176.

For Derathé, the main difference between Rousseau and Hobbes is that for Rousseau, the evils that fracture human beings emerge out of their increased contact within social structures. It is the community, and not the original vice of human beings that brings out the worst in man. A social contract is thus needed to restrain human beings who have been corrupted by their own communities.⁹ Thus, Derathé upholds the same schism between nature and convention which is characteristic of many interpreters of Rousseau. He assumes that for human beings, it is natural to want to be left alone.

While Hobbes would insist that the will is a natural disposition of human beings who jealously guard their independence, Derathé might deduce that it only comes to the surface when the natural independence of human beings is undercut within the confines of society. It thus is nature's cry of protest against the community. While Rousseau himself did not provide a lengthy exposition of the will, I will suggest an interpretation that dovetails with the kind of historical analysis which he practices in the *Second Discourse*. The concept of the will emerges out of bourgeois society. The atomic existence of individuals, together with the struggle for mastery between them leads to the notion that I have to leave my own mark on the world. This is not to say that individuals in earlier communities did not leave their own historical imprint. However, because their own interests were not necessarily in a relationship of conflict with those of others, they were not so acutely

⁹"Ce sont les premières relations sociales qui sont à l'origine de l'état de guerre, sans lequel les hommes ne se seraient pas trouvés dans la nécessité de s'unir par des conventions, ni n'auraient jamais songé à le faire." Derathé, p. 177.

aware of what was their own. The concept of the will, thus arises out of antagonistic relations between individuals. Hegel notes that the will is a unity of two moments. One inheres in the individual's ability to negate every particular circumstance and thus determine that he has an ego apart from these particulars: "The will contains the element of pure indeterminacy or that pure reflection of the ego into itself which involves the dissipation of every restriction and every content either immediately presented by nature."¹⁰ In a sense, it is bourgeois society that permits us to negate all particular circumstances because these are constantly changing and do not provide a secure basis for my identity. However, I cannot merely negate and therefore must prioritize certain particulars over others, otherwise I am an empty shell: "At the same time, the ego is also the transition from undifferentiated indeterminacy to the differentiation, determination and positing of a determinacy as a content and object."¹¹

One of the purposes of the *Social Contract* is to go beyond the oppositional nature of willing. Instead of creating a contract whereby a compromise can be reached between conflicting wills, Rousseau wants individuals to agree to create the community of which they are a part. Rather than etching their signature into the world by asserting themselves against others, they are to create the community in conjunction with others. The society that Rousseau envisions in the *Social Contract* is a political community, not a traditional

¹⁰G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, P:5.

¹¹*Ibid.*, Sect. 6.

or customary one, because individuals are to be aware of the fact that they themselves construct it. In earlier societies, community members were not aware of their role in shaping the whole: it was always something that was already in existence. In bourgeois society, the preexistence of the community can no longer be affirmed and therefore individuals have to actively participate in shaping it.

Rousseau takes his bearings by the state of nature when formulating his ideals. His justification for delving into our pre-historic roots is due to the proto-human's happiness, not this creature's reason. There was no conflict between its desires and nature's provisions. It completely imbibed nature's rhythm and therefore was undivided because it was not yet a self. Furthermore, its efforts were neither thwarted nor enhanced by those of other creatures. Once human beings have separated themselves from nature, they can no longer return to their lost paradise. The only way to reproduce such happiness is to make the whole of which we are a part. We will never be at one with nature, because we continuously separate ourselves from her through our own creations. Therefore, we must integrate ourselves with others who are also creative beings. We are no longer creatures of instinct, but creatures of process and so can only reaffirm our connection to nature through the medium of the community. Yet, in the process of doing so, our desires change, and therefore our creative activity cannot stop. A permanent home constantly eludes us. Rousseau suggests that we also long for the independence of the pre-human. We cannot replicate independence by severing all connections to others, for in so doing,

we would be denying ourselves a home. However, we can safeguard our own independence by making everyone an equal participant in the construction of the community. Rousseau's social contract, I will argue is not only about balancing the wills of individuals; it is about allowing them to actively shape the order in which they live. Analysts such as Derathé, who focus primarily on the independence of the pre-human and therefore maintain that avoiding dependence is Rousseau's foremost concern, forget that the pre-human was also characterized by its complete integration into its environment.

Thus, Rousseau recognizes that the frontier dividing nature from convention is quite blurred. Society becomes the medium through which we return to nature in an attempt to replicate the harmonious condition of *amour-de-soi*. As soon as we are connected with other human beings, we are disconnected from nature. What differentiates civil societies from other forms of society is that we are aware for the first time of the artificial nature of the social orders and are conscious of the fact that we must produce it. Rousseau even exposes the conventional nature of the family, often considered to be the epitome of the natural social order. Ironically his account of the family in the *Social Contract* leaves out the mother, whose biological bond with her offspring is more immediate than that of the father. Children are bound to their "father" only so long as their needs are met by him. The family unit is maintained out of mutual affection and love, feelings that are conventional and yet grow out of a natural relationship: "If they continue to remain united, this no longer takes place naturally, but voluntarily, and the family

maintains itself only by means of convention"(SC I.2).

The *Social Contract* opens with Rousseau's famous adage: "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains"(SC I.1). One could argue that the will represents the individual's desire to extricate himself from a situation of bondage. We would not be aware of our own imprisonment, if the voice of nature did not remain within us. Regardless of the type of social relations which human beings are embedded in, they are *simultaneously* free and enslaved. Buried underneath the social constraints that encumber us lurks the "natural" which continuously reminds us that nothing about these relations is completely inevitable. While we may no longer have direct access to nature, it is woven into all our non-instrumental relationships. Moments of compassion, sexual relationships, escapes into the wilderness and intimate friendships are all murmurs of a self that has not completely fallen victim to the "logic" of the market. Moreover, the proto-human continues to haunt the civilized "human being" and in doing so keeps the "civilizing" process alive. The tension between these contradictory drives fuels the process of self creation. Human beings are born into social structures, but also have an ingrained desire to escape them. It is this desire to escape social structures that impels us to recreate them. Thus, feelings of constraint are powerful catalysts to freedom.

Thus, Rousseau's pronouncement describes the conundrum that human beings will *always* find themselves in. However, it is not only the relationship between nature and convention, but also the relationship between people that makes us aware of the constraints

we face. By comparing ourselves with others we become aware of the limitations which hamper our own activity. *Amour-propre* stimulates the awareness of the shackles that constrain us, and also gives birth to our desire to overcome them. The overcoming of our chains constitutes our freedom, and therefore freedom and constraint are mutually implicated in each other. There is no absolute state of freedom, in which we are liberated from all limitations, for freedom is the very process of overcoming constraints.

However, this metaphor also has a meaning which is specific to bourgeois society. In this state, we are shackled to market forces which we must either adapt to or perish. Not only the slaves but also the masters are handicapped by such a system. If we concede that our ability to create ourselves develops out of an interaction with others, then we stymie our own growth by making another subject to our will because our own boundaries become ossified without being challenged by another. These chains are not only external but also internal. As a citizen of a market economy, the logic of the market has penetrated my being to such an extent that I reproduce my own shackles. With the social contract, Rousseau hopes to jettison the chains with which humanity has strangled itself. Thus Rousseau remarks that " he who believes himself the master of others does not escape being more of a slave than they"(SC I.1).

The General Will: egoism transformed

Rousseau uses the language of liberal contract theory because he is trying to effect a transition from a legal political order to a political community. He cannot offend the sensibilities of those who are suspicious of such a community and must lure them towards it, by demonstrating that his ideal is the best means by which they can actualize their own principles. Thus, he turns the egoism of the bourgeois against itself. Rousseau is poised to exploit the principle of both equality and identity which have formed the ideological base of most bourgeois society.

The problem of self identity surfaces for the first time in bourgeois society due to the impermanence which marked individual circumstances. The objects and people that shape me are constantly changing. The only way for me to resume control over a shifting self is to take responsibility for fashioning it. Continuity lies only in the process of making myself who I am. However, the efforts to carve out one's identity are continuously frustrated in bourgeois society because I must constantly be on guard against you, thereby depriving my self of the soil in which to take root. I imitate you in order to prevent you from gaining the upper hand. Identity became so important because it found itself under perpetual siege. Thus, the very society which imputed so much importance to self identity was marked by extreme inauthenticity. Inauthenticity and authenticity emerged simultaneously. Since I am engaged in an incessant struggle for the upper hand, I am

always homeless. I can never belong, because I must always be one step ahead of you. Thus, Rousseau would insist that identity is not only about making myself who I am but finding a home in which I can belong.

This provides a stark contrast to the ancient polis, where citizens did identify with the political community because they completely imbibed its customs and conventions. However, their collective identity was not freely chosen but was impressed upon each citizen by a vigorous system of education that instilled civic virtue. The citizen could not conceive of himself apart from the polis. Both the unstable identity of market society, and the stable structures of identification within the polis were externally and unconsciously imposed.

I will now examine how Rousseau significantly transforms some of the major concepts that emerged out of bourgeois society. While the modern notions of individual identity, freedom and equality become the cornerstones of his thought, he attempts to combine them with the strong commitment to the community evident in the ancient polis, achieving a new synthesis of ancient and modern which transcends both. However, he cannot appeal to a modern audience by recounting the glories of ancient virtue. Instead, he uses the logic of exchange in a subversive manner, taking it out of its narrow economic and instrumental context and prioritizing the questions of freedom and self identity.

First of all, he takes the sovereignty of the will more seriously than most liberal theorists. Hobbes and Grotius, for example, had turned freedom and the will into a kind

of possession which could be "exchanged" for the sake of peace and security. However, according to Rousseau, the will, which is an expression of an individual's capacity to leave his mark on the world, cannot be surrendered, for in doing so he is renouncing the autonomy of the individual which makes it possible to enter into exchanges in the first place. A market society is premised on the notions of continuous exchange. By renouncing my freedom, I am making all future exchanges impossible: "Renouncing one's liberty is renouncing one's dignity as a man, the rights of humanity and even its duties. There is no possible compensation for anyone who renounces everything. Such a renunciation is incompatible with the nature of man. Removing all morality from his actions is tantamount to taking away all liberty from his will. Finally, it is a vain and contradictory convention to stipulate absolute authority on one side and a limitless obedience on the other. Is it not clear that no commitments are made to a person from whom one has the right to demand everything"(SC I.4).

Rousseau like all liberal theorists affirms the sanctity of the will. However, if the community which they then enter into is to be legitimate they must "find a form of association which defends and protects with all common forces the person and goods of each associate, and by means of which each one, while uniting with all, nevertheless obeys only himself and remains as free as before?"(SC I.6). Evidently, the community cannot function if each member asserts their particular will against all the others. Therefore, they must somehow be lured towards the community by holding up the promise of greater

individual sovereignty. He encourages them to transcend some of the most egotistical aspects of their nature by appealing to this same egoism. Each person makes an exchange with himself in which he agrees to cease the constant quest for satisfying his own particular desires and instead legislates for the community as a whole of which he is a member: "Each of us places his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will; and as one we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole"(SC I.6). Paradoxically, this is a parody of the "unequal" exchange that is an integral part of profit-making in bourgeois society since we agree to give up our selfish needs in order to become legislators of the whole: "This passage from the state of nature to the civil state produces quite a remarkable change in man, for it substitutes justice for instinct in his behaviour and gives his actions a moral quality they previously lacked"(SC I.8). We have profited from this exchange because our range of control is expanded. In so doing, the individual becomes a part of something larger than himself, satisfying his yearning for belonging, but remains free because he has agreed to the conditions under which he will limit his particular will. If each of us decides what the body which we submit to will look like, then we are not simply subjected to it. The nature of the will would change in the course of such a transaction. It is no longer the will of one individual pitted against another, but the will of a whole community. However, because I decide what this community will be, it is still my will.

By setting the terms for our own subjugation to the social whole, we legislate for

ourselves as members of the political community. I become the whole that includes me and thereby universalize myself. In civil society, I participate in a whole whose contours I could not discern. In trying to secure my own advantage, I inadvertently enter into a network of complex interdependence: "When men are thus dependent on one another and reciprocally related to one another in their work and the satisfaction of their needs, subjective self-seeking turns into a contribution to the satisfaction for the needs of everyone else. That is to say, by a dialectical advance, subjective self seeking turns into the mediation of the particular through the universal, with the result that each man in earning producing and enjoying on his own account is eo ipso producing and earning for the enjoyment of everyone else."¹² The social order which embraces me in civil society is unconsciously contrived. True citizenship forces me to be conscious of my universality.

Furthermore, in civil society, my identity is insecure, since the opinions of others directly affect my status in the impersonal social hierarchy of the market. Who I am is dependent on what others make of me. The general will forces each of us to not only recognize but to treat others as our equals and therefore also prevents them from holding me hostage. Thus, I have not substituted positive liberty for negative liberty but rather have used positive liberty to underpin my negative liberty. We are all equally dependent on the whole, which is dependent equally on each of us, so no one can infringe upon the

¹²G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, sect. 199.

independence of another. My individuality is protected by being a member of a larger community where each is treated as an end in their own right. Because the general will "comes from all and applies to all", in principle, it cannot be used to exclude me on the basis of my particular characteristics.

Each of us embodies the community as a whole, which fails to exist otherwise: "Each of us places his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will; and as one we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole"(SC I.6). If a single individual's legislative right is undercut, the whole is dissolved. This is the kind of logic that appeals to the egoist emerging out of bourgeois society, who cannot accept merely being part of something larger than the self and strives to be in complete control of that which he is a part of. Thus, Rousseau is presenting him with an unparalleled power which he had chased after in bourgeois society but which constantly eluded him. He now has the opportunity to shape the social order as a whole, rather than having an impact on only a tiny segment of it. In this way, he is making community membership palatable for the selfish bourgeois.

The new social contract also replaces the fleeting ownership of bourgeois society with a more secure basis for possession. By agreeing to free ourselves from the slavish devotion to ever escalating needs, the ownership of our possessions is real rather than fleeting: "Let us summarize this entire balance sheet so that the credits and debits are easily compared. What man loses through the social contract is his natural liberty and an

unlimited right to everything that tempts him and that he can acquire. What he gains is civil liberty and the proprietary ownership of all he possesses"(SC I.8). Rousseau is reconceptualizing the idea of ownership in order to rid it of its zero-sum connotations. When each individual has the right to acquire whatever he can obtain, then he is always subject to the whims of others, who can rob him of his possessions by outdoing him in a competitive market. If you ruin me financially, I must relinquish my possessions in order to survive. However, if each person owns the property of the entire community, then no individual can rob another of the property that is rightfully his. You cannot take from me what I own, nor can I take what you own from you. At the same time, my ownership of my possessions is dependent on your ownership of yours. If I were to rob you of yours, I would be dissolving the whole which belongs to all of us, and therefore would be left with nothing. Because I would be robbing myself in robbing you, I can no longer seek an advantage over you by depriving you of property. Rousseau is not completely undermining instrumental reason but changing the nature of the equation so that instead of benefitting from harm done to you, I suffer from it.

Thus, ironically, the new social contract constitutes both the realization of bourgeois goals and their subversion. Rousseau demonstrates that in his new society, property is indeed sacrosanct, for it is impossible for anyone to take it away from anybody else if all have equal claims to it. At the same time, Rousseau makes it clear that the true basis for property right is one's activity. Because we have all created the property, we are

all its rightful owners: "Third, one is to take possession of it not by an empty ceremony, but by working and cultivating it-the only sign of property that ought, in the absence of legal titles to be respected by others"(SC I.9). Property does become that upon which I have left my own mark. Once I have mixed my labour with it, nobody can take it from me. Rousseau tries to demonstrate that only common ownership guarantees genuine ownership, since it is not subject to the vicissitudes of the market.

Like the Hobbesian covenant, the Rousseauian social contract is designed to protect us from each other. However, the best way for me to protect myself against you is to cooperate with you and to intertwine my fate with yours. If I recognize that each of us is equally integrated into the whole, then my attempt to rob you of your place will dissolve the whole which also belongs to me. Thus, each person protects himself against the other, by agreeing to protect themselves against the egotistical elements within. Rousseau's new community must be the concern of each individual citizen. Everyone participates in the democratic process to protect his freedom which is inextricably linked to the freedom of every other individual. This appeals to individuals who reason in terms of instrumental reciprocity: "Finally, in giving himself to all, each person gives himself to no one. And since there is no associate over whom he does not acquire the same right that he would grant others over himself, he gains the equivalent of everything he loses, along with a greater amount of force to preserve what he has"(SC I.6). However, this is a kind of integration which differs fundamentally from that found in either primitive

communities or the ancient republics, since the contract would automatically dissolve, if even one individual's freedom was trampled upon. It is therefore both the most fragile and the most powerful of communities for it has no existence beyond that of the individuals who comprise it.

While I must come to realize that my individuality cannot be conceived of in isolation from the community, I must also realize how weak the community is in order for the general will to be effective. Without the underlying threat of civil society and its propensity to degenerate into inequality, I would be stripped of the motivation to curtail such selfishness. Because there is no natural social bond that we can rely on, and because the community has not been engraved into our soul, we must continuously struggle to shape it. The absence of the natural social bond bestows upon the artificial bond of the general will its legitimacy. Primitive communities would have no need to legislate for themselves in this way, for they have not been ravaged by the type of relations endemic to civil society. Only a community which is inherently fragile must continuously legislate itself into existence.

Thus, Rousseau is trying to entice those who have an intense fear of others back towards the community by playing on their egoistic preconceptions. I must learn that an integration of equals is the best way to protect and develop my individuality. I can shape the whole of which I am a part only by allowing you to do the same. Once I realize that my freedom is dependent on yours and not threatened by it, I come to realize that I am a

social individual who cannot conceive of my individuality apart from the community. I have been forced to transcend the boundaries of the self and universalize myself, thus satisfying at least in part the yearning to go beyond the self that had been activated by *amour-propre*. The general will enables me to step outside myself so that I will discover that I am not only threatened by others, but actually handicap myself by refusing to forge an alliance with them.

Out of the self interest of each individual emerges the collective body that is to develop an identity of its own: "At once, in place of the individual person of each contracting party, this act of association produces a moral and collective body composed of as many members as there are voices in the assembly, which receives from this same act its unity, its common *self*, its life and will. This public person, formed thus by union of all the others formerly took the name *city*, and at present takes the name *republic*, or *body politic* which is called *state* by its members when it is passive, *sovereign* when it is active, *power* when compared to others like itself"(SC I.6). I accept this collective body because I have created it and continue to mould it through my active participation in it.

Thus, the social contract is not the vision of a utopian thinker, but that of a pessimist, who recognizes that we cannot demonstrate loyalty towards a community unless it can be aligned with our individual interests. At the same time, Rousseau recognizes that the nature of these "individual " interests will change by virtue of our participation in such a community. I will no longer see the political order merely as a mechanism which

protects my interests from others, but one in which I have the opportunity to develop these interests. My individuality develops by interacting with others since it is the dialectic between "inside and outside" which propels the process of becoming. Yet, if I am to remain free in Rousseau's terms, my impact on the "outside" should be equal to the impact of the "outside" on me. Therefore, freedom in Rousseau depends on harmony and balance. I cannot maintain this kind of equilibrium within nature, for its forces elude my grasp. Only within the human community, can I be sheltered from the untamed forces of nature. Politics becomes not only a way of adapting to nature, but a means of transforming it. We establish a unity of which we ourselves are in charge of. We create our own necessity rather than having necessity imposed upon us, as was the case in the state of nature.

In the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau reminds us that we can only begin to make individual comparisons within a community which furnishes the framework in which such comparisons can be made. I recognize that I am unique only if I am living with others who differ and yet are similar to me. One cannot understand the "I" without understanding the "not-I". My private identity has no meaning without a public identity. As I have pointed out, I cannot create myself without interacting with others, who force me to extend my own boundaries. However, if they are my masters, and they exert more power over me than I do over them, then I cannot claim that I have created myself. Self sufficiency does not require complete independence but rather demands that we are equally dependent on each other. In civil society, individuals have become so engulfed by their

private identity, that they have forgotten how such an identity was allowed to unfold in the first place. The general will is also an educative device that reminds those of us caught in the web of civil society how our identities come to be formed. It elucidates the dialectical interaction between individual and community that constitutes the self.

The yearning to transcend the boundaries of the self depends on an internal split that had reached its zenith in civil society. Once human beings become conscious of their freedom, they can only experience a sense of belonging if they construct the whole of which they are a part. Thus, nature can no longer be a sanctuary for human beings in its unmediated, unreflective form. The protohuman animal experiences *amour-de-soi* because the boundaries of its experience are contained and its needs do not exceed its capacities to fulfil them and nature's "willingness" to provide. Modern society instils in human beings the constant need to transform their surroundings. The equilibrium of the state of nature is therefore forever beyond reach since human beings determine and create their own needs. If I create my own needs, and am to retain this balance, I have to create the community which makes it possible for me to satisfy them. To preserve this balance, I have to limit my needs in order to make them compatible with those of others. Yet, it is I and not an external master that is forcing me to limit them. Evidently, my own needs will be transformed in the course of this interaction. It is not the static condition of the state of nature that is replicated but rather the balance that is maintained between individuation and integration. While I do not cease to individuate myself, I can only do so to the extent

that I do not rupture the community with my action. However, what constitutes "acceptable individuation" will change throughout the course of the community's history and therefore the balance must be continuously reassessed and recreated. The general will requires that the social bond be constantly revived by framing new laws as the community evolves. In fact, as Horowitz asserts, the community does not exist prior to legislation but is constituted through it: "It is not the community that legislates, but the community that is *constituted* and *reaffirmed* in the act of legislation itself. Of course the community is not constituted in any and every act that might pass as legislation, but only when its lawmaking follows the strict rule of producing a general will."¹³ This means that the community is formed with an eye to each and every individual that is in it. Rousseau's contract is not merely applicable at the time of the social order's construction, but must be perpetually reaffirmed.

However, in order to *make* myself part of the community, I also have to be able to distance myself from it, otherwise I am just a limb dangling from a social body. The tension that exists between the particular will and the general will enables me to retain a certain distance from it so that I can freely will the laws that lend shape to the social body. There is a degree to which universalization of the self is an integral part of individual freedom but I need to be aware of the *movement* towards the universal from the particular. Rousseau intimates that freedom requires both freedom from the self and

¹³Asher Horowitz, *Rousseau: Nature and History*, p. 186

freedom for the self. If transcendence of the self is part of the experience of freedom, I need to be aware of the boundaries that I am transcending. Thus, it is the *interaction* between the particular and general will, and not simply the general will alone which accounts for our freedom. While the community supplies the perspective from which to see the limitations of my egotistical self, my egotistical or particular self alerts me to the limitations of the community: "In fact, each individual can, as a man, have a private will contrary to or different from the general will that he has as a citizen. His private interest can speak to him in an entirely different manner than the common interest"(SC I.7). Commonality requires difference because there would be no need to assemble together if our interests were naturally compatible, as were those of the pre-human. Our freedom consists in the act of making them compatible. However, not only does the community force me to set limits to my own individuation, it also increases my scope for self development. Because I know that I am always equal to everyone else, the pressure to conform may be less intense in areas which do not impinge on the social whole itself. The general will, does not, as some analysts claim, necessarily annihilate difference and collapse the distinction between public and private realms. In fact, it may allow me greater leeway in areas which do not directly affect my public duty. Because my position as a member of the community is always secure, I cannot be expelled for my eccentricities. At the same time, those areas which are public and private must be continuously renegotiated for the border that separates them cannot be permanently fixed.

If I am to remain an active participant in the sovereign body, I must be constantly reminded of the opposition between particular wills and the potential for conflict that exists there. Without the competition that creates friction between individuals, I would not recognize the need to integrate myself into a community that affords protection against the threat of a war of all against all. For Rousseau, this competition cannot be eliminated, but it must never be allowed to undermine the general will itself. Without a particular will, there would be no need for a general will. The society which is established thus does not try to eradicate the internal divisions of each individual but depends upon them. I lead an existence which is both separate from all others and at the same time am united with them. Furthermore, I integrate with them not in order to try to eliminate my separation, but to ensure that it does not eventuate in conflict. I am "forced" to inhabit two worlds simultaneously, neither of which could exist without the other.

However, competition is not the only threat that threatens to undo the seams of this delicate social order. If I lose sight of my particular will, which is different from that of others, then the general will is also enfeebled since we fall back on social conventions. The social bonds then fail to be resuscitated on an ongoing basis and degenerate into hollow rituals. Individuals need tension between themselves and the community to induce them to reflect on their own personal relationship with the community as a whole. This in turn, encourages them to continuously affirm their membership and reconstitute the community. Mere habit cannot sustain it. For example, if influences which question the

viability of certain customs penetrate the community's walls, the whole community collapses if it is sustained merely by its own traditions.

Rousseau's paradoxical conclusion that man must be "forced to be free" refers to such a tension. The existence of the community forces the individual to transcend her narrow selfish interests, while the selfish interests of the individual give her a stake in active citizenship. Once complacency begins to take hold and we forget the threat posed by civil society, the community begins to degenerate. A perceived security takes hold, enfeebling the general will: "If we wish to form a durable establishment, let us then not dream of making it eternal...This is why, far from growing weak, the laws continually acquire new force as they grow old, this proves that there is no longer a legislative power, and that the state is no longer alive"(SC III.11). The struggle *for* the community is always also a struggle *against* civil society. Thus, civil society continues to provide the backdrop of the political community.

This interpretation contradicts Cassirer's more Kantian reading of Rousseau according to which the "state claims the individual completely and without reservations."¹⁴ For Cassirer, the law is the sole guarantor of freedom and it is only in universalizing themselves that human beings become free.¹⁵ However, this ignores the dialectical

¹⁴Cassirer, Ernst, 'The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau,' in *Jean Jacques Rousseau*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988), p. 20.

¹⁵Ellenburg contrasts Rousseau's and Kant's political philosophy since Kant endorsed a juridical egalitarianism while condoning a political hierarchy, defending the division of ruler and ruled. He therefore points to a contradiction between Kant's moral and political philosophy.

relationship between universality and particularity. Universality is the condition for true particularity since it prevents political or social hierarchies from undercutting a person's perfectibility. Our autonomy is not expressed through abstract moral laws, but by developing ourselves in very particular ways. Only by recognizing that we are all autonomous, self-constituting beings, do we ensure that we do not undermine the agency of others through our particular actions. Thus, universality protects particularity. At the same time, particularity makes the need for universality apparent, since we have to ensure that our differences do not eventuate in hierarchies. If the state claimed the individual "without reservations" then there would be no need for a contract to establish it. Unlike Kant, Rousseau does not try to expunge heteronomous desires but instead wishes to ensure that one person's particular desires do not undercut those of another. We create history by developing our particularity through an interaction with others. For Rousseau, an abstract rationality is not to suppress particularity, but rather, it is intended to enhance it. In this sense, the general will safeguards the particular will. It is not particularity itself that he vituperates against, but the particularity that leads to inequality.

Moreover, the *process* of universalizing oneself means that the particular will cannot be allowed to die. I would have no need to see myself as an individual who reasons

Stephen Ellenburg, 'Rousseau and Kant: The Principles of Political Right,' *Rousseau after Two Hundred Years*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.5 Kant justifies this due to the pernicious effect that nature has on the human psyche. Repressive forms of government are to train human beings to suppress the voice of nature within.

and creates herself like all others, if I were no different from them. Cassirer notes that we must learn to submit to the community as we submit to the law of nature, recognizing its necessity.¹⁶ Freedom and necessity converge in the general will. Yet, we stoop to nature unconsciously, while we consciously submit to the general will. In order for this to be the case, we must be aware of that aspect within ourselves which is antagonistic towards the general will and our submission to it must involve struggle.¹⁷

Such a picture of citizenship also differs radically from that of Judith Shklar who holds that Rousseau identifies an *absolute* split between man and citizen. Insofar as an individual is a citizen he is relieved of inner conflicts and "finds it easy to do his duty."¹⁸ She claims that once we step into society we are "doomed to suffer from conflict between instincts and socially acquired urges" and are in "need of a faculty to protect us from inner threats to our own happiness."¹⁹ However, I would suggest that it is precisely this struggle that makes citizenship possible. While there is no self transformation that is not accompanied by nostalgia for what is left behind, this does not rule out the happiness that

¹⁶Ernst Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, p. 23.

¹⁷I would argue that in Kant, moral self legislation necessitates a struggle against nature. If nature were not an obstacle, it could not be said that we had freely chosen the moral law. A completely moral universe would be devoid of contradictions, but the same contradictions that threaten to subvert morality also make it possible. There can be no realm of the *ought* without the realm of the *is* against which it can be defined.

¹⁸Judith Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory*, p. 21.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 72.

is to be gleaned from continuously dismantling the chains that handicap us. Because we are individuals, sacrifices must always be made when we become part of a social body, but as individuals, we are also limited and therefore gain from entry into the community.

Because of these internal divisions, the split between obedience and command becomes internal rather than external: "each individual, contracting, as it were, with himself, finds himself under a twofold commitment: namely as a member of the sovereign to private individuals and as a member of the state towards the sovereign"(SC I.7). It is not someone else, but I myself, who keeps my particular aspirations under control. I speak to myself both as a member of the community, and as an individual whose interests are at some level pitted against the community. By obeying myself in this way, I ensure that I do not have to obey others.

The problem of the empty self

While Rousseau's use of bourgeois language in making the transition from bourgeois society to the new social contract is ingenious, he is less effective in overcoming the problem of the disembowelled self that emerged out of the market. We are exhorted to curb our particular will, even though the particular will may be the only thing which we know. The difficulty of uniting with others at times seems insurmountable: "He (Rousseau) discovers that minds are separate from one another and that we cannot

communicate the immediate evidence of inward conviction. From that moment paradise is lost, for paradise was the state of transparent communication between mind and mind, the conviction that total, reliable communication is possible. ...Souls cease to connect and take pleasure in hiding from one another."²⁰ However, we cannot simply scrape away the veneer of artificiality that coats us to reveal the authentic self, as Starobinski suggests. I do not necessarily know what it means to legislate as a member of the community because I have never really been part of one. Dent points out that even within a community "if we suppose even a moderate diversity of ambitions, hopes, preferences among these clear-sighted participants, the number of points on which each and every one will be able, on their own estimation to agree that they would be advantaged by an arrangement which included that component, would be quite small."²¹ He maintains that the scope of legitimate legislation would be narrow and be restricted to the most basic necessities of life.²² Yet, at the same time, Dent acknowledges that the kind of instrumental and minimalist community is anathema to Rousseau who recognizes that a solid social body is formed around more than just basic necessities and must share certain cultural, social

²⁰Jean Starobinski, *Transparency and Obstruction*, p.8-9. This quotation refers to an incident in the *Confessions* where Rousseau is unjustly punished for breaking a comb: "This occurrence terminated my infantile serenity; from that moment I ceased to enjoy a pure unadulterated happiness." (C: 27) The problem of having to relate to others through appearances is therefore not limited to bourgeois society but rather is exacerbated within it.

²¹Dent, *Rousseau : An Introduction to his Psychological, Political and Social Theory*, p. 184.

²²*Ibid*, p. 184.

and moral norms: "But when the citizens love their duty, and when those entrusted with public authority sincerely apply themselves to nurturing this love through their example and efforts, all difficulties vanish and administration takes on an easiness which enables it to dispense with that shade art whose baseness constitutes its entire mystery"(PE: 120). It is precisely such a community that we are to legislate into existence. If we are to reason as one body, there must be a common bond that unites us. At the same time, it is our reason that is to create this bond. We are presented with an irresolvable conundrum: the general will is its own precondition. Equality cannot be based on abstract reason alone, but depends on a common source of identification, otherwise it becomes impossible for each of us to make the laws that we all subscribe to.

Rousseau is well aware of the enormous hurdles that must be overcome if such a community is to be forged. Since we can be free only if we are "internally constituted as citizens"²³ the process of imprinting the community onto individuals may be difficult to achieve without violating their independence. Agreeing to curb the excesses of the particular will is insufficient. My conception of the general will may differ from yours, not because I am handicapped by my own selfish interests, but because I have a different idea of what being a member of the community entails. If I am then subject to the voice of the multitude, I am not simply forced to attenuate the pernicious hold of the particular

²³Frederick Neuhouser, 'Freedom, Dependence and the General Will,' *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 102 no. 3 July 1993, p. 369.

will, but must abandon my idea of the community itself. Horowitz and Horowitz ignore this when they assert: "behind the argument about totalitarian democracy is the presupposition that the only possible will is the particular will. This being the case, direct democracy is merely the imposition of a majority of particular wills on a minority."²⁴ What this position neglects is that I may envision a community very differently than my neighbour. Rousseau himself seems to skirt over this possibility when he asserts that the will is either general or private: "Sovereignty is indivisible for the same reason that it is inalienable. For either the will is general, or it is not. It is the will of either the people as a whole or of only a part. In the first case, this declared will is an act of sovereignty and constitutes law. In the second case, it is merely private will, or an act of magistracy"(SC II.2).

Yet, Rousseau might justifiably retort that only an abstract recognition of the other as one's moral and juridical equal can lay the foundation for a recognition of difference, and allow for a forum in which we chisel out a community taking these differences into account. Our rationality enables us to agree in principle that we are all equal and provides us with the moral wherewithal to enact such precepts. Rousseau is not under the illusion that reason alone can foster a consensus. However, it does furnish us with the motivation to work out such a consensus. Reason is therefore an integral component of our perfectibility, for it furnishes us with a direction to pursue by making us cognizant of our

²⁴Asher Horowitz and Gad Horowitz, *Everywhere they are in Chains*, p. 69.

own shortcomings.

Rousseau also realizes that the system of needs will not evaporate with the emergence of the new social contract: "We grant that each person alienates, by the social compact, only that portion of his power, his goods and liberty whose use is of consequence to the community; but we must also grant that only the sovereign is the judge of what is of consequence"(SC II.4). The general will will not eliminate the competition between particular wills, but moderates it. However, it is the development of this citizen awareness that presents an almost insuperable hurdle for Rousseau. This is why he stipulates that each person must consider himself or herself in relation to the whole, prior to considering relationships with each other qua individuals. In this way we mimic the state of nature where each is dependent on the impersonal forces of nature but not on other human beings.

Ironically, the new social contract depends on independent assessment of what the community entails because we have been scarred by the kind of interpersonal dependence we experienced in bourgeois society. The voting procedure he outlines precludes debate in an effort to avoid the tyranny of persuasion and thus eliminate the possibility of personal dependence: "Long debates, dissension and tumult betoken the ascendance of private interests and the decline of the state" (SC IV.2). Rousseau is well aware that once we step beyond the realm of abstraction, we may quickly violate the principles of equality. "Democratic" decision making can be thwarted by a speaker who dominates the proceedings.

Rousseau's ambivalent position on majority rule is also indicative of the pessimistic strain in his thought. Initially, Rousseau was careful to distinguish between the will of all, which is the sum of particular interests and the general will which represents the community as a whole. However, he later notes that the power of the majority is to be used to force deviants to comply with the "general will" who become "foreigners among citizens"(SC IV.2). Moreover, the "vote of the majority always obligates all the others" and the one who deviates from this is "in error" regarding the essence of the general will(SC IV.2). Despite the faulty logic at work here, one could argue that such a position elucidates the procedural difficulty in implementing a general will. While one's independence is not to be tarnished by the dependence on the esteem of others, Rousseau recognizes that the opinion of others plays a crucial role in "forcing" people to think as members of the community. The threat of ostracism becomes a powerful catalyst to the consolidation the community. Undoubtedly, Rousseau is well aware of the tyrannical implications of this position. He recognizes that most modern communities have violent streaks in their foundation.

Rousseau's hesitation in wholeheartedly endorsing majority rule is evidenced by his reluctant acceptance of plurality. The idea of partial organizations is anathema to Rousseau, since they could detract from one's commitment to the whole. However, the danger they pose lies not in their differences per se, but in their opposition of interests, impelling some to seek ascendancy over others. If the number of partial associations is

great, than the chances of domination are reduced and there is less likely to be interference with the general will. Yet, if partial associations grow too powerful, then the range of issues which fall under the category of the common interest will diminish. Even though the general will is to be limited to general principles regarding the essence of the community, members of different groups may have multifarious conceptions as to the form which the community should take.

The kind of compromises which Rousseau accepts in outlining decision making procedures may be necessary in order to make the general will functional. Perhaps he hopes that they are intermediary steps that eventually help to consolidate the kind of community that is a necessary precondition of the general will. Nevertheless, the community that Rousseau has sculpted out of the fragmented citizenry of civil society is a fragile one, for the relations of civil society have not been eradicated but are suspended within the structure of the new order, posing a constant danger to the general will. The double alienation that spurs the shift from the particular will to the universal general will makes the community genuine but also endangers it. Because the general will is an abstraction it does not have much emotional clout and is also difficult to imbue with content. In fact, we must already have a strong sense of the community that we legislate for and this casts doubt on the ability to legislate a community into existence.

Rousseau thus falls back on the Legislator who is to provide the cultural and emotional backdrop that is necessary for consolidating the community: "Discovering the

rules of society best suited to nations would require a superior intelligence that beheld all the passions of men without feeling any of them who had no affinity with our nature , yet knew it through and through"(SC II.7). The Legislator has to be superhuman, so as to avoid relations of domination and servitude but he has to "have no authority over men"(SC II.7). However, to instil social content into individuals who have purged themselves of such content within the hubbub of the market is a Herculean task. Only a figure who is vastly superior to human beings could engender the awe that would hold the competitive instinct of the bourgeois citizen in abeyance. Such a figure could interrupt the momentum of civil society because he cannot be dominated, nor could he be pulled into the dynamic of instrumental reciprocity. The fact that Rousseau introduces the Legislator, indicates what a giant leap he believes must be taken in order to extricate human beings from the clutches of the market. Moreover the abstract reason that had been fomented in civil society cannot by itself provide the social glue necessary to consolidate the community. Thus, rationality must be sustained by an irrational bulwark, for unlike his Kantian interpreters, Rousseau acknowledges that pure reason is devoid of content and cannot generate morality. The contractual basis of the social contract is therefore seriously undermined.

The Legislator is to carve a community out of the shattered pieces of civil society. Thus, he must provide a cultural, social and perhaps religious bulwark out of which a consensus emerges. He must miraculously provide social cement for a people who can

only relate to each other on the basis of opposition. He must create an organic whole. His charisma and his ability to inspire awe must draw people to rally together in spite of themselves. Hence, their love for a particular individual becomes the basis for a collective identity.

Rousseau's account of civil religion also reflects the reliance upon authority and tradition. Religion and civic duty coincide, thereby ensuring that citizens become inseparable from the whole: "Of all the Christian writers, the philosopher Hobbes is the only one who clearly saw the evil and the remedy, who dared to propose the reunification of the two heads of the eagle and the complete restoration of political unity, without which no state or government will ever be well constituted"(SC IV.8). Religion which incorporates politics "is good in that it unites the divine cult with love of the laws, and that, in making the homeland the object of its citizens' admiration it teaches them that all service to the state is service to its tutelary god"(SC IV.8). The particular wills of individuals would thus fade, and citizens become engulfed in the collective. Here Rousseau relies upon ancient virtue which smothers the individual and keeps him enraptured by symbols of the whole. In order to conceive of other's as equals, individuals must be made acutely aware of their non-supremacy. While the *Social Contract* begins by enlisting reason, it ends by transcending reason through a kind of mysticism that abruptly tears individuals from their bourgeois roots. Thus, he finds himself at a dead end, unable to effect a transition from civil society towards the general will.

The pessimistic strain that runs through these writings should not be underestimated. Individuals must focus on a common symbol of the whole, namely a legislature or a civil religion in order to begin to act as a people. Naked reason alone cannot be a community. However, it is also important that these "compromises" are also intended to be merely preliminary steps that consolidate the community and imbue individuals with a sense of common purpose. The cautious voting procedures which seem to prevent the formation of intersubjective relationships, are primarily defensive, and are intended to uproot the competitive residue of bourgeois society. Once the community has been consolidated and our competitive strains have been weeded out, Rousseau hopes that the stage has been set for true "intersubjective" relations between people. The biggest hurdle to be overcome is the formation of the community itself, for it means that we must overcome years of bourgeois distrust. Rousseau realizes that it is much easier to sustain existing ties, than to create them. If we feel that we are equal members of a community, then we are less likely to allow open debate and discussion to destroy it, for part of our identity is already invested in the community. Democracies often have an anti-democratic base.

Thus, Rousseau ends his *Social Contract* on a note of despair, suggesting that the divisions that ravage bourgeois society may be too great to both forge and sustain the type of community he envisions. A commitment to freedom alone cannot create a social order. Affective ties between citizens must develop, and Rousseau turns to forces that are beyond

the community to generate such emotional bonds. The egoism of human beings can only be overcome if they are overawed by a presence that is greater than themselves. This is why he invokes civil religion and the legislator. At the same time, such egoism cannot be entirely submerged for it is an important stimulus to creativity. Without the confidence and the desire to make my own contribution, I will relapse into a stagnant passivity. However, reconciling such egoism with the kind of communitarian social order he envisions is no small task. At the same time, it is important to recognize that Rousseau's goal is not to completely overcome the tension between the desire for integration and the appetite for individuation, since this would put a halt to humanity's perfectibility and thereby rob us of our freedom. The degenerate state of bourgeois society was not due to the existence of the tension itself, but rather due to its obstinate refusal to recognize it. Bourgeois individuals did not appreciate their own submerged desire for belonging and assumed that integration would undercut their independence. We aim to stand out, not only in order to distinguish ourselves from those around us, but to prove to others that we are worthy of being embraced by them. At the same time, such individuation may pose a threat to the very community whose recognition we seek. Thus, not only the individual, but the community must respond to this challenge. It is the interplay between the individual and the community, that keeps both alive. Rousseau does not propound a return to the friction free environment of the proto-human, but rather aspires to ensure that the interplay between these opposing tendencies occurs in an egalitarian environment. The challenge

that we are saddled with is to not lose sight of either desire and to create an environment where each person can actively engage in the effort to achieve a reconciliation between these conflicting demands.

CHAPTER FOUR: EMILE

The *Social Contract* ends on an ambivalent note, highlighting the difficulty that the contradictions between individuation and integration can pose. Rousseau would like citizenship to be more than simply a Hobbesian trade-off in which one's security is purchased in exchange for submission to the law of a sovereign. To a large extent, he takes his bearings from the ancient Greeks who invested the political community with meaning. However, true to his modern roots, Rousseau insists that this meaning must not be beyond the individual but must be for him. It cannot be simply imposed upon him; it must be created by him. Yet, it would require a leap of faith for bourgeois citizens, who are accustomed to dealing with each other as rivals to suddenly create a community out of nothing. In order to perform this task, they would already have to know what it means to be members of the community, and as relentless competitors, they do not. The ironic challenge that Rousseau must undertake is to find a means of making bourgeois citizens, who are not already members of a community, predisposed towards it. The "spirit" of the community must somehow be fostered in its absence. If their *amour-propre* is to be enlisted to "recreate" the harmony characteristic of *amour-de-soi*, human beings must first be allowed to experience this primordial sense of oneness. Thus, the individual must know the feeling of being completely integrated into his natural environment. Once the process of separating himself from it begins, he must not experience a division so intense

that it causes him to completely lose sight of his original home. Thus, for Rousseau, what is most sublime in human nature cannot be attained by suppressing the animal in us, but only by carefully nurturing it.

Culture cannot be brutally imposed on man, creating an unequal division that pits conventional needs against natural ones. Instead, it must be reconciled with the needs of nature. It is interesting to note that Emile's cultural training does not occur within the community, but at its fringes. The only "community" which would be available to Emile is bourgeois society. Premature exposure to the relationships of inequality which prevail there would make integration impossible. As a child, he would find himself dependent on others to satisfy his own desires. He would quickly come to see them as instruments that can be used for his own benefit and begin to objectify them. He will not be able to integrate himself with them, because their needs will conflict with his own and therefore he must use cunning and deceit to enlist their help. Rousseau insists that the independence of the child must not be threatened, so that he will not succumb to the temptation to use another human being. Domination and submission both stem from a position of weakness. It is precisely when Emile is most dependent, that the greatest care must be taken to conceal his dependence from him.

Rousseau's noble lie, unlike that of Plato, is used to foster Emile's independence. Circumstances are manipulated in such a way that Emile is always under the impression that his decisions and discoveries are entirely his own. All acts he is "compelled" to

perform must be in accordance with his needs. It is important to stress that his "independence" is intended to prevent the growth of an internal division which would make him unsure of his relationship to the world. The child is not ready to understand his relationship to the larger human community because he is still preoccupied with his own most basic needs. Therefore, forcing him to obey the commands of others would appear to him to be an order to ignore his own body's demands. As a result he would come to see the community as a hostile, alien force. Because Emile must always understand the interconnectedness between culture and nature, Rousseau cannot allow culture to be imposed upon him by others. In this way he tries to ensure that his "exit" from nature is always at the same time a return to it.

As I pointed out in earlier chapters, morality for Rousseau involves an attempt to replicate the harmonious relationship that existed in the proto-human at the social level. However, we cannot replicate a oneness that we do not know and therefore Emile must be allowed to experience this sense of harmony. During our childhood, we are closest to nature. Since culture is always in part an imitation of nature, knowing our own childhood is an essential part of the civilizing process. Thus, Rousseau's treatise is not only the education of Emile, but an education in childhood for his readers. If we do not know what it is like to feel integrated into the world, we lose the capacity to integrate ourselves. In order to be able to deal with conflict, we must know what an existence that is relatively devoid of conflict would be like. The innocence of the child must be protected rather than

spurned. By celebrating childhood, Rousseau wants to ensure that idealism has a place in human activity. Even if we can never recapture the harmony of childhood, the memory of it can act as a catalyst for our striving to continuously improve upon the imperfect environment that we are condemned to inhabit. Rousseau wants to prevent the kind of cynicism that accompanied the crumbling of utopias, which impels us to simply adapt to what is, rather than trying to improve upon it. We must learn to be children in order to be responsible adults.

Emile's social isolation is an attempt on Rousseau's part to shield him from the divisive affects of bourgeois society. Nevertheless, Rousseau is fully aware that if the "self" is to develop, Emile must learn to integrate himself not only into nature but into the community. Rousseau insists that it is the sexual relationship between a man and a woman that forms the cornerstone of all communities. Here "selfish" bodily needs demand integration with another. Therefore, Emile is not really ready for morality until sexual desire stirs within him, for it is at this point that he recognizes the need for integration with another. The scope of his self interest is broadened through sex. However, sexual arousal also has the potential to shake the very foundations of Emile's "selfhood" since the desire for integration may simply impel him to cater to another's whims. For this reason, public responsibility and sexual satisfaction must be fused in Emile's imagination. His attention to public duty will prevent him from simply surrendering himself to his beloved, while his beloved will entice him to fulfil his public responsibilities. A delicate balance is

maintained between integration with one's spouse, and his individuation. He must be one with her and yet at the same time retain his "separateness" from her.

Only when armed with the intersubjectivity of a love relationship, can he make the leap to citizenship, for the more abstract identification with the political community must be premised on a concrete identification with one's fellow human beings. Many atrocities can be committed in the name of a citizenship that merely unites isolated atoms. Because atomic individuals see integration and individuation as mutually opposed, they assume that in order to become part of the whole, they must surrender the capacity to make their own judgements. We need only reflect on the horrific imprint that genocide has left on the history of the twentieth century to see examples of crimes perpetrated by "good citizens". Like Aristotle, Rousseau's philosophy suggests that the good citizen and the good "man" are not necessarily concomitant and tries to delineate a process through which the two can be fused. His novel *Emile* is thus an education in humanity which is a necessary prelude to citizenship.

Nature and self sufficiency

Since citizenship must be closely allied with humanity, it cannot merely be thrust upon the individual, but must be carefully nurtured throughout the span of one's life. The attempt to rush headlong towards citizenship while neglecting or repressing our most basic

instincts only produces a disfigured and weak social body. The sacrifices required by the citizen then pose a threat to one's individuality and create an internal schism that is difficult to breach. Nature is not only an integral part of our humanity, but our first home. Therefore, our social habitat must grow out of our natural habitat¹, rather than uprooting it in order to make way for alien structures: "Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man. He forces one soil to nourish the products of another, one tree to bear the fruit of another. ...He turns everything upside down; he disfigures everything; he loves deformity, monsters"(E 37). This recklessness results in perpetual dissatisfaction as we are racked by nostalgia for what has been left behind: "Swept along in contrary routes by nature and by men, forced to divide ourselves between these different impulses, we follow a composite impulse which leads us to neither one goal nor the other"(E 41). Only if our natural roots are woven into the social tapestry do we feel at home in our surroundings. While we chart our path forwards, we must not turn a blind eye to where we come from.

Berman points out that according to Rousseau, man's nature has survived but has

¹Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity*, (New York: Athenaeum, 1970), p. 163. Berman points out that Rousseau dispenses with the rigid dualism between Machine and tree that had permeated modern thought. The Machine had become a symbol for externally imposed conventions while the tree represents man's capacity for life and freedom. Rousseau was attuned to the "paradox of modernity" which saw the machine as "an outgrowth of the tree." He therefore "aimed neither to integrate modern men into the machine nor blow it up." Conversely, Starobinski adapts the dichotomy rejected by Berman and suggests that Rousseau exhorts us to return to the inner voice of nature, that has been stifled by the Machine.

been thrown into a "totally unnatural world."² He uses the metaphor of the tree that has been planted on the highway and leads a precarious existence, facing the constant threat of being overrun by the cars that hurtle past it. According to Berman, Emile must have a firm education in nature which will enable him to cope with an alienated world and struggle against its inauthenticity. Berman tacitly equates nature and authenticity, insisting that this authentic self can be nurtured provided that the interference of others is kept to a minimum. Only an individual who is authentic can be relied upon to care for the authenticity of others. I would argue that Rousseau would deny the existence of an authentic core that has been ravaged by inauthentic social relations. The self is always also externally constituted and there is no pure inner essence that can be deemed authentic. Authenticity does not involve the absence of outside interference, but a relationship in with such interference is harmonized with "internal" or natural demands. In the process, what is considered internal and external is constantly shifting. Rousseau does not aim to minimize external influence per se but rather to minimize unequal external influence.

Although the primary focus of Rousseau's tale is to prepare Emile for a relationship with his fellow human beings, he begins his story by introducing him to the world of nature. The chronology of Emile's development closely coincides with that of humanity as a whole as outlined in the *Discourses of Inequality*. As I pointed out in previous chapters, culture, for Rousseau is always simultaneously an adaption to and a

²Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity*, p. 165.

resistance against nature. Yet, while the struggle to both adapt to and transcend nature is a permanent feature of the civilizing process, Rousseau insists that a solid grounding in nature itself would be more conducive to a "sensible" imitation.

Emile's experience of nature is not identical to that of the proto-human, for he is guided by Rousseau whose conception of nature is informed by culture. Emile is taught to appreciate nature rather than blindly being subjected to it. Rousseau's own awareness of the "value" of nature stems from a reflection upon cultural experiences. Ironically, it is culture's attempt to steer us away from nature that enables us to resuscitate it. The suppression of nature's voice generates an inner tension which makes us more conscious of that which we are forced to leave behind. The austere skyscape of modern cities is perhaps the most blatant reminder of the need to seek refuge in our first home.

In order to prepare Emile for the divisions that will inevitably confound him, they must be carefully monitored and controlled during childhood. He must know happiness and harmony so that he will be inclined to try to overcome these divisions later on in life. Even though he cannot return to childhood, he must learn to act as though it were possible to do so. Thus, Rousseau must shield Emile from the harmful effects of others in order to minimize the possibility of premature internal tension. Emile is raised in virtual isolation because other people can do irreparable damage to his vulnerable psyche, thereby robbing him of the happiness he needs to enjoy. He could meet individuals in bourgeois society only as "others" who interfere with his own desires. To introduce Emile to people scarred

by the bourgeois ethic would deny him the experience of harmony. Rousseau begins with an individual who is prior to society, because of his virulent disdain for the existing society: "*Emile* is written to defend man against a great threat which bids fair to cause a permanent debasement of the species, namely, the almost inevitable universal dominance of a certain low human type which Rousseau was the first to isolate and to name: the *bourgeois*."³

Emile is trained to be independent, not in order to enable him to survive without others, but to ensure that he does not develop the appetite for domination. The taste for mastery comes not from feelings of superiority in Rousseau's view, but from feelings of inadequacy that spring from the inability to satisfy our needs on our own. Because the drive for self preservation is primary, an unequal dependence on others attunes us to our own vulnerability. Thus, we try to tie their fate to our own, by either becoming their master or slave. This involves sacrificing our own desires to either control or submit to those of others. It is not dependence itself that Rousseau objects to, but unequal dependence. It would appear as though self sufficiency and equality are connected in Rousseau's view. However, Rousseau merely wants to guarantee that I am no more dependent on you than you are on me. This becomes apparent in the *Social Contract* where we are independent legislators and yet at the same time, dependent on the

³Allan Bloom, 'Emile,' *Giants and Dwarfs*, p. 180. Bloom points out that the bourgeois is the man who, in thinking about himself thinks only about others, and in thinking about others, thinks only about himself.

community as a whole which depends equally on all of us. If I depend on you no more than you depend on me, the dependence is neutralized and we remain as "independent as before." Emile is isolated and raised to be "self sufficient" because it is a bourgeois social order that he must eventually enter into. If the larger society that is to become Emile's home were predicated on relations of equality, there would be no need to sequester Emile. The irony of the novel is that the kind of education that is necessary for Emile because of bourgeois society is also made impossible by that society. Only an individual with independent means such as Emile can withdraw from the very social order that most are compelled to depend upon for their survival.

Emile's secluded childhood is not simply an effort to shield him from the vagaries of public opinion. Rousseau recognizes that public opinion is necessary in any society since it works through habituation and therefore reduces the need for authority based on force. However, when we passively submit to the prevailing norms without participating in their creation, both our freedom and our sense of belonging are undercut. Emile too is manipulated by his educator, but this "interference" is always disguised as necessity: "The tutor and his helpers must disappear, as it were, and everything that happens to the child must *seem* to be an inevitable effect of nature."⁴ Necessity and freedom are closely intertwined. Paradoxically, when we are confronted with necessity, we have a greater tendency to adapt to it in our own way. We do not see nature as a subject that could have

⁴Allan Bloom, 'Introduction,' *Emile* (New York; Basic Books, 1979), p. 11.

acted otherwise; it simply is and therefore we ourselves must change in order to reintegrate ourselves. Our desires may be frustrated but we have to overcome this in order to survive. However, when another person prevents us from satisfying our desires, we become resentful. Since we are aware of another's subjectivity, their interference is something that need not have occurred and therefore it is interpreted as a deliberate ploy against us. An internal division is created which is allowed to fester, rather than overcoming it.

During the nascent stages of his education, Emile is permitted to tend exclusively to his immediate self interest and his inner needs. In the infant state of complete dependence, the child does not differentiate between himself and his mother, since all his needs are satisfied. As soon as they begin to be frustrated, he begins to distinguish between self and other, internal and external. Reaching for objects that escape his grasp is a lesson in self awareness. Simultaneously, he acquires an awareness for his dependence on others and the need to subordinate their will to his own: "A child cries at birth; the first part of his childhood is spent crying. ..Either we do what pleases him, or we exact from him what pleases us. Either we submit to his whims, or we submit him to ours. No middle ground; he must give orders or receive them. Thus, his first ideas of are those of domination and servitude"(E 48). This is accompanied by a sense of longing to return to the state of harmony enjoyed in early infancy.

Once the child recognizes that his cries prompt others to respond to his needs, he

acquires a preliminary understanding of his ability to command others. He learns that the subordination of their will to his own can be a convenient substitute for adapting to nature. The capacity to determine the actions of others becomes more important to him than satisfying his needs by himself. By soliciting their recognition, he can enlist their help in performing tasks for him. For this reason, Rousseau deprives Emile of any visible servants who cater to his whims. All his experiences must be ruled by necessity, for only if he recognizes and accepts the limitations of nature, can he realize his own freedom. Emile must therefore fall back on his own actions, and transform himself in order to adapt to nature. Such self transformation constitutes the essence of freedom according to Rousseau, for if we simply rely on the servitude of others in order to satisfy our needs, we are not forced to expand our own horizons. Conversely, if we become servants of others whose actions are determined by our masters, we do not shape ourselves. Thus, the purpose of Emile's training is to ensure that self creation remains an indelible feature of his experience.

Other people do not constitute the sole obstacles to Emile's happiness. His own imagination can tip the balance between needs and capacities to fulfil them and therefore it must be curtailed. After all, it was the imagination that prevented man from recapturing the "joys of the primitive state."⁵ The hurdles Emile must overcome are never beyond his ability to cope with them. In his youth, Emile is only exposed to one book, *Robinson*

⁵Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity*, p. 266.

Crusoe, which chronicles the life of a self sufficient individual whom Emile can imitate in order to become himself: "Robinson Crusoe on his island, alone, deprived of the assistance of his kind and the instruments of all the arts, providing nevertheless for his subsistence, for his preservation and even procuring for himself a kind of well being-this is an object interesting for every age and one which can be made agreeable to children in countless ways...I want him to think he is Robinson himself... I want him to worry about the measures to take if this or that were lacking to him"(E 184-185). If Emile felt compelled to mimic the grand heroics of a superhuman figure, he would quickly master the art of hypocrisy to compensate for his own deficiencies. In his *Confessions*, Rousseau makes reference to the damage done to his own psyche by reading too many books in his youth since his first consciousness was that of the other rather than himself, leading to profound internal division.(C I.9)

Nature becomes Emile's "companion" during the early periods of his youth. First of all, this diminishes the sense of alienation that he experiences, since the young child is ruled primarily by natural instincts. By allowing Emile to be guided by them he minimizes an internal division that the child is ill equipped to handle. While nature does occasionally frustrate his needs, the child strives to overcome the obstacles that he faces, rather than resenting them. Conversely, human interference with his needs incites his anger and his tears. He knows that he has come up against another will, although he is unable to articulate this phenomenon. Because the child suspects that his needs are deliberately

being foiled, his sense of belonging appears to be under siege. For Rousseau, belonging is an integral aspect of freedom. Eventually, Emile will mature, such that his sense of belonging will grow more sophisticated, and is not automatically associated with the immediate satisfaction of desires, but this process is a gradual one.

The movement away from the instinctual towards the intellectual and erotic must be gradual and in accordance with the natural development of the child. To a certain extent, "denaturation" is essential since the selfish impulses must not only be constrained but transformed in order to be able to accommodate the other. Horowitz makes a distinction between excessive and necessary denaturation, remarking that Rousseau's purpose in *Emile* is to eschew excess denaturation which is the hallmark of civil society.⁶ In Emile's case, proper denaturation is not only a matter of degree, but also of timing since the transformations that he undergoes must be in accordance with his "biological clock". The divisions that Emile encounters must not surpass his psychological and physical capacity to handle them. I would describe excessive denaturation as that which creates an internal rift that we cannot overcome. If cultural demands are placed upon us too early, and we are unable to see their connection to nature, a rift is created in the soul which is difficult to heal. Healthy denaturation involves the introduction of culture in such a way that it can be seen also as an adaptation to nature.

Nature is to become Emile's moral guide and is used to prepare him for his

⁶Asher Horowitz, *Rousseau, Nature and History*, p. 213.

relationship with his fellow human beings. Morality for Rousseau is not simply treating the other as you would want to be treated, but treating the other as though they were a part of you and as if you were a part of them. This is why love becomes such an important precursor to morality for Rousseau. If morality is simply imposed and presented as something that is contrary to our desires, then it will be an unwelcome burden. Thus, the potentially moral being must be integrated into its surroundings, so that his soul is prepared for an integration with another human being. Rousseau insists that since "children's first sensations are purely affective"(E 62) they must be presented "to him in an appropriate order"(E 64): "At the beginning of life when memory and imagination are still inactive, the child is attentive only to what affects his senses at the moment... He wants to touch everything, handle everything. Do not oppose yourself to this restlessness. It is suggestive to him of a very necessary apprenticeship; it is thus he learns to feel the hotness, the coldness, the hardness, the softness, the heaviness, the lightness of bodies, and to judge their size, their shape, and all their sensible qualities"(E 64). In short, we cannot learn to compare things through concepts prior to our comparison of objects through touch. Kant's observation that Rousseau's project in *Emile* is to "end the conflict between the natural and the moral species"⁷ is correct, but for the wrong reasons. For Kant, the continued and persistent assault on the passions and heterogeneous desires by the

⁷Immanuel Kant, 'Conjectural Beginning of Human History,' *On History*. ed. L.W. Beck. (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), p. 62.

categorical imperative will eventually succeed in supplanting nature, becoming a kind of second nature. Nature is to be overcome, while Rousseau argues that our movement away from nature is at the same time a return to it. We move *beyond* nature by going *through* it.

One may object that Emile's freedom is illusory, since his tutor manipulates circumstances to yield predetermined results. In fact, Rousseau makes his pupil compliant, foreclosing any possibility for rebellion by never uttering the word "no". Such prohibitions create a division between self and other that the child does not know how to overcome. Furthermore, one must let the child use "all the strength nature gives them"(E 68), "limiting their desires to their strength"(E 68). This will safeguard the child against evil, since "the child is wicked only because he is weak"(E 67). For example, instead of telling the child that he cannot do something, Rousseau insists that the child must discover for itself why its actions are destructive. Otherwise, it does not learn to adapt to necessity but sees it as an external burden that robs it of its sense of belonging. Emile's tutor must never undercut the child's capacity to integrate itself. Morality must therefore develop out of his own experiences. Therefore, he manipulates circumstances so that the child is never exposed to situations where the problem exceeds the child's capacity to adapt on its own.

Rousseau wants to ensure that his pupil does not turn into an individual who loves an abstract humanity but hates actual human beings. A conceptual awareness of the need to integrate oneself with others is meaningless to an individual who has led a disintegrated

existence.

In order to foster a healthy self love in Emile, he is to first of all learn what his needs are and how to satisfy them. If others interfere too early during this process of discovery, his needs will be determined by others. Emile unknowingly acts according to the wishes of his tutor, so that he will never simply bend to the wishes of others. Emile's compliance is an education in non-compliance. His tutor forces him to become self-sufficient.

Emile's lesson in self sufficiency allows him to mediate the external world , therefore participating in the cultural process. His desires and passions will act as the catalyst to such transformation and therefore are not to be repressed. Thus, according to Rousseau desires are not sublimated through repression but rather through the process of satisfying them. For example, Emile learns the art of astronomy when he finds himself lost in the woods at lunchtime and struggles to navigate his way back in order to satisfy his appetite. In this way, Rousseau ensures that the skills he learns will not be forgotten. Natural instincts and intellectual appetite do not conflict, but are blended together in the education of Emile. The "higher virtues" are developed in order to satisfy the "baser" ones. In the process of creating new methods for satisfying our animal appetites, we acquire higher tastes. This is a unique account of sublimation that differs radically from that of Plato, who insists that our appetites and desires must be reined in by reason. Once

we have savoured the higher pleasures, our baser instincts lose their appeal.⁸

The distant other

Emile cannot spend the remainder of his life in blissful seclusion and must learn how to relate to human beings. Because this is likely to wreak havoc on Emile's soul, Rousseau exercises great caution during his pupil's socialization. His first encounter with another human being is indirect; he meets him as an owner of property. This may seem odd, given Rousseau's scathing criticism of the kind of property relations that tarnish bourgeois society. However, at this stage in his development, Emile is still primarily concerned with meeting his own physical needs and he will judge others by their failure or capacity to satisfy them. He must learn to see the connection between his own interests and those of others. Furthermore, Rousseau is raising an individual who must survive in a bourgeois world where property plays a central role. Rather than teaching him that another's property is detrimental to him, he wants to inculcate a non-hierarchical conception of property relations which stresses their mutually beneficial nature. Once

⁸In *The Republic*, Socrates hopes to whet Glaucon's appetite for philosophy. Glaucon is a man of intense and insatiable desires who is both a potential philosopher and potential tyrant. Once having revelled in the light of the sun, the paltry glow in the cave is no longer satisfying to him. The world of eternal forms is much more desirable than the transient world of the particular, which our baser desires are wedded to. Plato, *The Republic*, tr. Allan Bloom, (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

again, Rousseau is using very bourgeois concepts and imbuing them with anti-bourgeois connotations.

Emile's first lesson in property relations occurs when he is encouraged to plant beans in a garden. He takes immense pride in his work, and develops a notion of ownership because his labour has gone into their plantation: "In this model of the way of inculcating primary notions in children, one sees how the idea of property naturally goes back to the right of the first occupant by labour. That is clear, distinct, simple, and within the child's reach"(E 99). When he suddenly finds that someone has ploughed over his beans, he is indignant at the injustice perpetrated against him(E 99). The gardener, responsible for committing this act is equally enraged, because Emile's beans have interfered with the melons that he had planted for Emile's consumption. Because Emile's appetite is whetted by the thought of the luscious melons he might have had, his anger over his beans wanes and he is taught an important lesson in the respect for the property of others. A compromise is reached, whereby Emile is entitled to a small plot of land for his own beans. Because the respect for the rights of others appears to be clearly in his own interest, the morality of the lesson is not lost on Emile. Were the self interest of the gardener pitted against that of Emile, he would see morality as a burden that blocked his own desires and would secretly defy these codes of morality. The child, at this stage is not yet ready to grapple with an abstract principle telling him to respect the rights of others, for he does not have an immediate connection to them.

However, eventually this abstract experience of the "other" must give way to more direct personal relationships. The awakening of sexual passion during adolescence sets the stage for a new intimacy. Passion, not reason is the most powerful link between people. since it can transcend the realm of survival and necessity and overcome the opposition between self and other: "As soon as man has need of a companion, he is no longer an isolated being. His heart is no longer alone. All his relations with his species, all the affections of his soul are born with this one. His first passion soon makes the others ferment"(E 214). Sexual passion is a bodily need but also demands the recognition of the other in order to be fulfilled, combining *amour-propre* and *amour-de-soi*. It manifests a potent desire to be part of something larger than the self and therefore is much more compelling than any abstract recognition of integration through property. The system of needs, links people indirectly through things, and therefore does not establish the kinds of personal links between people that are necessary in order to consolidate social bonds. However, as I pointed out earlier, if Emile does not preserve his independence prior to falling in love, he will lose himself in an emotion which effaces some of the boundaries between self and other.

Since passion is an overwhelming urge to be part of something larger than the self, it is a necessary pillar of any moral order. I transcend myself through the vehicle of my own body and not in spite of it. Spiritual transcendence in Rousseau incorporates the body rather than shunning it. However, I cannot satisfy this kind of longing on my own and

need to be recognized by another in order to feel integrated. Love demands reciprocity and therefore is a powerful testament to relations of equality. In order to be loved, "one has to make oneself lovable"(E 215). However, this is replete with danger for the need to be loved by others might engender dangerous rivalries as well as deception. I will go to any lengths and deform myself in order to conform to the wishes of others. For this reason, Emile must be secure in his own identity before being exposed to this powerful sentiment. He must be aware of his own subjectivity, if it is not to be undermined by his passion for another. Rousseau wants to ensure that love becomes an intertwining of two souls and bodies, rather than a submission of one to the other. Morality cannot grow without *amour-propre*, but if *amour-propre* is not contained, it can undermine morality.

The erotic passion of youth that Emile experiences is dizzying since the desire to be part of a larger whole also threatens to efface the self. The very existence of these passions demonstrates that he is beginning to feel separate from the world that he is a part of and seeks a reunification with his lost home. Thus, the passions are not antithetical to reason but emerge in conjunction with it. Only upon reflection of his condition does he begin to notice incongruities that remind him that he is not fully part of the world. He is in danger of losing the independence that Rousseau had so fastidiously cultivated due to his desire to re-integrate himself. However, this also threatens to undermine reason when we will go to any lengths to recapture the sense of belonging and annihilate our self in the process: "So long as his sensibility remains limited to his own individuality, there is

nothing moral in his actions. It is only when it begins to extend outside of himself that it takes on, first, the sentiments, and, then, the notions of good and evil which truly constitute him as a man and an integral part of his species" (E 219-220). Because he covets the company and recognition of other human beings, he begins to compare his lot to theirs.

One would not experience the need to compare oneself to someone with whom one feels no connection. At the same time, if one did not notice the distance between oneself and others, there would also be no reason for comparison. However, this comparison could also sharpen Emile's feeling of estrangement. Thus, *amour-propre* represents both a division from and an identification with others. Rousseau's task is to ensure that the divisive aspect does not stifle its unifying potential.

Rousseau capitalizes on Emile's burgeoning desire by cultivating pity before exposing him to love. Pity is a more "abstract" emotion which can be experienced at a greater distance, and therefore is less threatening to Emile's sense of independence. Unlike love, which leaves more permanent marks, it is fleeting. Yet, compassion is also an emotion which can help to overcome the opposition between self and other. If one sees another's suffering and puts oneself in her place, then a connection is made with another human being. To prevent self dissatisfaction, Rousseau only introduces him to people who are less fortunate than he. If he were to become prematurely acquainted with the better-off, he would feel spurned by the social world that surrounds him. Concentrating on their misfortune enables him to identify with this suffering while being thankful for his

own condition. There are both pre-reflective and reflective aspects to pity, according to Rousseau: "Such is the movement of nature prior to all reflection. Such is the force of natural pity.."(DOI 54). During the state of nature, pity contributed to the preservation of the species by curtailing *amour-de-soi* and placing limits on what the proto-human would do in the interests of his own self preservation: "with all their mores, men would never have been anything but monsters, if nature had not given them pity to aid their reason(DOI 54). Starobinski focuses on the instinctual nature of pity and insists that true pity would be "spoken directly by the voice of nature."⁹ However, this ignores the second aspect of the emotion which involves *amour-propre*. The capacity for comparison enables an individual to imagine himself in the shoes of another and establishes a link between them as a fellow sufferer. We are united through our common alienation from the world: "It is man's weakness which makes him sociable; it is our common misery which turn our hearts to humanity; we would owe humanity nothing if we were not men. Every attachment is a sign of insufficiency. If each of us had no need of others, he would hardly think of uniting himself with them. Thus from our very infirmity is born our frail happiness"(E 221). The feeling of separation thus catapults us towards a new experience of harmony.

Pity also provides Emile with a means of re-integrating himself by alleviating the suffering of another human being. It motivates him to make himself part of the world, by

⁹Starobinski, *Transparency and Obstruction*, p. 306.

improving the lot of others in it. His own well-being is intimately bound up with the happiness of others. His independence is enhanced and his sense of connectedness is reinforced. However, there is also a darker side to pity. We revel in the power that accrues to us as a result of being needed.¹⁰ While we do not like to be dependent, we enjoy the dependence of others on us. Pity is not purely a gentle emotion but can inflame vanity and pride. Thus, feeling for others and selfishness are tightly interwoven in Rousseau's philosophy. The act of compassion both unites us with fellow sufferers and separates us from them. Pity is a potent expression of the divided self.

Rousseau protects Emile against the potential for vanity by invoking pity, the very emotion which threatened to instil the dangerous pride in Emile in the first place. Through literature, he is introduced to a wider array of books that depict the life of heroes. The tragic fate they meet as a result of their vanity is to elicit his pity rather than his admiration: "When he then reads the life of this madman and finds that all the latter's great designs ended in his getting killed by a woman's hand, instead of admiring this pretended heroism Emile will see nothing in all the exploits of so great a captain, in all the intrigues of so great a statesman, other than so many steps on the road to that fateful tide which would terminate his life and his projects by a dishonourable death"(E 242). He is introduced to greatness only to reinforce a fundamental notion of equality. Thus, Emile

¹⁰The general will incorporates this need to feel needed, but ensures that we are equally dependent on each other. It tries to safeguard each individual's independence while at the same time, making all others dependent on each individual.

will not aspire to emulate these great figures, as Rousseau did. Instead his exposure to their tribulations will increase his satisfaction with his own lot. Because he is acutely aware of the vulnerability of all people, even his introduction to the upper strata of society will not stir his envy, but rather impel him to spurn their ostentation. He learns to prefer a humble peasant meal to the lascivious banquets of the wealthy.

Love and the family

After ensuring that Emile's independence has a solid foundation, Rousseau makes it clear to Emile that his escalating passions seek fruition in the sexual relationship with a woman. For Rousseau, love, rather than pity becomes the most powerful force of cohesion that can underwrite the political order. At the same time it is also replete with danger, for it can weaken the social bonds that it is supposed to uphold. Unlike pity, it is not merely an abstract identification with another that comes from noting similarities in one's conditions. Love is the desire to both become part of another human being, and to have another human being become part of oneself. Therefore, it involves both reciprocity and perfectibility since we must transform ourselves in order to expand the boundaries of the self in this way. Both individuals must change in order to permit a fusion of souls. It is through love that Emile is to learn to enter into a reciprocal relationship with another that is to become the foundation of the political order predicated on the general will.

Thus, if Emile is to be socially integrated, he must also learn to become vulnerable to another. However only when armed with a strong sense of his own self sufficiency is he ready to take this risk, for he must take care not to completely lose himself by submitting to the other's will. Love is fraught with danger, since the desire to win the affection of another human being impels us to don masks, changing our appearances in order to elicit our beloved's admiration. Love offers a powerful incentive for manipulation. Rousseau himself uses the uncertainty surrounding the emotion to increase his own power over Emile. He benefits from Emile's disorientation in order to steer his sexual energy in the "right" direction, informing him about the "true" nature of sex. His drives must be harnessed by enhancing rather than repressing them for this would foster an unhealthy internal division. They are to be allied with the highest of human aspirations and become a means for integrating himself within a larger whole, rather than merely satisfying sexual cravings. Morality and sex become inextricably interwoven. The sexual union between two people is to lend a spiritual dimension to morality and approximates the harmonious oneness of *amour-de-soi*.

In order to awaken Emile to spirituality, he reintroduces him to a nature that he had not been attuned to in his childhood, when it was merely a means to his preservation. Rousseau mystifies nature: "Stones, trees, heaps of rocks, consecrated by these acts and thus made respectable to barbaric men, were the pages of this book, which was constantly open to all eyes. The well of the oath, the well of the living and seeing, the old oak of

Mamre, the mound of the witness, these were the crude but august monuments of the sanctity of contracts"(E 321). The Enlightenment, by emptying nature of its spiritual content, and turning it into a mechanism, failed to move people. In such a mystical natural setting, Rousseau introduces sexuality and marriage to Emile in one breath: "the idea of the exclusive attachment which makes it delicious, and the idea of the duties of fidelity and of modesty which surround it and redouble its charm in fulfilling its object; if in depicting marriage to him, not only as the sweetest of associations but as the most inviolable and holiest of all contracts"(E 323). The intimate union with another human being is portrayed as tantamount to an integration with the entirety of nature. Thus, Emile learns that there is more to sexuality than just selfish lust. Through it we come to enjoy the rhythm of life itself. This deception is necessary so that sex can be a medium for enlarging the sphere that we feel a part of. Rousseau wants to prevent Emile from viewing sex as merely an exclusive relationship with another which would once again separate him from the broader world. The integration between man and woman is to become the vehicle for an even larger integration.

Rousseau so dazzles Emile with his portrayal of love that he begs for his tutor's help in navigating himself through these turbulent waters. The excitement that Emile begins to taste stems from the ardent desire to expand his own boundaries. However, this is also frightening, because he recognizes that he may lose sight of his self in the process. The distinction between extending one's own boundaries and allowing oneself to be

absorbed by another is a difficult one to discern. Because of his inexperience, he is willing to defer to his wiser teacher. The wily tutor takes advantage of this to elicit from Emile the first promise, to obey him upon command. Together, they embark on a quest for the ideal woman, who must first spark Emile's imagination. Here Rousseau borrows the Platonic conception of love without sacrificing its sensual component, since the love of the ideal, is at the same time, the love of a real, corporeal woman. In a sense, Rousseau humanizes Plato's philosophy. Fantasy and delusion are necessary if sex is to evolve into love. The imagination enables him to yearn for more than the immediate satisfaction that he coveted as a child and prevents him from sinking into debauchery. He is led to believe that by delaying satisfaction, he stands to reap a greater reward. By expecting more of the relationship than a bare satisfaction of needs, we are driven to try and actualize the illusions that cast a spell over us. Illusions then become a powerful catalyst to perfectibility. Rousseau reintroduces art and eros to politics.

Sophie is to be attractive but must not dazzle Emile with her beauty because this would incite the jealousies of others. Moreover, if he were in awe of her appearance, he might too easily mistake sexual desire for love. The courtship of the two lovers is significant for the anticipation for one's loved object heightens sexual arousal. The imagination must be fuelled to link it to higher virtues. Rousseau tries to instil within Emile the belief that the right woman will only heighten his sexual satisfaction. If Emile had simply been allowed to satiate his bodily desires, he would not have striven to perfect

himself in order to satisfy his sexual longing. Thus, the erotic, for Rousseau is a combination of the moral and the physical, combining the imagination and bodily desires. There is no doubt in Rousseau's mind, that love is always also a chimera. Sophie recognizes in Emile the qualities of her hero Télémaque, and Emile recognizes that Sophie is the woman who has been nurtured in his imagination: "At the name Sophie, you would have seen Emile shiver. Struck by so dear a name, he is wakened with a start and casts an avid glance at the girl who dares to bear it. 'Sophie, O Sophie! Is it you whom my heart loves?'"(E 414). The act of making the actual become the ideal fuels the sexual dynamic. The confusion Emile experiences in her presence is indicative that she both is and is not the figure of his imagination: "He does not know whether the one he sees is better or worse. He studies each feature; he spies on each movement, each gesture. In all he finds countless confused interpretations"(E 414). Yet, this incongruence is beneficial. We improve upon ourselves in order to meet the high expectations of our beloved. Thus, we can never be completely sure of the other's recognition but must constantly struggle to earn it. In this way, sexuality and morality become gloriously intertwined. Sexuality is directly linked to perfectibility.

While sexuality is to become the basis for sociality in Rousseau, he insists that it must do so through the institution of the family. However, as I will point out in the next section, the sexual division of labour he deems necessary for the survival of the family undermines the kind of reciprocity that love entails and therefore the foundation upon

which the political community is to rest is weakened. Rousseau chooses the family as the harbinger of his "revolution", not because it is inherently natural, but because it is the only social institution within bourgeois society that is not predicated purely on relations of instrumentality and selfish egoism. The smaller community of the family, Rousseau hopes, will make individuals more receptive to the larger political community. Within the family, the seeds are to be planted for an eventual reconceptualization of the public space.

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that Rousseau's choice of the family is an ironic one, for he asserts that the bonds of affection which united family members were directly linked to the demarcation of one's own property: "Soon they ceased to fall asleep under the first tree, or to retreat into caves, and found various types of hatchets made of hard, sharp stones which served to cut wood, dig up the soil and make huts from branches they later found it useful to cover with clay and mud. This was the period of a revolution which formed the establishment of the distinction among families and which introduced a kind of property.."(DOI 62). At the same time, the emotional attachments within the family transcended property relations: "The first developments of the heart were the effect of a new situation that united the husbands and wives, fathers and children in one common habitation. The habit of living together gave rise to the sweetest sentiments known to men: conjugal love and paternal love. Each family became a little society all the better united because mutual attachment and liberty were its only bonds.."(DOI 62-63). This institution would eventually help sustain the market by providing a private refuge in which we can

seek the integration that eludes us in a competitive "public world", making the alienated public arena bearable and preventing us from seeking integration there.

In the state of nature, there were no families and both sexes were independent, the woman's psychological makeup being no different from that of the man's. Able to care for their offspring on their own, women did not have to solicit the help of men, nor did they develop enduring bonds of affection with their offspring. Caring for their children did not seem to undermine the obliviousness to other beings which in Rousseau's view characterized the life of the proto-human. His image of the proto-human was therefore largely defined by the male animal's experience. The family emerged when the first homes were set up, marking the end of women's independence. Once homes had been constructed, a separation between inside and outside began to take place. Sexual encounters were less frequent and took place between individuals who shared the same abode. The emotional bonds that extended to the rest of the community begin to wane and love became closely linked to the concept of ownership. A person is mine because he or she is not somebody else's. Desire is directed at a specific individual to the exclusion of others. Greater intimacy is always achieved at the expense of society and the public life. A wedge is driven between the intimacy characteristic of life within the family and the more tenuous bonds with the larger community. Part of the pleasure that comes from love is the satisfaction in knowing that I know an individual more intimately than anyone else. Thus, love is both divisive and integrating.

Because the woman has frequent sexual encounters with a single spouse, she leads a more sedentary existence, since she can no longer rely on the community as a whole to assist in the raising of her numerous children. Continuous pregnancies deprive her of the mobility her spouse enjoys to leave the home: "Women became more sedentary and grew accustomed to watch over the hut and the children, while the man went to seek their common subsistence"(DOI 63). A division of labour develops in which the women tend to domestic concerns while the men search for food. In agricultural communities, men and women were both integrated into the community, even though they performed different activities. Public festivals and outdoor activities ensured that common bonds still remained in place. A woman's domestic role did not mean that she was deprived of a public existence. However, once the division of labour was no longer purely sexual, the community disintegrated and the woman was forcibly excluded from most public activity. While Rousseau comments extensively on the pernicious effects of the division of labour between men, the sexual division of labour between men and women is not held up as one of the primary causes of inequality

. If the family is to become the revolutionary instrument that Rousseau hopes, then public life must enter into bourgeois family life collapsing the rigid boundary that separate the two. This is a difficult task to accomplish for it was precisely their separation that resulted in the kind of intense affective bonds prevalent in the family. Rousseau recognizes that *amour-propre*, or the love of one's own cannot simply be eliminated if social bonds

are to be revived. Rousseau hopes that just as an integration of individuals gives rise to the family, the integration of families could produce the political community. At the same time, he is attuned to fact that the intensity of one's devotion to the family is based on the exclusion of others, and that one cannot simply expect an expansion of the sentiments that bind family members together. While the need to protect one's family might force Emile to acknowledge his public duty, it cannot instill in him feelings of public devotion. He will still be tempted to use the political arena to seek advantages for his own family, rather than considering the good of the whole for its own sake. Thus, somehow public responsibility must enter into the family directly making familial integration contingent upon public integration. As I shall point out in the following section, Rousseau relies upon woman to forge the tenuous link between the public and private realms.

The feminization of politics and the exclusion of women

In order to unleash the family's revolutionary potential, Rousseau must begin with its transformation. If his hopes for a better public realm are pinned on the family, then he must allow the public interest to penetrate the private realm. The integration within the family must somehow be made dependent upon the integration within the larger political community. Rousseau acknowledges that this is a difficult leap to make, and because of this he entrusts the responsibility for bridging this gap to women. For Rousseau, it is

woman who is to become the pillar of both the family and the community although she is to abstain from a direct public role herself. Her power is to be wielded indirectly, such that the man always appears to be the master of both the household and the new community. Okin maintains that Rousseau fails to question the natural basis of such patriarchy, citing numerous examples from the text to support her thesis. She asserts that there "is no recognition in Rousseau's later works...that this type of family system, with the radical division of labour between the sexes, the dependent position of the woman, and the overriding concern with female chastity, has any relation to particular social and economic arrangements and power relationships. It is all presented as according to nature."¹¹ I would argue against Okin that Rousseau recognizes that the patriarchal family is not natural since he stresses that its emergence coincides with the development of property. However, I would agree with Okin that Rousseau hesitates to take his bearing from the proto-human state of nature when prescribing the "appropriate" role for women. The independence which Rousseau had attributed to her there is simply glossed over.

While in the state of nature, woman is not defined primarily by her reproductive capacity, this is no longer the case when she enters into social relations. She then becomes defined almost exclusively by her role as mother. According to Rousseau, motherhood provides her with a natural basis for sociality which the man does not enjoy. The

¹¹Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 118-119.

implication is that she does not need to overcome herself in order to recognize the links between herself and others, because her awareness of this connection is intuitive. Although Rousseau does not argue for the intrinsic superiority of men over women, he nevertheless espouses a unique form of patriarchy. Following tradition, he uses reproductive roles to justify this hierarchy, but his reasoning is very unconventional. While the ancients considered childbirth to be a testament to woman's fallibility, for Rousseau it signals her advantage. It is Rousseau's perception of male weakness that compels him to condone master-slave relations in the private sphere. First of all, self transcendence is not an abstraction for woman. In satisfying her own sexual desires, she may also contribute towards the continuation of the species as a whole. The language of self and other is too rigid for her since the "other" is already part of herself.

Furthermore, woman herself embodies the dialectical relationship between nature and culture, due to the inner tension between her desires and the need to restrain them to avert unwanted pregnancy. Rousseau's posture towards the divided "nature" of woman is ambivalent and contradictory. Man's internal divisions stem from the conflict arising between nature and culture. He is separated from himself, because culture interferes with his natural desires. The image he paints of woman is more nebulous. On the one hand, he argues that in the state of nature, pregnancy does not impose limitations on her, and she does not develop enduring bonds with her offspring. Even breastfeeding is performed because it offers her immediate pleasure. On the other hand, he seems to imply that unlike

man, she is by nature a divided being, who must assert control over her sexual drives in order to avoid constant pregnancy. Her "modesty" and "chastity" are not only the upshot of a patriarchal system but are a defense mechanism against pregnancy prior to the existence of more foolproof methods of birth control. She embodies the division between integration and individuation that man has to grapple with only after cultural norms take hold on him. For a woman, the demands of her own body impel her to control it.

This alleged "natural" internal division of women in Rousseau's view affirms not her weakness but her "natural" superiority. She knows of her connection to others instinctively, while man only knows of it culturally. Her diminished political role, and her apparent subservience to her husband compensate for her "biological" advantage. Furthermore, her sexual drives, in Rousseau's view, far exceed those of men. His texts abound with references to a woman's strength that is so threatening to men. Claiming that a woman's sexual drive is more powerful, and would exhaust men, were it not harnessed, he insists that a false modesty must cloak her sexual prowess. This would enhance her seductive charm without threatening men. Rousseau thereby gives the master-slave relationship an ironic twist. Woman must rule through obedience, otherwise her actions would destroy a fragile male ego. Woman must wear veils to mask her strength, so that man must not wear veils to disguise his weakness. His authenticity is purchased at the cost of hers. However, the very fact that his most intimate relationships are to be with these veiled beings, attests to the fact that he too lives his life out under a shroud. In a sense,

the woman's role is to set the stage for her husband's self creation, furnishing him with the requisite psychological arsenal and enhancing his self esteem. She must sacrifice *herself* so that he can *become* himself.

Rousseau, like Plato, recognizes the power of the sexual bond, acknowledging that it has the potential to both sustain and unravel the social order. The public realm must be harmonized with the family if the latter is not to undo the former. However, the problem with his analysis is that he denies the woman, whom he invests with the sole responsibility for blending the two realms, access to the public realm whose morality she is supposed to instil in her husband.

Rousseau's depiction of the sexual dynamic exposes some blatant contradictions in his philosophy. Sophie receives a training that is almost antithetical to Emile's, since it teaches her to lead a life which is entirely oriented towards the other. Even if one were to concur with Rousseau, that the biological role of motherhood creates a natural internal division, this division would not be applicable to the child whose thoughts are not consumed by the potential for pregnancy. One would thus assume that the kind of division that is deemed so unhealthy for the boy Emile, would also be unhealthy for the girl Sophie. Because of this discrepancy, the reason underlying the marked disparity in education between the two sexes has been contested in the secondary literature. Schwartz avers that Rousseau advocates sexual differentiation not only because of supposed differences in male and female natures, but also because of its political and social effects:

"bodily differences between males and females lead them to differ from one another in certain moral and emotional respects."¹² He argues that women, who are naturally weaker than men, cannot be independent and therefore need to make men dependent upon them. He maintains that bodily differences between men and women "unalterably differentiate them" and that women are the "political sex" since they are less self sufficient.¹³ Presumably they must be prepared in childhood for the dependence that will become an ineradicable part of their lives.

Because of their physical dependence, women more easily recognize the need for politics in Schwartz's view. The woman is invested with the responsibility for forging the links between a man and his family, for she needs his support and protection to take care of her children. Therefore she must cater to his interests. Men do not need women in the same way that women need men. By forging the link between children and their father, Sophie impresses upon him not only the importance of family, but the importance of the larger political community which is to grow out of it. According to Rousseau, her chastity is more important than that of the male, for she must convince the father that the children are his own in order to enlist his support, thereby invoking his *amour-propre* to serve both the family and the community. Selflessness is predicated on selfishness. The social contract grows out of the sexual contract. Duty does not oppose desire but must be based

¹²Joel Schwartz, *The Sexual Politics of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, p. 3.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 85.

on it, and the task of intertwining the two falls to the woman. However, this analysis downplays Rousseau's earlier hypothesis, in which he remarks that the dependence of women on men, like the dependence of men on other men, develops as a result of the change in the nature of property relations. Rousseau points to the pernicious effects of such dependence between men, but he does not object to the dependent relationship that is established between men and women.

Bloom unlike Schwartz, does not take the "natural" dependence of women on men for granted, but insists that sexual differentiation is necessary if men and women are to believe that they complete each other. Their dependence must be artificially created by prescribing different tasks for men and women: "If women do not need men and men are emotionally and legally able to avoid responsibilities that are always painful and are now made utterly unattractive, men and women will always be psychologically ready for separation and will separate at the first difficulty."¹⁴ Bloom accepts the Rousseauian argument that only sexual differentiation makes sexual equality possible. However, he downplays the extent to which this mutual dependence is achieved at the expense of the woman's independence. For Emile, it is necessary that individuation and integration remain in balance, and that the steps he takes to differentiate himself from his environment always also reintegrate him into it. The interests of others are initially made to coincide

¹⁴Allan Bloom, 'Rousseau on the Equality of the Sexes,' in *Justice and Equality: Here and Now* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 82.

with his own, to prevent an unhealthy internal division which will impel him to try to force others to accede to his demands. However, Sophie's training is not just different from Emile's but antithetical to it, since she is taught to ignore her own desires in order to please the other. While Emile is sheltered from social pressures, they comprise a large part of Sophie's education: "Always justify the cares that you impose on young girls, but always impose cares on them. Idleness and disobedience are the two most dangerous defects for them and the ones least easily cured once contracts. ...They ought to be constrained very early. This misfortune, if it is one for them is inseparable from their sex, and they are never delivered from it without suffering far more cruel misfortunes. All their lives they will be enslaved to the most continual and most severe of constraints-that of the proprieties"(E 369). Rousseau neglects to explain why submitting to the will of others does not impel Sophie to succumb to the master-slave dialectic. While for Emile, a training in obedience would also be a lesson in tyranny, this logic seems not to apply to Sophie. Emile must "will and be able", and Sophie must "put up little resistance"(E 358). Sophie's imagination is repressed early on in her life so that she has no ideas of her own. Whereas the young Emile experiences only the necessity imposed by nature, Sophie is always imposed upon by other people. She is not taught to think for herself but how to be a good housewife and mother. The woman who is to implant moral virtue in Emile, is not allowed to nurture her own moral independence.

Sophie is subjected to the conventions which in her adult life will be her only

yardstick when making moral judgements. Woman is "made to please and be subjugated"(E 358) and so she learns to ornament herself in order to attract the attention of suitors. Her curriculum differs from that of Emile, since sex education is part of it from the very beginning: " For man this aim is the development of strength; for woman, it is the development of attractiveness....Girls prefer what presents itself to sight and is useful for ornamentation: mirrors, jewels, dresses, particularly dolls"(E 365, 367). Appearances play a central role during her formative years: " Observe a little girl spending the day around her doll, constantly changing its clothes, dressing and undressing it...But, you will say, she adorns her doll and not her person. Doubtless, she sees her doll and does not see herself. She can do nothing for herself. She is not yet formed; she has neither talent nor strength; she is still nothing. She is entirely in her doll and she puts all her coquetry into it. She will not always leave it there. She awaits the moment when she will be her own doll"(E 367). A woman is defined by her sexuality in a way that the male is not: "Thus, the whole education of women ought to relate to men" (E 365). While Emile is to be sheltered from the opinions of others, a woman is taught to heed them.

This does not foster the kind of independence that would be conducive to assuming responsibility for her husband's moral education. Moreover, it does not furnish her with the psychological fortitude that would enable her to exercise independent judgements. It is not clear how she is supposed to make the most crucial decision of her life and select her mate. Rousseau makes Sophie's "independence" depend on her ability to convey to

her husband what kind of dependence she is willing to accept: "The stronger appears to be master but actually depends on the weaker. This is due not to a frivolous practice of gallantry or to the proud generosity of a protector, but to an invariable law of nature which gives woman more facility to excite the desires than man to satisfy them. This causes the latter, whether he likes it or not, to depend on the former's wish and constrains him to seek to please her in turn, so that she will consent to let him be the stronger"(E 359-60). While dependence plays a prominent role in the education of Sophie, Emile must be attuned only to his independence until his sexual passions begin to stir within him. For Emile, a training in independence prepares him for dependence. However, it is not clear how Sophie's training in dependence prepares her for independence. The "other" which poses such a threat to Emile, is not only a part of Sophie's life but overshadows it. She is taught to feel part of the world by succumbing to it.

According to Rousseau, it is the woman who is responsible for fostering citizenship, although she herself is to abstain from a direct political role. Rousseau's public world cannot survive "without women to guard, nurture and renew the private sphere."¹⁵ Sophie's love is to be reserved for the model citizen; this is her most important and sole contribution to the general will. Here Rousseau both manifests and rejects the sexism of his contemporaries. On the one hand, the woman's decisively political role is

¹⁵Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women in Social and Political Thought*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 165.

acknowledged and she is presented as a bulwark of the political community. Yet, on the other hand, she is denied participation in the public arena and her politics is restricted to family life. The wellspring of Rousseau's revolution is in domestic life, which had traditionally been shunned by proponents of change. For Rousseau, the personal is political: "The great strength of Rousseau's analysis, a strength which does not excuse but partially transcends his vulgar misogyny, lies in the fact that he aspires to a politics which is not cut off from the virtues which are commonly regarded as domestic, and which were traditionally ascribed to the private realm."¹⁶

Thus, it is up to her to entice the male into the moral realm, making his virtue a condition of her seduction. The burden of equipping man with the will falls to the woman, who makes the satisfaction of his sexual longing dependent on his moral virtue. Women must beguile men and lure them towards morality by inducing him to extend his self to include her. In her, Emile must find the barometer of his own virtue: "Observe how the physical leads us unawares to the moral, and how the sweetest laws of love are born little by little from the coarse union of the sexes"(E 360). His need to please her impels him to perform virtuous acts. In one episode, Sophie observes Emile in the carpenter shop. She had been concerned that his wealth would induce him to dominate others, and is relieved to discover that he works as an equal with the other workers. Sophie's mother exhorts

¹⁶Mary O'Brien, *The Politics of Reproduction*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 95-96.

Emile to leave and join them for the afternoon, tempting Emile because this is what he desires, but Emile values his commitment to his employer and refuses, demonstrating to Sophie that he would be a reliable husband and father. In a similar episode, he arrives late to meet Sophie because he was delayed while tending to a man with a broken leg. When he had carried the man home, his pregnant wife went into labour and required the assistance of Emile and Jean-Jacques: "Sophie, you are the arbiter of my fate. You know it well. you can make me die of pain, But do not hope to make me forget the rights of humanity. They are more sacred to me than yours. I will never give them up for you"(E 441). It is at this point, that Sophie agrees to marry Emile, since he has proven that his sense of responsibility outweighs his selfish interest. Through Sophie, he becomes capable of obeying a law that he prescribes for himself. Hence Rousseau, in contrast to Kant, underpins duty with eroticism. By fusing morality with the passions, he tries to rescue it from the realm of both hollow convention and austere abstraction. Moral sincerity depends on this coalescence. Sophie makes the link between Emile's higher and lower desires. Man is capable of making laws for himself, because woman forces him to.

Ironically, the heavy dose of convention that Sophie receives in her childhood education not only undercuts her own independence but also that of Emile. Rousseau recognizes that the independent minded Emile who learns to spurn convention needs to be socialized, and this task is to fall to Sophie. Emile's love for Sophie forces him to comply with conventions that are transmitted to him through her. He does not really learn to

integrate cultural demands with natural ones, but must succumb to convention in order to win Sophie's affection. Thus, he can preserve the illusion of his own independence from public opinion, while he actually imbibes it through his relationship with her. Because he chooses her, he is tricked into believing that he also chooses to be moral. Rousseau reluctantly admits that a certain degree of adherence to convention is the prerequisite of any social order. Thus, he "forces" Emile to be socialized through Sophie. Because the passions and the private realm become the vehicle for this socialization, Emile is under the illusion that his independence remains intact. Sophie is to become the bridge between nature and convention. The division between public and private spheres is a necessary chimera that allows the public to invade the private. Emile does not make the community of which he is a part; he is forced to become part of it by Sophie, whose own attachment to it is based on habit and mimicry.

Rousseau is therefore imposing a difficult burden on women. While Sophie is to be the arbiter of Emile's morality, she is never permitted to exercise moral autonomy. In order for man to be self, woman must be non-self, a mirror through which selfhood is reflected. Despite the undeniable importance of Sophie's role, her "freedom" from the self is not counterbalanced with a freedom "for the self" as it is in Emile. She is denied the opportunity to discover the world for herself and therefore cannot take the same pleasure in the expansion of horizons that Emile experiences through an intimate relationship with his companion. Her own perfectibility is irrelevant to Rousseau. Throughout his writings,

Rousseau had made the interplay between these two aspects of freedom the cornerstone of freedom itself. Emile is made aware of his own limitations through a relationship with the other and thus strives to overcome them. In turn, he enables others to overcome their limitations. Sophie, on the other hand is subjected to the limitations of others. While Emile's dependence is disguised as independence, Sophie's independence is sacrificed and to some extent disguised as dependence. It is of paramount importance to Rousseau, that man *think* himself to be a master in the household, even if this is not necessarily the case: "Happy is he who is destined to instruct her. She will be not her husband's teacher but his pupil. Far from wanting to subject him to her tastes, she will adopt his. She is better as she is than if she were learned: he will have the pleasure of teaching her everything" (E 410). Here, Rousseau makes it very clear that man is to derive satisfaction from his "power" over woman and is to enjoy the role of master. While the appetite for mastery is to be avoided in all other aspects of his life, he is to enjoy the dominance over women in the private sphere, be it real or perceived. Why does Rousseau spew contempt for the desire for mastery in the body politic, but endorse it in the sexual dynamic? This is an inconsistency in his writing that cannot be resolved. There is nothing to guarantee that this taste for mastery does not spill over into other realms. If the family is to be the pre-political unit that makes politics possible, why does hierarchy play such a central role within it? It is woman who is to awaken him to the presence of the other within him, but this is an unequal relationship to the other. How does this prepare him to accept others as

his equals in the political arena?

Sophie's psychological well-being is secondary to that of Emile. Sexual differentiation is achieved at the cost of Sophie's subjectivity. Emile could not learn to become independent without benefiting from the illusion of his independence. Sophie, on the other hand, is not permitted to benefit from such assurances. From her childhood onwards, she is trained to yield to the opinions of others in order to fit the role that society demands of her. It is precisely the difference in the development of subjectivity that Weiss ignores when she maintains that the education which Rousseau prescribes for Sophie is different but equal to that of Emile. She argues that Emile's deeper immersion in the social world makes him more dependent on others, raising the question of whether or not "Sophie might actually be freer than Emile."¹⁷ In Weiss's view, Sophie's household skills are comparable to Emile's craftsmanship and thus she is no more dependent on Emile than Emile is dependent on her. Mutual dependence is fostered through sexual differentiation. Woman brings psychological and practical wisdom to the relationship, while the man is preoccupied with more abstract concerns: "This partnership produces a moral person of which the woman is the eye and the man is the arm, but they have such a dependence on one another that the woman learns from the man what must be seen and the man learns from the woman what must be done. If woman could ascend to general principles as well as man can, and if man had as good a mind for details as woman does, they would

¹⁷Penny Weiss, *Gendered Communities*, (New York: New York University Press, 1993), p.20.

always be independent of one another, they would live in eternal discord, and their partnership could not exist. But in the harmony which reigns between them, everything tends to the common end they do not know who contributes more. Each follows the prompting of the other,; each obeys, and both are masters"(E 377). It is the capability for abstraction that Rousseau uses to justify man's dominance in the political realm. While the woman is responsible for the continuity of the species, man assumes responsibility for the continuity of the community, using his propensity for abstraction to construct general rules and principles that give birth to the political organization. He is therefore not cut off from the process of life and can imitate the reproductive actions of women by creating historical continuity. While one could make a case for the complementary of such role differentiation, such an argument still ignores the profound differences in the way that these roles are acquired by Emile and Sophie respectively. Emile discovers skills such as astronomy, when he is forced to find his way home through a forest. His capacity and his needs are always conjoined. Sophie, on the other hand, performs household tasks, only because she is told to do so by her parents. They do not become a means by which she recognizes her own needs, but a method by which she learns to satisfy the needs of others. Sophie is denied the opportunity for integrating herself into the environment that is deemed essential for Emile. Being a mother by itself cannot compensate for the divisions she is subjected to as a child.

The failure of love and the family

The passion for Sophie, which leads Emile towards social responsibility also threatens his sense of duty. Jean-Jacques must ensure that his disciple's moral virtue does not dissipate in his lover's absence. Desire and duty can never be completely reconciled. Emile's morality has not been put to the test because his desires have always coincided with the *ought*. To strengthen Emile's resolve, Jean-Jacques taunts Emile by asking him: "What would you do if you were informed that Sophie is dead?"(E 442). Emile retorts that he would refuse to see the messenger again. His anger represents the refusal to let go of what he considers to be his own. The division between morality and the passions, convention and nature is poignantly manifested here. At this point, Rousseau invokes the promise Emile had made to obey his master and commands him to leave Sophie. Morality must overcome desire and must enable one to do what one does not want to do. Furthermore, his public responsibility also prevents him from complete submission to his lover. During his separation from Sophie, Emile must be exposed to the realm of politics and participate in it in order to provide a stable environment for his family. Attachment to the country evolves out of his passion for his beloved. For his family's sake, he had to go beyond it. After his return, Emile and Sophie are free to marry. At this point, the public and private have coalesced. Emile's conception of his own includes that which is not his own.

However, this happy ending has sour undertones. The only way that Rousseau can guarantee Emile's departure is by reminding him that he must comply with the conditions of his contract. Contracts step in where passions have failed. Faced with a choice between public duty and his love for Sophie, Emile would choose the former. This is a tacit recognition on Rousseau's part that the political cannot become personal despite the interconnection between the two. The general will always remains dispassionate. At the same time, the contract cannot exist if it is not underpinned by passion. Because of the intimate connection with some human beings, we can recognize the need for a more abstract connection to others. While love has catapulted Emile towards morality it has also detracted from it. His decision to accompany his tutor is a token of love's success as well as its failure.

In Emile, Rousseau tries to find the cure for the ailments of bourgeois society by reforming the bourgeois institution of the family. The *Social Contract* had ended with the recognition that the gap between private interest and public duty was to be narrowed. Rather than simply relying on the capacity of citizens to put their particular will aside in the interests of the community, he hoped to effect a transformation of the particular will, so that the leap towards the general will would not be as great. Emile's love for "his own" was to include the love of his family, and he would assume his responsibility as legislator in order to provide a safe-haven for his children. Thinking about his particular will would force him to think of the general will. The community of abstract individuals in the social

contract was to be replaced by a community of families.

However, Rousseau fails to tap into the potential of both the family and love relationships. His preoccupation with Emile's self sufficiency makes him reluctant to permit the kind of loss of self that is an indelible part of love. In order to safeguard Emile's self sufficiency, he transforms Sophie into a mere mirror in which Emile can see his own reflection. The two cannot spur on each other's development because Sophie is prevented from contributing to the relationship as an independent subject. In order to invigorate the process of creating himself, Emile requires intimacy with another subject who is his equal. Sophie's recognition would mean more if she was an independent human being. The pleasure in love derives from the ability to be transformed by the other and transform the other. The loss of self through love is intimately connected to the discovery of one's self. Love, like happiness is not a static condition but a process. While Rousseau tacitly admits that such a loss of self is necessary for creation, he is extremely suspicious of it and thus robs Sophie of her subjectivity. The modicum of independence that she enjoys is used primarily to strengthen Emile's moral stature. Her docile education merely imposes truths on her in the way that Rousseau finds so distasteful, and so in the sequel to *Emile et Sophie, Les Solitaires*, her fragile moral backbone fractures as soon as it is subject to the vices of Paris. Because she has not learned to love herself, her love for Emile is also weak. Unlike Emile, she does not know what it means to be integrated in the world, because she lacks the ability to integrate herself since she is deprived of the

opportunity to individuate herself. For Sophie, individuation is sacrificed for the sake of integration. In fact, Sophie epitomizes the "non-self" that Rousseau so assiduously tries to prevent Emile from becoming. She, who is to become the beacon of morality is deprived of the opportunity to become moral. Her morality is worn like a set of clothing that can easily be dispensed with when it is no longer in vogue.

As a result, Sophie crumbles under the pressure of Paris and cheats on Emile. Since she has not had the opportunity to discover and make for herself the moral code she subscribes to, she easily succumbs to the temptations of this "lewd" city. Her virtue was not her own and therefore it could not withstand the tests of bourgeois society. Emile in a fit of rage rejects Sophie suggesting that his love for her was also artificial. Because Emile had loved only a shell, his feelings for her withered easily. Once he had met Sophie's expectations, the eroticism in their relationship quickly subsided. Because Sophie's moral and intellectual backbone was formed by aping others, she could not develop through her interaction with Emile. A relationship that was stifling for Sophie was also stifling for Emile. He was taught not to love Sophie as an independent being, but to love her as her master. He could not grow through his interaction with her. However, if love is an expansion of our boundaries, then we need to be with people who can facilitate such growth by "threatening " our own boundaries. I am only willing to tolerate such a loss of self if my beloved is at the same time part of my self. In this respect love is both the most selfless and the most selfish of emotions. Altruism and egoism are intricately

fused in the most powerful of human passions. Rousseau's ingenuity lay in recognizing the complexity of love. His failure resulted from the inability to accept it.

The conflicting standards that Rousseau brings to bear upon Emile and Sophie also represent Rousseau's own conflictual stance towards the community as a whole. In order for the general will to work, members must see themselves as part of a community. He recognizes that an individual that is not already part of a community must be "tricked" into integrating himself into it. Emile is drawn towards the community both by his tutor and by Sophie who together harness his sexual energy and try to steer it towards the public good. The satisfaction of his sexual desire becomes dependent upon winning Sophie's recognition, which in turn is made dependent on his ability to perform civic duties. Yet, his integration into the community is not direct but is mediated through Sophie. Sophie makes his public integration a condition of Emile's intimacy with her. He therefore has not really escaped the submission to the will of another. It is doubtful whether or not Emile really comes to feel part of the community. Furthermore, Sophie's own connection to the community is extremely tenuous for she is simply forced to abide by its customs and traditions. For her, the community is the product of empty ritual, not of her own creation. It does not become a means by which she integrates herself into her environment, but merely a means by which she integrates Emile into his environment. The delicate balance Emile achieves between individuation and integration is achieved only by depriving Sophie of such a balance altogether. A community which she does not know and Emile enters

into primarily because of her can only be a very fragile one.

PART II NIETZSCHE

CHAPTER FIVE: NIHILISM AND TRAGEDY IN NIETZSCHE

Nietzsche was a maverick of his time, smashing philosophical traditions with his acerbic prose. Like Rousseau, he expresses an intense distaste for modern society, arguing that it is marked by increasing conformity and shallowness. However, unlike Rousseau, he accounts for this malaise by identifying a crisis of cultural meaning, rather than focusing on the socio-economic structures which propped up this "decaying" social order. Old values had been discredited, and new ones had not arisen to take their place.¹ Nietzsche refers to the loss of meaning which ensues, as nihilism: "Such turmoil is marked by a profound experience of nihilism or loss of meaning: "What does nihilism mean? *That the highest values devalue themselves*"(WP 2). Nietzsche is intensely frustrated, because in his view, modern individuals would rather continue to cling to decaying belief systems instead of seizing the opportunity to create new meanings. In fact, he argues that the threat of meaninglessness could be one of the most powerful stimulants to human creativity.

It is important to realize that the term nihilism is used by Nietzsche in two ways. On the one hand, it applies broadly to a crisis of meaning that marks the human condition. On the other hand, it describes a European phenomenon which is characterized by the

¹I will discuss the specific nature of this moral crisis in Chapter Six.

decline of Judeo-Christian values. I will turn to his critique of the Judeo-Christian legacy in the next chapter and concentrate first on nihilism's general connotations. In this way, I hope to provide a brief backdrop to Nietzsche's thought as a whole.

It has been assumed that the philosophy of European nihilism was precipitated by a collapse of absolute metaphysical truths. The kind of historical enquiry launched by Rousseau and Hegel, which questioned the validity of transhistorical truths, prepared the groundwork for such metaphysical doubt. Conceptions that had once been accepted *prima facie* were now exposed as products of history: "After Hegel, there was a rapid collapse of metaphysics and moralities based on God or a world of 'true Being'. The worldview that had supported the spiritual life of Europe for more than two thousand years was all at once thrown into question. Faith in God and the eternal world and their accompanying conceptions became no more than historically conditioned ideas."² No totality existed that could suffuse individual lives with meaning: "Nihilism as a psychological state is reached... when one has posited a totality, a systematization, indeed any organization in all events, and underneath all events, and a soul that longs to admire and revere that has wallowed in the idea of some supreme form of domination and administration. ... Some sort of unity, some form of 'monism': this faith suffices to give man a deep feeling of standing in the context of, and being dependent on, some whole that is infinitely superior to him,

²Nishitani Keiji, *The Self Overcoming of Nihilism*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), p. 6.

and he sees himself as a mode of the deity... At bottom, man has lost the faith in his own value when no infinitely valuable whole works through him ie, he conceived such a whole in order *to be able to believe in his own value*"(WP 12). Human beings who relied on such absolutes counted on transcendent goals to lend their striving direction. For them, the primacy of the "ought" sparked a continuous self transformation in the effort to attain it. However, once the ought is stripped of its immanent legitimacy, they find themselves deprived of their guiding beacon and no longer know how to act. Thus, they deduce that their actions are in vain because they are without direction: "something is to be *achieved* through the process- and now one realizes that becoming aims at *nothing* and achieves *nothing*"(WP 12).

While Nietzsche does not deny that the death of absolutes had a profound impact on European thought, his analysis of nihilism goes deeper, and suggests that the propensity to adopt metaphysical standpoints in the first place is symptomatic of a kind of nihilism. The very fact that we conceive of meaning in terms of an all encompassing truth or utter meaninglessness is problematic: "The faith in the categories of reason is the cause of nihilism. We have measured the value of the world according to categories *that refer to a purely fictitious world*"(WP 12B). For Nietzsche, nihilism represents an unwillingness or inability on the part of human beings to participate in the constant flux that in his view constitutes life. Therefore, the danger of nihilism may be greatest when a tremendous certainty surrounds existing truth claims. According to Warren, Nietzsche does not

understand the root cause of nihilism to be the absence of a "metaphysically grounded realm of truth" but rather to be a "symptom of dissolving subjectivity, of disintegrating power and of a failing mode of living and acting."³ He remarks that the disjunction between interpretations of the self and world, and the possibilities of practice brings the onset of feelings of nothingness.⁴ Nietzsche is not judging interpretations by the extent to which they mirror reality, but rather by the power these interpretations have to impel individuals to transform themselves. An incongruence between the interpretation and the "reality" as we experience it may in fact stimulate self transformation. If I aspire to reach certain moral standards, I will have to attempt to transform myself to become a good person.⁵ The danger for Nietzsche, is that if seemingly "absolute" moral values have been devalued, the individual no longer feels the need to engage in such self overcoming because he does not see himself as the creator of values. It is then easiest to simply adapt to existing circumstances. Once the realm of the ought has lost its legitimacy, the temptation to simply adapt unquestioningly to the "is" becomes overpowering, since we are deprived of the lofty goals that we can aim towards.⁶

³Mark Warren, *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), p.14.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 15

⁵For Kant, the ability to act in accordance with self made laws is the essence of freedom. This depends upon an internal division between the moral imperative of the "ought" and our "heteronomous" desires which must be subjugated.

⁶see Max Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason*. (New York: Continuum 1974), p. 96. Horkheimer refers to such a problem as the ascendancy of instrumental reason. In his view, the

For Nietzsche it is imperative that we recognize that all truths are interpretations which are not only imposed by us onto the world but which also emerge out of our interaction with it. The propensity to proclaim the immutable and eternal status of certain values is indicative of a desire to refrain from participating in the process of life. It represents an inflated subjectivity that tries to assert control over the world around it by refusing to act. In so doing, it undermines the very subjectivity that gave birth to these concepts in the first place. Once the absolute values are ossified, they subvert rather than enhance efforts to transform oneself. A rigid order is easier to succumb to. We no longer assume responsibility for the direction of our own striving. We continue to adapt to the prevailing social order, even after its metaphysical justification has been eroded because we covet the predictability that such order had guaranteed. In this sense, the propensity to simply adapt to the "is" is an extension of the desire to attain the ought.

Ironically, the fissures that started to appear in the European metaphysical edifice are cause for not only despair but optimism. Only human beings who have refused to relinquish completely the desire to change and grow would be troubled by the death of metaphysics. Although they could not relinquish their strong desire to continue striving, they had become disoriented and confused in the seeming darkness that now surrounded them. Yet, the irrepressible urge to strive is the flicker of hope which Nietzsche capitalizes

absence of an objective truth means that reason is no longer an instrument for "understanding the ends" and adjustment becomes the only viable alternative: "The subject must, so to speak, devote all his energies to being in and of the movement of things."

on. Rosen claims that Nietzsche celebrates the idea that "everything is permitted."⁷ Once absolute truths are no longer held to be valid, he assumes that any kind of behaviour is acceptable. For him, Nietzsche's denial of the existence of absolute truths constitutes a denial of all truth claims about existence. Once these constraints on our behaviour evaporate, we can succumb to any of our whims, and cannot discriminate between them. Rosen's position itself stems from a conception which sees objective truth as the only arbiter of value and makes meaning a derivative of an immutable truth. Once absolute truth evaporates, meaning also makes a rapid exit. However, as I will demonstrate in the upcoming chapters, for Nietzsche, the world we are in is characterized by constant flux. Recognizing that we are part of this process, rather than trying to transcend it becomes the basis of his "ethics": "Man thinks of himself as having been present when the organic world originated: what was there to be perceived by sight and touch when this event took place? What can be reduced to figures? Thus: man wants to arrange all events as events accessible to sight and touch....It is a question of an inventory of human experiences-under the supposition that man, or rather the human eye and ability to form concepts, are the eternal witness of all things"(WP 640). Thus, he does not ascribe to a philosophy which places an equal value or lack of value on everything, nor is Nietzsche's philosophy itself

⁷"Nietzsche defines nihilism as the situation which obtains when 'everything is permitted'. If everything is permitted, then it makes no difference what we do, and so nothing is worth anything." Stanley Rosen, *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), p. xiii.

devoid of "values" or "truth claims". In fact, he exhorts his readers to recognize that the process of positing values, or interpretations assumes priority over the interpretations themselves for it is the participation in life, rather than the mere understanding of it which is fundamental to him.

For Nietzsche, our interpretations are valuable insofar as they provide a means of engaging in the process that he refers to as life: "A multiplicity of forces, connected by a common mode of nutrition, we call 'life.' To this mode of nutrition, as a means of making it possible, belong all so-called feelings, ideas, thoughts"(WP 641). The recognition that existing interpretations can no longer serve as the foundation of our activity generates two different reactions in Nietzsche's view. Nietzsche distinguishes between active nihilism, which struggles to fill meaningless voids, and passive nihilism, which impels one to lead a life of despondent resignation: "Nihilism as a sign of increased power of the spirit: as *active* nihilism. B. Nihilism as decline and recession of the power of the spirit: as *passive* nihilism"(WP 22). The passive nihilist throws up his arms in despair because he "judges of the world as it is that it ought *not* to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist"(WP 585A). Passive nihilism is an attitude that grows out of the correspondence theory of truth in which correct ideas must accurately mirror the environment we live in. Vanquished because he can no longer superimpose his moral or logical categories onto the world, he concludes that life is lived in vain, failing to recognize that while these values may not represent an accurate reflection of his

surrounding reality, they spring from his interaction with it. Haar describes what Nietzsche would refer to as passive nihilism when he claims that nihilism is an "exhaustion of meaning" amounting "to a grand weariness, a 'grand disgust,' on the part of man, directed toward himself as well. Nothing is worth much any more, everything comes down to the same thing, everything is equalized. Everything is the same and equivalent: the true and false, the good and the bad."⁸ Such an attitude easily degenerates into an adaptation to what "is."

Nietzsche tries to transform this despair into optimism by maintaining that the lack of transcendent meaning should be a cause for celebration. The very fact that we cannot grasp life in its totality allows us to participate in it since our limitations become a necessary precursor to creativity. Because we can never capture the ultimate meaning, we are engaged in a constant process of discovery. Totalities confine activity, and their absence opens the door to a different kind of limitlessness. We cannot mirror a true world, but we can shape it, an act ultimately more valuable for him than grasping after "accurate representations".

Nietzsche's focus on the activity of interpretation itself has impelled some postmodern critics such as Haar to note that, for Nietzsche there is only appearance: "Appearance, thought of in this new way and transfigured by the abolition of all

⁸Michel Haar, 'Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language,' *The New Nietzsche*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977), p. 13.

oppositions, never comes to the point of referring itself back to any ultimate foundation, nor to any central focus of interpretation nor to anything... 'Becoming is simply the indefinite play of interpretations, an indefinite shifting of masks.'⁹ However, to say that no interpretation can ever capture the ground we stand on is not tantamount to claiming that this ground does not exist in the first place. While Nietzsche does profess that no interpretation is sacrosanct, he does prefer some forms of interpretations over others and judges them according to their relatedness to the eternal flux which he calls life. The participation in "life" allows us to achieve a new kind of spiritual integration since we actively engage with its forces. Our perspective is limited and we must filter out certain stimuli in order to navigate ourselves. If we do not mistake our perspective for truth we can continue to open new doors. Nietzsche suggests that the absence of another world that legitimates this one "might be a *divine way of thinking*" (WP 15), for it encourages human beings to become a part of the one we are in. Thus, the highest meaning arises out of the profound sense of meaninglessness that initially had handicapped us.

For Nietzsche meaning is not tantamount to a stable overarching set of values that we blindly cling to, but rather to the act of creating these values. It is not to be found, but rather to be made; a process rather than a condition: "Can we remove the idea of a goal from the process and then affirm the process in spite of this? This would be the case if something were attained at every moment within this process" (WP 55). The awareness

⁹Haar, 'Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language,' p. 15.

that we are determining factors in our own existence is essential if passive nihilism is to be overcome. However, Nietzsche is well aware that we need a source of inspiration in order to rid ourselves of the weight of passive nihilism. Since he can no longer look towards the heavens, he must cast his eyes back towards the earth. Nietzsche, like Rousseau, finds in nature a fountainhead of meaning that does not necessarily circumscribe or impoverish our activity.

Art and life

Nietzsche's analysis, like Rousseau's is an immanent one, in the sense that it does not look to a supraterrrestrial realm to find meaning, but returns to the world of nature. Although both thinkers would maintain that there is no immutable human nature which we can draw upon in order to make eternal philosophical pronouncements, they exhort us to lead a life that incorporates rather than spurns our natural origins. While nature's hold over us is constant, the nature of its grip is always changing and therefore it can be used to legitimate a continuous re-adaptation and recreation of our world. Like Rousseau, Nietzsche finds within necessity a basis for our freedom. Nietzsche sees in nature the potential to catapult us "beyond good and evil" towards art.

To underline the fundamental role that art plays within Nietzsche is not to deny its ethical implications. He is not a proponent of a philosophy which endorses "art for art's

sake". For Nietzsche, art is necessary in order to be able to affirm existence, and to participate fully in a natural world that can often appear hostile. He makes it clear that we do not simply superimpose art onto the world, but participate in the artistry of nature itself. He celebrates "artistic energies which burst from nature herself, *without the mediation of the human artist*" (BT 2). The beauty in nature cannot be justified or even explained using rational or logical categories; it can only be admired. Like Kant, Nietzsche would argue that aesthetic judgment is its own law, manifesting a kind of "purposiveness without purpose". Kant describes a harmonious interrelation of particulars that form a whole although we cannot account for this harmony by referring to a creator or master plan.¹⁰ The Nietzschean world of nature is much more frenzied than that of Kant: "it is the law of *life* that everything must overcome itself again and again without final goal or ultimate purpose."¹¹ For Nietzsche, nature is more than just an aggregation of organisms who struggle and adapt in order to preserve themselves. It has an immanent beauty which does not simply reside in the "eyes of the beholder."

The human artist remains in an ambivalent relationships towards nature. On the one

¹⁰Körner aptly characterizes the judgements made when observing the artwork in nature in his explication of Kant's *Third Critique*: "When observing, say, a graceful galloping horse, we may admire the harmonious interplay of its parts as serving a specific purpose such as the self preservation of the animal. We may however, admire the same harmonious whole apart from any purpose which it serves and even apart from any concept which it exemplifies." S. Körner, *Kant* (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 184.

¹¹Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche contra Rousseau*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 102.

hand, her art is tantamount to a participation in the artistic energies that emanate from nature itself. At the same time, it amounts to a reinterpretation of the world that she is immersed in which may transform her surroundings. She establishes a protective sanctuary which shields us from the full impact of its forces. Thus, art thrives on the lack of correspondence with its object. If, by painting, I am reproducing an image which I have seen, I will always fail to replicate it in its "exact" form. However, in the process of replicating it, I also participate in the creation of a new reality. If I paint a landscape I both reaffirm my connection to it, and at the same time distance myself, emphasizing certain aspects and ignoring others. The artist can never capture nature which is the source of her inspiration. However, she can reaffirm her connection to it through art. Art becomes not only a metaphor for life but a method of living life. I can never adequately capture the world that envelops me, but I both adapt to and resist it because of my limitations. What I choose to ignore is as important as what I consider. We are aware of the limitations of a work of art and therefore never accept it as a final statement on life. Through art, the relationship with our world is constantly renewed, rather than simply repeating time worn images and metaphors until they become stale and flavourless.

The moral message of art for Nietzsche inheres in the acceptance of its own limitations which impels us to continue striving. Art does not aspire to envelop the world that surrounds it, but rather to catapult itself to new experiences. Nietzsche is not suggesting that we all become artists, but rather that we should view our relationship to

life as an artist would. Our conceptions of the world are neither entirely true nor entirely false. If we realize that there can be no "accuracy" in our conceptions, we are more likely to continue to change them so that our relationship to life is renewed rather than clinging to defunct ideas that we have certified as Truth. As Schacht points out, it is important to note that art should not be mistaken for a "self contained and self-enclosed sphere of activity and experience detached from the rest of life, but rather as intimately bound up with life."¹²

The artist, according to Nietzsche, like the moralist tries to make his world palatable, but is fully aware that she can never mirror it. She does not assume that her own vision is correct. Any sanctuary she may construct that shields her from nature's most devastating forces is only temporary and she must continuously build new shelters for herself. Yet, each time she builds a new home, she renews her relationship with life itself. However, in doing so, she is inviting not only the wellspring of life but also the harbinger of death. She works both against nature and with it. Thus, the artist, in Nietzsche's view, exhibits a willingness to change and does not try to stifle it in any way. While we cannot choose our experiences, we can act upon them and change them, thereby transmuting necessity into freedom. Art makes life bearable not only because "it creates for us another world alongside the real world..into which we may from time to time escape"¹³ but

¹²Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 482.

¹³Arthur Danto, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, (New York:MacMillan Co, 1970), p. 47.

because it attests to an active participation in life rather than merely a passive resignation to it.

Thus, Nietzsche believes that he offers a possibility for overcoming the kind of suffocating nihilism which concerned him. In his view, the nihilism which confronted his contemporaries was so profound because it stemmed from the tendency to absolutize interpretations and herald their eternal validity. If these interpretations had been recognized as interpretations, the paralysis that had set in would have been more short-lived and after a brief period of mourning, would have motivated individuals to find new meanings to replace the discredited ones. What worried Nietzsche was what he saw as a burgeoning malaise which would devalue not only existing "truths" but the act of interpretation itself.

Tragedy: Apollo and Dionysus

Nietzsche recognizes that all interpretations are thrown into question by the pervasiveness of suffering. Such anguish threatens not only particular truths, but the meaning of our existence itself. At the same time, in Nietzsche's view it is our suffering that forces us to reflect upon our lives as a whole and therefore it becomes an important catalyst for the creation of meaning. The intensity of the desire to participate in life itself gives rise to despair, for our efforts are thwarted and our lives are eventually extinguished

by "nature". Furthermore, the recognition that we constantly live under the threat of being expelled from our own home and the pain that is involved in residing there can engender within us a growing passivity. We deduce that only by refusing to fully participate, and by muffling our own desires can we diminish the suffering that befalls us.

Nietzsche feels compelled to find in art a way out of this impasse. Art must not only affirm life but also a suffering which can never be fully extirpated. He turns to the Greeks for inspiration, for in his view, they were a people who had undergone tremendous suffering, but nevertheless had triumphed in their affirmation of life. The modern crisis point for him is "analogous to the period when Greek civilization first began to carve itself out of the chaos of nonexistence."¹⁴ Out of a profound turbulence emerged cultural achievements that according to Nietzsche have been unparalleled in the history of Western civilization. These achievements, in Nietzsche's view are embodied in the form of Attic tragedy which affirms suffering through art. It is important to recognize that Nietzsche does not advocate a return to ancient Greece, nor does he expect that in imitating it, the problems of modernity will be miraculously resolved. He does not see Greek tragedy itself as a vehicle which could propel human beings beyond nihilism. It is rather the kind of perspective and attitude that is symbolized in tragedy that Nietzsche wishes to revive.

¹⁴Tracy Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 137.

Tragic art, like all art, according to Nietzsche "is bound up with the *Apollonian* and *Dionysian* duality"(BT 1) and therefore it is necessary to unpack the meaning of these two terms before addressing their combination in the form of Attic tragedy. One cannot simply equate Apollo with civilization and Dionysus with nature, although such a classification is not completely mistaken. Nietzsche invests Apollo and Dionysus with a significance that reaches well beyond art itself, for he sees these as tendencies that also exist within nature. As artistic impulses, they cast veils over nature while simultaneously mimicking and emanating from the very nature they cloak: "Thus we shall be in a position to understand and appreciate more deeply that relation of the Greek artist to his archetypes which is, according to the Aristotelian expression, 'the imitation of nature' "(BT 2). They represent both affirmations and negations of the natural world, which are not revered for their cognitive accuracy but as stimulants that enable us to adopt a more positive stance towards life without blinding us to its negativity. In fact, negativity itself is affirmed by changing it into beautiful forms.

Perhaps it is Nietzsche's refusal to deny negativity but rather to embrace it by changing it into an object of beauty that impels Deleuze to insist that Nietzsche's ode to tragedy demonstrates the anti-dialectical tenure of his thought. In a dialectical relationship to our environment, we at first struggle against that which seems to threaten us. Through this struggle we become aware of the fact that we are constituted by this very threat. We therefore incorporate what was once a threat to us and overcome its "alien", "external"

nature. Tragedy, on the other hand, refuses to deny negativity¹⁵ but rather re-presents our relationship to it, thereby affirming the negative in the beauty of the image that can be created through it. In this way, Deleuze claims that irreconcilable differences are affirmed joyously.¹⁶

I would argue that Deleuze's emphasis on the playfulness of difference risks trivializing the agony which irreconcilable differences may cause. In fact, this becomes problematic not only in the work of Deleuze but in Nietzsche as well. Nietzsche is reluctant to eliminate pain, since he argues that in doing so, we eliminate an important catalyst to creativity, and no longer have a powerful incentive for finding meaning in our lives. In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche fails to distinguish between the kinds of pain that are ineradicable to our existence, such as loss and death, and the kinds of pain which result from social structures or the relationships between human beings. The alleviation of pain, therefore does not necessarily amount to a refusal to face the dynamic nature of life. This work deals almost exclusively with a kind of "metaphysical" pain that surfaces when we confront our own finitude. For an analysis of the kind of pain that is socially inflicted, one must await his analysis of the master-slave relationship in *On the Genealogy*

¹⁵"Nietzsche dit bien que la force a une autre force pour objet. Mais précisément, c'est avec *d'autres forces* que la force entre en relation. C'est avec *une autres sorte* de vie que la vie entre en lutte." Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche et Philosophie*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), p. 9.

¹⁶"Dans son rapport avec l'autre, la force qui se fait obéir ne nie pas l'autre ou ce qu'elle n'est pas, elle affirme sa propre différence et jouit de cette différence." *Ibid.*, p. 10.

of Morals.

Apollo and Dionysus are to become the symbols for the ways by which human beings reconfigure their painful reality. Nietzsche makes it clear that neither Apollo nor Dionysus represent a naked "truth" by characterizing Apollo as the representative of the dream world and Dionysus as the instigator of an intoxicated frenzy. Dionysus represents an immersion in existence, collapsing all boundaries in a joyous intoxication with life: "Under the charm of the Dionysian only is the union between man and man reaffirmed, but nature which has become alienated, hostile or subjugated, celebrates once more her reconciliation with her lost son, man"(BT 1). According to Higgins, the Dionysian perspective "reminds us that the world is not a force that threatens us externally but a dynamic unity that our very persons express."¹⁷ Symbols such as music become the medium through which this primal unity is experienced since we can never encounter nature in its raw form: "In the first place, as Dionysian artist he has identified himself with the primal unity, its pain and contradiction... Assuming that it has been correctly termed a repetition and a recast of the world, we may say that he produces the copy of this primal unity as music. ...The artist has already surrendered his subjectivity in the Dionysian process"(BT 5).

Nietzsche repeatedly underlines the importance of Dionysus, because as I will point out below, he asserts that this disindividuating tendency has suffered neglect at the hands

¹⁷Higgins, *Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), p. 123.

of a cancerous rationality, whose pervasive tentacles have touched almost all aspects of our being. By allowing the pulse of life to run through us, we forget our individuality and it becomes impossible for us to concentrate on our own suffering. Through the voice of Dionysus, Nietzsche reminds us, that there is a unity in life that transcends the lives of individuals while at the same time only expressing itself through them. He is exhorting us to adopt a stance which feels this unity, and does not merely try to capture it through abstract concepts, for it is a reality that is in constant motion, and like the waters of a river, can never be captured. We are swept along by its currents. The Dionysian discourages us from reflecting upon life from not only our own perspective but any perspective, and simply immerses us in it. Because we do not concentrate on our individual existence, we cannot concentrate on our suffering while we are in its clutches.

Kaufmann turns a blind eye to Nietzsche's effusive tributes to Dionysus and favours a more Apollonian Nietzsche. According to Kaufmann, Dionysus is primarily destructive due to the formlessness he spreads: "the symbol of that drunken frenzy which threatens to destroy all forms and codes; the ceaseless striving which apparently defies all limitations; the ultimate abandonment we sometimes sense in music."¹⁸ Kaufmann accentuates Dionysus' negative features which must be tamed by the controlling grip of

¹⁸Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 128.

Apollo.¹⁹ He turns a blind eye to Dionysus' life giving potential. Dionysus is neither primarily creative nor primarily destructive but as unadulterated energy reaches both beyond and beneath the individual. When his force takes hold of us, we no longer think about its impact on ourselves, but merely enjoy the passion and energy that we participate in. We become aware only of the movements and rhythms which we are immersed in, being transported beyond the daily rituals of our mundane existence. The temporary loss of self consciousness imbues us with a feeling of ecstasy. The most Dionysian of art forms is music which requires that the listener be drawn into the activity. If he maintains a safe detachment from music, he has not experienced it. The self is engulfed in the whirlwind of nature which sweeps her along as she becomes part of this primordial energy. In losing our subjectivity and self-consciousness, Dionysus is not merely creating an illusion but also dispelling illusions since it invokes in us the sense that there is a unity to life which moulds us and that we are part of the stream of life. While we may never not be able to describe the bends and turns in the river nor the direction it is going in, at least we are aware of its flow. We discover that there is more to our being than just "selfhood" and that we are part of the force of life itself. Den Ouden suggests that the Dionysian can

¹⁹Kaufmann argues that while the Dionysian in its early form represents a kind of raw destructive energy, the calming touch of Apollo controls it. What is considered to be Dionysian in the final pages of Nietzsche's tract is a synthesis of the Dionysian and Apollonian. Kaufmann; p. 129.

also be likened to the "unstructured unconscious which is chaotic and without form."²⁰ By speaking directly to the unconscious, Dionysus plays a disindividuating role, leading us to the formless mass of life.

However, one should not underestimate the peril that the frenzy of the Dionysian poses for its all consuming forces are destructive as well as creative and threaten to obliterate the self that seeks enjoyment in them. Because it is spontaneous energy, it spares no one and can instigate tremendous pain. Dionysian festivals unleashed "the most savage natural instincts" including "that horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty which has always seemed to me to be the real 'witches brew'"(BT 2). The pulse of life demands both creation and destruction, and if we participate in it in its raw form, we cannot ignore the destructive aspect of our own nature. Ironically, when one is swept along by life, then one manifests a profound indifference to particular lives. One is so enraptured by its movement, that one may inadvertently destroy whatever comes into one's path, since one is simply unleashing energy. The Dionysian frenzy Nietzsche describes is a wild and unbridled sensuality that breaks down all boundaries between things, and therefore does not necessarily uphold the individual. There is a great risk of a tremendous insensitivity to the very suffering which we must grapple with.

The inebriated Dionysian state is difficult to return from since the contrast with

²⁰Bernard den Ouden, *Essays on Reason, Will, Creativity and Time: Studies in the Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*, (Washington: University Press of America, 1982), p. 6.

ordinary existence is so stark: "For the rapture of the Dionysian state with its annihilation of the ordinary bounds and limits of existence contains, while it lasts, a lethargic element in which all personal experiences of the past become immersed. This chasm of oblivion separates the world of everyday reality and of Dionysian reality. But as soon as this everyday reality re-enters consciousness, it is experienced as such with nausea: an ascetic, will-negating mood is the fruit of these states"(BT 7). An intoxication which is too frequent could be devastating. Therefore, Nietzsche recognizes the importance of Apollo's soothing influence on this wild beast. Apollo underlines the importance of individual existence and strives to offset the chaos by providing a refuge from it through pleasurable illusion. The beautiful illusion smooths over the harsh edges of life, lending it a sense of stability that enables us to feel at home in the world. Apollo is the god of the dream world, representing the force that gives shape or form to the shapeless. We recognize it as appearance, fully acknowledging the distance between the dream and the reality it represents: "in our dreams we delight in the immediate understanding of figures; all forms speak to us; there is nothing unimportant or superfluous. But even when this dream reality is most intense, we still have, glimmering through it, the sensation that it is *mere appearance*"(BT 1). The experience of the dream is both one of reality and unreality at the same time, for we have distanced ourselves from nature, by *creating* something of our own, while at the same time participating in nature, using its materials in our creative endeavours. Yet, this control is only temporary, for eventually we must wake up from all

of our dreams. Apollo is therefore "one of those illusions which nature so frequently employs to achieve her own ends"(BT 3). We enjoy the transfigured images for their own sake. However, this does not mean that we have severed the links with life, since we recognize that the roots of the illusion are in life. We take a particular moment out of our experience, and enhance it as well as lending it a kind of permanence that escapes the cycle of creation and destruction characteristic of Dionysus.

Furthermore Apollo represents a fragmentation and individuation that separates one from one's surroundings: "we might call Apollo himself the glorious divine image of the *principium individuationis* through whose gestures and eyes all the joy and wisdom of illusion, together with its beauty speak to us"(BT 1). Apollo is the sun god who casts light on the distinct contours of objects. He enables us to observe them in isolation from one another and focus on each one in particular. The river is not just simply flow, but is composed of many distinct elements that together, lend it its shape. However, we revel in their separateness only against the backdrop of chaos and confusion that threatens to envelop them. It is the threat of darkness that awakens our appreciation for light. Order depends upon chaos. Without the harshness in reality that the Apollonian creation defies. it would not be an embodiment of beauty: "If the Greeks were as healthy and sunny a people as legend has painted them, they would not have required art, at least not Apollonian art."²¹ The image of permanence projected against the cycle of endless

²¹Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, p. 49.

destruction and creation individuates by pointing to something that can survive the ravages of both nature and time: "Apollo overcomes the suffering of the individual by the radiant glorification of the *eternity of the phenomenon*: here beauty triumphs over the suffering inherent in life; pain is obliterated by the lies from the feature of nature"(BT 16).

Apollo is best represented by the visual arts which demand of the observer that he maintain a distance from the object being observed. We feel at home in Apollo's world because we can distance ourselves from it, reflecting on its beauty without being enveloped by it. It is impossible to appreciate a sculpture by becoming part of that sculpture, we must stand back from it in order to observe the elegance of its design. If I create a sculpture I freeze a moment in time and eternalize it. A sculpture can depict an event and allow us to observe it even after the event has long passed. We cannot relive the event through the sculpture, but we can reflect upon it. Apollo is the incarnation of the kind of necessary "falsehood" through which we can resist our own finitude without denying it. We can leave a "permanent" imprint that escapes the ruthless march of time. Furthermore, it also enables us to piece together for ourselves an image of the force of life which sweeps us along. Because we record and "eternalize" moments, we can connect them to other moments and thereby make sense of an existence that may otherwise appear senseless and chaotic. By knowing what body of water the river comes from and where it flows to and what creatures live within it, we have a new perspective on the river, which is different from our Dionysian understanding, but neither more nor less true. This provides us with

another "reality" that can help to offset the chaos of a Dionysian existence.

Apollo's glory is a panacea to the wisdom of Silenus, who proclaims that "what is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second best for you is-to die soon"(BT 3). Silenus is poignantly aware that the pain of individuation impels us to covet complete integration, but this can only be achieved through the total annihilation of the self. We ourselves suffer because of the tension between Apollo and Dionysus. My knowledge of myself as a distinct being, that is in some way separate from its surroundings means that I also know that there will one day be an end to Dionysian ecstasy. We are swallowed up by the very life that we not only participate in but create and therefore our own individuation may seem worthless. Because I feel its pulse and do not want it to stop, my death seems abhorrent to me. I am individuated because I internalize its Dionysian rhythm. Yet, the fact that the life within me will one day be extinguished causes me anguish and I end up seeking the very nothingness that is the source of my fear. Ironically, the impulse to suicide reflects a refusal to accept our own death. Apollo fights the death impulse not only by providing pleasurable illusions of eternity, but by illuminating the individual organisms that interact to form life. He reminds us that we are not only swept along by a raging river, but are also the motors of a life that at times can seem hostile and alien to us. Even if our own lives will come to an end, the pulse of life would cease without individuated beings like us. Thus, the fact that our life must end is not a testament to its meaninglessness. Thus,

it is inaccurate to claim that Apollo is merely the illusion that makes order out of chaos. He also wakes us up from the illusion of a complete and pervasive disorderliness. He reminds us that without the interaction of individuated beings, there would be no Dionysian current.

Both Dionysus and Apollo are illusions that shape each other's reality. Apollo shows us the individual actors who together generate nature's frenzy: "With his sublime gestures he shows us how necessary is the entire world of suffering, that by means of it the individual may be impelled to realize the redeeming vision, and then, sunk in contemplation of it, sit quietly in his tossing bark amid the waves"(BT 4). Without suffering, we would not be impelled to create the images that characterize Apollo. We reflect on our own existence because of its impermanence. It makes us aware of the fact that we are distinct individuals and beings. We can only reflect upon things that we have separated from the Dionysian tempest. It is difficult to ponder the course and direction of a river, while one is being buffeted about by its current. To make sense of it, we need to provide a stable vantage point which allows us to see each of the river's components. Dionysus provides the experience of integration that makes Apollonian individuation bearable: "And behold: Apollo could not live without Dionysus"(BT 4). Disindividuation leads to individuation and vice versa. Apollo's triumph against flux also induces us to be drawn in again by its undulating rhythm since residing in a "stable" world would constitute a sterile existence without the regenerative forces of Dionysus. Eternal images

are only beautiful when they are projected against the chaos which surrounds them. Once we have discovered an Apollonian escape route, we *voluntarily* resubmit to nature's frenzy. Thus, our illusions, which provide a temporary refuge against certain aspects of nature, enable us to go back to these aspects of nature willingly. The profundity of the Apollonian experience allows us to experience the intensity of the Dionysian. Conversely, without the primordial drive of Dionysus, we could not bathe in the radiant light of Apollo. Each capture partial aspects of our existence which both complement and exclude each other. I cannot notice the beauty of a sculpture when I am enraptured in a Dionysian frenzy. Nor can I become engrossed in a piece of music if I maintain a serene detachment from it. We cannot combine the two moments, but we can move between them, using one to facilitate our return to the other.

To say that Apollo and Dionysus cannot be reconciled does not mean that they are not at the same time interwoven and transformed as a result of their interaction. Without the knowledge that we can erect boundaries and eternalize ourselves, we would be unwilling to tear asunder the borders that separate us from the natural world and revel in our union with it. One can only revel in nature after having experienced the alienation of individuation. Reconciliation with the natural home from which one has strayed generates the joyous excess which characterizes the Dionysian. Suffering and joy are inextricably intertwined. Like the Vicar in Rousseau's *Emile* who basks in the glory of nature after having endured some of the horrors of civilization, Dionysus cannot live without Apollo.

(BT 4) Thus, we harbour within us two contradictory tendencies which can never be completely synthesized. On the one hand, we want the boundaries that define the self to crumble so that we can be engulfed by the totality of existence. On the other hand, we fear the erosion of boundaries and wish to maintain a sense of separateness and completeness that incorporates what remains on the "outside" without sacrificing anything to it. Yet the experience of one sharpens the desire for the other and thus they are linked not in spite of but through their opposition.

Therefore, the Dionysian represents a *return* to nature rather than a pure, unmediated experience of the natural world. It needs Apollo just as Apollo needs Dionysus for Apollo acts as a bulwark against the destructive strains endemic to the natural world. Nietzsche's prototype of the Dionysian man is Hamlet who directly confronts the absurdity and horror of existence. To overcome his nausea for the sake of action, he would require "illusions" that enable him to confront the horror of his own reality: "they have *gained knowledge* , and nausea inhibits action; for their action could not change anything in the eternal nature of things"(BT 6). Thus, it is the awareness of chaos and not the denial of it that impels human beings to create illusions, and these illusions allow one to be enraptured by nature once more: "*art* approaches as a saving sorceress, expert at healing. She alone knows how to turn these nauseous thoughts about the horror or absurdity of existence into notion with which one can live" (BT 6).

Schutte suggests that Nietzsche favours a shift from the Apollonian to the

Dionysian mode of being, stating that "our conception of individual existence represents a disruption of the fundamental continuity and harmony of the individual with nature."²² She insists that Apollo stands for illusion, while Dionysus stands for truth.²³ I would argue that Dionysus and Apollo offer us different means by which to experience our existence, but neither one can be identified completely with either truth or falsehood. As I have argued, each is both a transformation and a reflection of the "reality" that we find ourselves in. Nietzsche does bemoan the neglect that the Dionysian aspect of existence has suffered at the hands of a predominantly Apollonian culture, he vehemently objects to their separation. Conversely, Kaufmann suggests that if Nietzsche had to favour one, it would be Apollo.²⁴ I would maintain that he favours neither, since one cannot exist without the other. The combination of the Dionysian and Apollonian impulses will become evident in Zarathustra who experiences the power of both noon, the brightest time of day in which everything appears separate and distinct, as well as midnight, where there is a sense of primordial unity. We can only experience the joy of one of these moments, if we have experienced the other, for each one is incomplete in itself. However, like light and darkness, the Dionysian and the Apollonian cannot be merged, for we revel in both precisely because one is *not* the other.

²²Ofelia Schutte, *Beyond Nihilism: Nietzsche without Masks*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 14

²³*Ibid.*, p. 18.

²⁴Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist and Antichrist*, p. 108.

Tragic art

It is in Greek tragedy that the Apollonian and Dionysian are combined not in spite of but because of their opposition. Through this combination Nietzsche finds a means of overcoming the profound despair that is expressed in the writings of Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer's will is a raging, aimless force in life that bears a great resemblance to the Nietzschean Dionysian frenzy. As human beings, we are but one "possible type of manifestation of this dynamic principle."²⁵ For Schopenhauer existence is characterized by a suffering that was entirely devoid of meaning: "Unless *suffering* is the direct and immediate object of life, existence must entirely fail of its aim. It is absurd to look upon the enormous amount of pain that abounds everywhere in the world and originates in needs and necessities inseparable from life itself, as serving no purpose at all and the result of mere chance. Each separate misfortune, as it comes, seems, no doubt, to be something exceptional; but misfortune in general is the rule."²⁶

Nietzsche accepted some of the basic premises of Schopenhauer's anguish, concurring with him that there was no teleological justification to be found in existence. However, he wanted to find a means of affirming life despite such suffering, and looks to the Greeks for inspiration. The Greeks were surrounded by chaos and yet were unmatched

²⁵Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche*, p. 478

²⁶Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Essential Schopenhauer*, (London: Unwin Books, 1962), p. 85.

in their creativity without becoming dependent on myths of perpetual progress or a transcendent God.²⁷ In Nietzsche's view, the genius of Greek tragedy lay in its subtle blend of affirmation and negation and in its ability to generate exhilaration out of anguish. Tragic art allows us to come to terms with a reality, not by masking its horror but by transfiguring it into beautiful illusions that enable us to affirm our own lives.

The propensity to characterize human existence as tragic reflects the powerful impact that Apollo has made upon us. Only in a world where the "principium individuationis" has a strong hold would the human condition be characterized as fundamentally one of despair. To transform this despair into hope, we cannot simply allow the light of Apollo to mask the suffering of the world. Instead the brutal story of a tragic figure, who becomes beautiful through his suffering is relayed to us. Despite the fate that awaits him, he clings to illusions such as integrity and valour. They become striking testaments to his individuation because he acts against his fate while knowing that he cannot escape it. The tenacity with which he clings to his "illusions" is heroic. His actions are meaningful precisely because they stand out against the chaotic world that envelops him.

The tragic heroes depicted in the drama of Sophocles and Aeschylus undergo tremendous suffering in their attempts to make the horror of existence palatable. The figures these playwrights present are extraordinary figures who would elicit the awe of the spectators. Because of their grandeur and their valiant struggle with fate, they grapple with

²⁷Schacht, *Nietzsche*, p. 480.

the question of the meaning of existence itself. Oedipus is condemned to misery despite his exceedingly noble character. He solved the riddle of nature, only by first resisting nature: "How else could one compel nature to surrender her secrets if not by triumphantly resisting her, that is, by means of something unnatural? It is this insight that I find expressed in that horrible triad of Oedipus' destinies: the same man who solves the riddle of nature-that Sphinx of two species-also must break the most sacred natural orders by murdering his father and marrying his mother"(BT 9). In the end, his defiance of nature comes back to haunt him, and he cannot escape his own inevitable destruction. However, he stands out because of the enormous effort that he exerts in the attempt to defy nature.

The struggle of Oedipus comes to embody the human condition itself. Rather than seeming pathetic, our existence is ennobled through him in spite of its ineluctable misery: "it is precisely the tragic myth that has to convince us that even the ugly and disharmonic are part of an artistic game that the will in the eternal amplitude of its pleasure plays with itself"(BT 24). The tragic heroes therefore facilitate the development of a new awareness regarding the tragedy of our own existence, attuning us to its aesthetic importance. Graceful forms used to represent our pain make it more palatable, by providing a "bright image of clouds and sky mirrored in a black lake of sadness"(BT 9). Yet, the artist's dramatization of Oedipus' story is in itself grounds for hope, for in telling it Sophocles beatifies the hero, eternalizing him in art. Stern and Silk claim that the serenity "belongs to the poet and not to the myth: it lies precisely in the poet's attempt to palliate the dark

truths that the myth represents. The myth in itself is deeply pessimistic."²⁸ Oedipus' own attempts to achieve victory over nature failed, but the artist, in relaying his story triumphs where Oedipus himself had floundered: "it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified"(BT 24). By recounting Oedipus' life and portraying his inevitable defeat by forces that overpower him, Sophocles prevents him from sinking into oblivion. Art makes life palatable not by hiding its horrors but by depicting them, for the act of depiction in itself is a victory over the ultimate horror of nothingness.

Nietzsche lauds the art form of Attic tragedy for a fusion of the Apollonian and Dionysian that resists a Hegelian synthesis, for it celebrates rather than overcoming their opposition. The chorus of satyrs assumed a central role in the tragedy. The satyr represents nature in a "pre-cultural" state, being both a fountain of wisdom and a symbol of "sexual omnipotence"(BT 8). The chorus of satyrs do not remove themselves from the characters of the tragedy as spectators but rather collectively identify with it, dismantling the walls between them. Thus, the Apollonian dialogue, which objectified events, was complemented by the chorus which brought the audience *into* the tragedy, giving way to an intense feeling of unity: "the state and society and, quite generally, the gulfs between man and man give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity leading back to the very heart

²⁸M.S. Silk and J.P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 70.

of nature. The metaphysical comfort-with which, I am suggesting even now, every true tragedy leaves us-that life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful and pleasurable-this comfort appears in incarnate clarity in the chorus of satyr, a chorus of natural beings who live ineradicably, as it were, behind all civilization and remain eternally the same, despite the changes of generations and of the history of nations"(BT 7).

Even the horror that our existence stirs within us is a ground for hope. Hamlet is filled with nausea when he sees the forces of nature at work: "In this sense the Dionysian man resembles Hamlet: both have once looked truly into the essence of things, they have *gained knowledge*, and nausea inhibits action; for their action could not change anything in the eternal nature of things; they feel it to be ridiculous or humiliating that they should be asked to set right a world that is out of joint"(BT 7). However, Hamlet is not a purely Dionysian figure. He has experienced the destructive fury of life, but he would not mourn his losses if he were not also an Apollonian figure. He shrinks from the world in horror because he clings to images of beauty and creativity that escape the ravages of time. Just as one cannot see beauty without horror, one cannot see horror without beauty. Even Dionysus who symbolizes primal unity, cannot escape the suffering of individuation and is dismembered by the Titans. Only individuals can experience the forces of life. While Dionysus represents primal unity, he can never become the primal unity and therefore is destroyed by it. This is his tragedy.

Therefore, suffering is not only nature's retribution for human arrogance, as exemplified in the myth of Prometheus who was punished for attempting to harness the powers of nature for humankind. Rather, it marks the realization that our illusions are only illusions and that we are therefore always separated from the world that engulfs us. In tragedy, this anguish is publicly displayed and spurred on by the Dionysian chorus, becoming the wellspring of a new *human* unity, because the audience not only identifies with the hero but merges with him: "it is only through the spirit of music that we can understand the joy involved in the annihilation of the individual"(BT 16). Ironically, our individuation leads to disindividuation. The primordial unity of nature is recaptured, not in spite of our humanity but because of it. Oedipus' individual suffering translates into solidarity, precisely because we recognize the agony of his individuation. We are brought to Dionysus, not in spite of Apollo but because of him: "We are really for a brief moment primordial being itself, feelings its raging desire for existence and joy in existence; the struggle, the pain, the destruction of phenomena, now appear necessary to us, in view of the excess of countless forms of existence, which force and push one another into life, in view of the exuberant fertility of the universal will"(BT 17).

It is important to remember that Dionysus *is not* nature but *mimics* it and therefore himself harbours an Apollonian strain. Yet, the Apollonian features of Dionysus should not impel us to obscure his sharp divergence from the sun-god. Dionysus works through the medium of music which incites an emotive response to nature, rather than following

Apollo's path of serene contemplation. In fact, the function of the Dionysian chorus is to offset the propensity for reflection that the drama on its own would instigate. According to Nietzsche, music imbues the drama with a vividness and sensuality by speaking directly to the subconscious, rather than first being filtered through the medium of language: "These harmonies make the relations of things immediately perceptible to us in a sensuous, by no means abstract manner"(BT 21). In turn, the tremendous power of music must be mitigated and tamed by the clear lines of the Apollonian drama: "Thus the Apollonian tears us out of the Dionysian universality and lets us find delight in individuals; it attaches our pity to them and by means of them it satisfies our sense of beauty which longs for great and sublime forms"(BT 21). This Dionysian revelry would not be possible, if we *were* the characters in the tragedy since the act of overcoming the distance between characters and their audience is part of the Dionysian experience.

Greek tragedy manifests the profound awareness that individuation and disindividuation can neither be reconciled, nor can they exist without each other: "Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo; and Apollo, finally the language of Dionysus; and so the highest goal of tragedy and of all art is attained"(BT 21). In order to experience the primordial unity of life we must transcend our "self" but this implies the existence of an individuated "self" that can be transcended. The soothing grace of Apollo can only cast its rays against a backdrop of chaos and confusion. It is his contrast with Dionysus that accounts for his glow. The two tendencies are therefore in perennial opposition. At the

same time, they are also part of each other. Apollo teaches us that only the interaction of individuated beings can generate the kind of primordial energy celebrated by Dionysus. Yet, out of this primordial oneness emerge individuated beings. It not only destroys them but gives birth to them. It is the irreconcilability of Dionysus and Apollo that allows them to work together. We long for both Dionysus and Apollo because they are *not* one another, and yet, at the same time, we can only appreciate each of them because they contain elements of each another.

The death of tragedy

Nietzsche blames Euripides and Socrates for the death of tragedy, since they expunged its Dionysian element: "To separate this original and all-powerful Dionysian element from tragedy, and to reconstruct tragedy purely on the basis of an un-Dionysian art, morality and world view-this is the tendency of Euripides as it now reveals itself to us in clear illumination"(BT 12). Rather than extolling heroes, Euripides "brought the spectator onto the stage"(BT 11) bringing to drama a new mediocrity, and marking a shift from tragedy to comedy: "And so the Aristophanean Euripides prides himself on having portrayed the common, familiar, everyday life and activities of the people, about which all are qualified to pass judgement"(BT 11). Because there was no longer a marked difference between the characters of the drama and the audience, the distance required for

the Apollonian illusion to work was noticeably absent. There was nothing awe inspiring about the comic figures that occupied the stage. The need for the "interference" by the Dionysian chorus that overcomes the distance between spectators and the tragic chorus is eliminated. Thus, Euripides had not only destroyed the Dionysian element of tragedy, he had dimmed its Apollonian radiance as well.

By dispensing with this tragic distance, Euripides succeeded in making tragedy reasonable. While the "entire world of sentiments passions, and experiences was transferred to the actors themselves"(BT 12), these emotions too closely replicated the daily experiences of the viewers. This made it impossible for them to be transported beyond the passive spectator role and question the meaning of existence. Comedy spewed contempt on the extremes of tragedy. Because there was no horror, there was also no beauty. Moreover, the audience would no longer be struck by the grandeur and nobility of the characters. To reinforce the spectator's passivity, the action would be explained in an introduction to the play, diminishing the opportunity for an involved response to the drama. There was no dissonance, and everything was neatly knit together to form a harmonious whole. Given this preamble, the spectator is compelled to map this framework onto the story unfolding before him, precluding a visceral enjoyment of the experience.

The richness of Greek drama lay in its ability to metamorphose suffering into joy, but by removing the pain, Euripides also precluded its transformation into joy. The

exuberant process of transcending the self in order to revel in the primordial unity of the Dionysian is denied to the spectator. Shielded from the horror of existence by the shroud of rationality, our existence is painless but also meaningless. It is clear from Nietzsche's attitude towards Euripides, that rationality is being equated with the mundane repetition of habit. Euripides' plays are rational, because they closely mimic the banal routines of his viewers. In some sense, the rise of comedy is a testament to the rise of the "last man" who simply mirrors and adapts to the mundane routine of daily life, extinguishing the need for his own self transformation. Comedy, for Nietzsche, has a profound levelling effect. In his contempt for comedy, one already begins to see the problems that he will come to identify with democracy.

However, it was Socrates and not Euripides that dealt the final blow to tragedy. He attempted to create a world where Apollo could exist without Dionysus: "Reason=virtue=happiness means merely: one must imitate Socrates and counter the dark desires by producing a permanent *daylight*-the daylight of reason. One must be prudent, clear, bright at any cost: every yielding to the instincts, to the unconscious, leads *downwards*..." (TI I.8). Socratic thought, which in Nietzsche's view has paralysed Western culture, is an offshoot of Apollonian art, but it stifles its artistic predecessors, vilifying the very art that gave birth to it: "Here *philosophic thought* overgrows art and compels it to cling close to the trunk of dialectic. The *Apollonian* tendency has withdrawn into the cocoon of logical schematism; just as in the case of Euripides we noticed

something analogous, as well as a transformation of the *Dionysian* into naturalistic affects"(BT 14). Eventually, the concept becomes objectified and we begin to orient ourselves by lifeless abstractions, which remove the suffering of life by expunging life altogether. Conversely, the Apollonian illusion cannot disassociate itself as completely from the object it represents, since it is metaphorical rather than logical. The use of metaphor presupposes an awareness of the distance between that which is represented and the symbol that represents it. Logical categories purge themselves as much as possible from the transient forces of life in order to be absolutely binding. Furthermore, when logic supersedes metaphor, the schism between the symbol and that which it represents grows larger, but at the same time we accept the symbol without recognizing the creative process that gave birth to it. It becomes an objective rather than a subjective truth precisely because its object suffers from neglect.

The glorification of certainty and absolute knowledge of eternal forms condemned life. Socrates went to his death "with the calm with which, according to Plato's description, he leaves the Symposium at dawn, the last of the revellers to begin a new day, while on the benches and on the earth his drowsy table companions remain behind to dream of Socrates, the true eroticist"(BT 13). Nietzsche would maintain that Socrates does not fear death because he has not lived. He refused to be carried away by Dionysian excesses, aiming to "correct existence": "all alone, with an expression of irreverence and superiority, as the precursor of an altogether different culture, art and morality, he enters

a world, to touch whose very hem would give us the greatest happiness"(BT 13).

Socrates instilled within us a false hope with a "delusion of limitless power"(BT 18). He thought that the rational acquisition of knowledge would free men from both the fear of life and death: "In this contrast, I understand by the spirit of science the faith that first came to light in the person of Socrates-the faith in the explicability of nature and in knowledge as a panacea"(BT 17). Nietzsche does not deny that the imposition of rational forms onto our experience is necessary, but he scorns "its delusion of limitless power"(BT 18). Nietzsche criticized the likes of Socrates and Plato, not for their rationality per se, but for bringing this rationality to excess, silencing other aspects of life. They made the false assumption that "thinking is a measure of actuality-that what cannot be thought, *is* not-is a rude *non plus ultra* of a moralistic trustfulness..in itself a mad assumption, which experience contradicts at every moment"(WP 436). Rather than recognizing illusion as illusion, Plato and Socrates achieved a curious reversal, in which the illusion became the true reality, and the reality the illusion: "The more 'Idea', the more being. He reversed the concept of 'reality' and said: 'What you take for real is an error, and the nearer we approach the 'Idea", the nearer we approach 'truth.'...Fundamentally, Plato, as the artist he was, preferred appearance to being!"(WP 572).

Despite his propensity to scorn Socrates for muting the effect of both individuation and integration, Nietzsche is well aware of the need to rein both of them in. Dionysus, if unchecked can have devastating consequences. By using music as a medium for the

Dionysian experience, one restrains a force that can also turn violent. A hint of Apollonian moderation is therefore implicit in the Dionysian art form. Similarly, as the heroes of the Apollonian dramas illustrate, defiance against the forces of nature has devastating consequences for the rebels. By expressing individuation through sculpture and in the scripts of plays, one is able to mitigate some of its more terrifying aspects. Thus, art is a form of escape, which allows us to experience these dual pulls on our being without surrendering to either completely. Both individuation and integration are mediated through art. Nevertheless, the art form depicting the lives of heroes such as Oedipus and Prometheus would not exist, were it not for the individuals who had faced the horror of individuation in all its intensity. Similarly, the Dionysian chorus could not be created if the Greeks were not willing to unleash Dionysian frenzies: "From all quarters of the ancient world-to say nothing here of the modern-from Rome to Babylon, we can point to the existence of Dionysian festivals, types which bear, at best, the same relation to the Greek festivals which the bearded satyr who borrowed his name and attributes from the goat, bears to Dionysus himself. In nearly every case these festivals centred in extravagant sexual licentiousness, whose waves overwhelmed all family life and its venerable traditions; the most savage natural instincts were unleashed, including even that horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty which has always seemed to me to be the real 'witches' brew"(BT 2). Evidently, the individuals within the community could not survive if they confronted the terror of existence on a constant basis and so it had to be tamed. Yet, this

would not be possible, if it was not also faced. One cannot appreciate the escape offered by art without also facing the horror that makes it necessary.

In Nietzsche's view, it was Socrates who precipitated the death of ancient Greek civilization by preventing people from confronting extremes. In fact, one could argue that the problem of rationalism inheres in its propensity to overcome completely the opposition between integration and individuation. Symbols represent certain objects, and are then pieced together to constitute a whole. In this way, the tension between individuation and integration would be superseded since each individual piece can be integrated without destroying its own boundaries. Like individual pieces of a puzzle, they neatly fit together. However, the pieces of a puzzle do not change as a result of interaction, nor do they have to transcend their own boundaries in order to become part of the whole. The logician too must limit change in order for his formula to work consistently. Anything that escapes his synthesis is considered to be unreal. This stands in stark contrast to the figures such as Oedipus or Prometheus who struggled against their fate while knowing it was inescapable. In attempting to carve out their own identity, they had to resist integration into nature. In fact, Nietzsche argues that only a defeated Oedipus can be embraced by nature once more: "The old man, struck by an excess of misery, is confronted by the supraterrrestrial cheerfulness that descends from the divine sphere and suggests to us that the hero attains his highest activity, extending far beyond his life, through his purely passive posture, while his conscious deeds and desires, earlier in his life, merely led him into passivity"(BT

9). He is serene because he has allowed the current of nature to sweep him away, and no longer worries about his own individual life. However, he would not appreciate this kind of serenity without having struggled against the nature that he now surrenders himself to. His passivity late in life does not imply that the tension between individuation and integration has been overcome, but points to the irreconcilability of the two phenomena. He cannot be individuated and integrated at the same time. I can only appreciate the serenity provided by Apollo, if I have succumbed to the Dionysian fury. Similarly, my desire to surrender to Dionysus is appealing if it is contrasted with the pain of individuation. Nietzsche exalts tragedy for acknowledging this "dual" necessity and refusing to reduce Dionysus or Apollo to each other. We need to both maintain distance from life and also immerse ourselves in it, in order to live. Needless to say, we cannot do both simultaneously, and therefore Nietzsche insists that we wander between them.

The wisdom of tragedy lay in recognizing the interdependence between individuation and integration. However, to say that these two tendencies cannot be reconciled does not imply that they are pure categories which contain no traces of each other. Nietzsche asserts that we are both individuated beings, who define our boundaries against the maze that encircles us. Yet, by struggling against our environment in this way, we also create the flux that sweeps us away. By imposing such limits, we are providing ourselves with a temporary refuge from the surrounding storm, but we are also increasing the velocity of its winds. While we may experience these tendencies as distinct, they are

not as differentiated as they may appear.

Nietzsche has demonstrated both the oppositional relationship between integration and individuation as well as their entanglement. However, he has defined this relationship primarily in terms of the individual's relationship towards nature at large, glossing over the role played by the community. Even the lives of figures such as Oedipus and Prometheus are defined almost solely in terms of their relationship to nature. Nietzsche claims that the incest taboo which Oedipus tries to avoid breaking constitutes a rebellion against nature. He does not examine the social implications of Oedipus' position and overlooks the fact that Oedipus's attempt to defy nature stems from his desire to integrate himself into the community: "how else could one compel nature to surrender her secrets if not by triumphantly resisting her, that is, by means of something unnatural? It is this insight that I find expressed in that horrible triad of Oedipus' destinies: the same man who solves the riddle of nature-that Sphinx of two species-also must break the most sacred natural orders by murdering his father and marrying his mother...He who by means of his knowledge plunges nature into the abyss of destruction must also suffer the dissolution of nature in his own person" (BT 9). I will argue that by introducing the community into this analysis, one can cast more light on the mutually constitutive nature of integration and individuation. While the community is not left out of the *Birth of Tragedy* entirely, it does not receive a very detailed analysis. Thus, I will turn to an analysis of the *Will to Power* and the *Genealogy of Morals* in an attempt to answer some of the questions which

Nietzsche begs in the *Birth of Tragedy*.

CHAPTER SIX: THE WILL TO POWER AND AGENCY

A. The Will to Power

In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche describes a self that needs to both individuate itself against nature and integrate itself within it. I have argued that the two processes are irreconcilable and yet also mutually constitutive. In order to deepen the analysis of their mutually constitutive nature I will turn to an analysis of the will to power. Nietzsche uses this concept to contest the "boundaries" of an individual that had remained largely unexamined in his earlier work. While in the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche had brought to the surface the complexity of our relationship with nature, indicating that we neither were completely integrated into it, nor separated from it, he did not examine the relationship between nature and culture in great detail. Through the concept of the will to power, I will discuss Nietzsche's account of the individual and examine in greater detail the relationship between nature and culture.

Although the concept of the will to power plays a central role in Nietzsche's philosophy, it is among the most misunderstood aspects of his thought, for it admits such a multiplicity of meanings, that one wonders why he encompasses them all under a single label. In doing so, he stresses that we are creatures of contradiction, whose essence cannot be so easily reduced to a single phenomenon: "Philosophers are accustomed to speak of the will as if it were the best known thing in the world; indeed, Schopenhauer

has given us to understand that the will alone is really known to us...Willing seems to me to be above all something *complicated*, something that is a unit only as a word"(BGE 19). As Haar avers, "the key words of his *own* vocabulary elude conceptual logic. ...most of Nietzsche's key words bring forth, as we shall see, a plurality of meanings undermining any logic based on the principle of identity."¹ Nevertheless, while Nietzsche is an assiduous opponent of "identitarian thinking", this does not mean that he denies the possibility of a kind of unity in the diverse processes that are included under the rubric of the "will to power". It is at once a kind of growth impulse which emanates from life as a whole and ripples through us, but at the same time is produced through the interactions between the various finite organisms that comprise life. He uses a single term that admits of many meanings in order to underline that there is at once a "whole" that we are a part of, while at the same time stressing that this whole does not fully precede nor does it simply ensue from the interactions of the organisms and beings that comprise it. It is a vague unity, whose nature is constantly changing and therefore it is futile for us to try to capture it.

It is also important to point out that Nietzsche recognizes that there is no way of affirming or disaffirming the existence of such a unity. He is not trying to posit new metaphysical truths but rather looking for a metaphorical device that will pull human

¹Michel Haar, 'Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language' in *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, ed. David. B. Allison (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p. 6.

beings out of the nihilistic quagmire which they have sunken into. I would agree with Haar that Nietzsche's method aspires to unmask "without ever pretending to lift the last veil to reveal any originary identity, any primary foundation."² However, I would argue that Nietzsche also acknowledges our desire to belong to something and this is why he applies a single term to whatever it is that we are a part of. Thus, the concept of the will to power offers us the delusion that we are part of a unity, while at the same time refusing to draw out the contours of this unity. In this way, Nietzsche hopes that we would avoid sinking into the complacency that comes from knowing that we have grasped the essence of life. He draws attention to the fact that there is no higher order that underwrites our existence. Without a system to regulate our interplay with the world, human beings can be "radically creative."³ At the same time, Nietzsche is sensitive to the need to fend off the despair that may result from the conviction that constant change will always prevent us from being at home in the world. If there is only becoming, why should I participate in this process if it can never enable me to belong. Thus, Nietzsche is trying to encourage us to find a way of belonging that affirms rather than denying the shifting nature of "reality".

Nietzsche is not, as some postmodern commentators suggest, extolling a world of unmitigated chaos. They impute to him a proclivity for deconstruction that continuously undermines all meaning: "It is not an essence; it is neither structure, telos, nor meaning,

²*Ibid.*, p. 7.

³Joan Stambaugh, *The Other Nietzsche*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), p.24.

but continual sublation of all telos, transgression of all ends, production of all concordance and contradictory meanings, interpretations, valuations. It is the chaos, the primal fund of the unformed-not matter, but force beneath the cosmos, which precedes the forms and makes them possible as well as transitory."⁴ The idea that the quest for chaos underlies all activity is just as absolutist as metaphysical postures since it merely substitutes a totalizing order with a totalizing chaos. Nietzsche recognizes that the destabilization of meaning necessitates the existence of meanings which can be deconstructed. We would not search for meaning in the first place, if we had no need to latch on to something that could give our lives direction. Nietzsche hopes that by acknowledging that we are a part of a "unity" which we are not only created by but also create, we will be able to continue striving, even when the meanings which we have developed for ourselves have become discredited. I should also point out, that I use the term "unity" here very hesitantly. I am not claiming that there is a single thread that runs through all of our experiences, nor that there is a universal subject who uses individual organisms as its vehicle. However, as I shall point out, Nietzsche does claim that each of us interacts with the world that we are not only in, but embody, setting off a chain of reactions, which in turned are reacted upon by others. It is the connection between these processes which forms the whole of which we are a part. At the same time, these kinds of processes always precede us, and therefore we

⁴Alphonso Lingis, 'The Will to Power,' *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p. 38.

emerge out of the very processes that we also create.

Heidegger also accuses Nietzsche of privileging the realm of flux over that of stasis, thereby reducing all being to becoming. Heidegger claims that Nietzsche's philosophy cannot escape the traps of metaphysics because it constitutes a kind of inverse Platonism: "To overturn Platonism thus means to reverse the standard relation: what languishes below in Platonism as it were, and would be measured against the supersensuous, must now be put on top by way of reversal, the supersensuous must now be placed in its service."⁵ While for Plato, the transient world is in some sense an imperfect manifestation of the forms, for Heidegger's Nietzsche, permanence reflects our impotence when faced with the realm of constant change. According to such an interpretation, flux is real, while permanence is the illusion. Because Nietzsche, in Heidegger's view still tries to discover the essence of life, he still has not shed the trappings of metaphysics.

I would argue that Nietzsche repudiates the kind of division between truth and illusion which Heidegger accuses him of upholding. Nietzsche does maintain that "becoming" has been neglected in Western thought. However, he does not make the kind of sharp distinction between being and becoming which Heidegger insists that he does. I will answer this objection more fully in my account of the eternal return. For now, I

⁵Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. 1: The Will to Power as Art*, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1979), p. 154.

would like to try to dull the sharp edges of this distinction by making use of the terms "home" and "homelessness" rather than "being" and "becoming." I would argue that for Nietzsche, the will to power is both a "permanent" force that marks our connection to the 'world' as a whole, and at the same time reflects a profound sense of disconnectedness within that "reality." Everything changes and yet everything remains the same. Neither one can be reduced to the other.⁶ If I encounter something or someone that is different from me, I have a tendency to try to incorporate it into my existing framework, or to exclude it. Both I and the "other" change as a result of participating in this dynamic. I act because I *am* at home in the world, but also because it is alien to me. Without a preexisting sense of belonging, I would have no incentive to try to create a niche for myself and react to the new stimuli that I encounter. I am, and therefore I must become. At the same time, differences between myself and others bring me to the recognition that I am also always in exile and therefore my being is not something that I can ever take for granted. I am both at home in the world, and homeless. The two are not mutually exclusive but rather are interdependent. We are disaggregated beings, and the differences between us generate the kinds of interactions which shape the whole that we are also a part of. These tensions cannot be superseded(*aufgehoben*) in the Hegelian sense, by observing them from the vantage point of the whole, for Nietzsche firmly denies the existence of

⁶For a detailed analysis of this relationship, see Chapter Seven on the eternal recurrence of the same.

such an absolute or transcendent perspective. For Nietzsche, unity and contradiction occur simultaneously: neither one can be reduced to the other. It might help to conceive of the will to power can be regarded as a kind of fusion of Rousseau's *amour-propre* and *amour-de-soi*. Rousseau notes that it is the comparative assessment of oneself and others that prompts one to try to make oneself at home in the world by soliciting their recognition. At the same time, without a latent *amour-de-soi* reminding us of the sense of primordial unity, we would not struggle to re-integrate ourselves.

Warren maintains that Nietzsche, rather than trying to describe the world in itself, tries to devise a "critical ontology of practice."⁷ We cannot conceive of a world that does not have us in it, and therefore it makes no sense to separate knowledge of the world from the means we use to make ourselves at home within it. Knowing itself is an action, since each interpretation that we may come up with is a means of marking our own place in the world. At the same time, these interpretations are never strictly our own. They come out of a process that we are a part of and therefore cannot help but participate in. According to Nietzsche, we must therefore pay attention to the diverse processes that are at work in the act of willing. As I will demonstrate below, he uses biological metaphors to emphasize that we do not simply impose our will on the world, but that this will is also "imposed"

⁷Mark Warren, *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, p. 111. Warren argues that the will to power is an "ontological postulate" which one must attribute to human beings in order to make sense of their own agency. (p. 114) He points out, that like Kant's categorical imperative, it "structures" our experience so that we are able to act. However, unlike Kant, Nietzsche does not insist on the universality of the "structures" that make our experiences possible.

upon us. Each time we interpret, we are also being interpreted.

Minds and bodies

In order to gain a better understanding of the will to power, I will begin by contrasting Nietzsche's approach with other theorists of the will, since his philosophy is largely defined against that of his predecessors. Traditionally, the will has been the cornerstone of a philosophy that exalted the subject as *the* source of action. According to Nietzsche, we are always already thrust into a world and therefore become both fields of action upon which other forces act as well as contributing to the dynamic by responding to and creating new forces. These processes are inextricable and cannot be disentangled in order to establish a predictable pattern of cause and effect. Thus, the Nietzschean will has its source both inside and outside the self.

Nietzsche is indebted to Kant for his formulation of the will, building on his philosophy while at the same time repudiating it. Kant too repudiated the claims of an absolute metaphysics, but argued that we could not do without universal categories in making judgements about things. We could not know whether or not these judgements inhered in the reality that we confronted, but they were nevertheless necessary to the interpretation of such reality. The will was the faculty that enabled us to act in accordance with the universal moral imperatives that we had posited. Kant recognized that freedom

depended on an internal division of the self, with heteronomous desires pitted against moral imperatives. The will was responsible for the exercise of freedom for it enabled the individual to subordinate empirical urges to the strictures of practical reason. It acts as a kind of disciplinarian that ensures that the subject obeys the dictates of its own reason and therefore forms an intermediary link between contemplation and practice. We are able to act by imposing form on the world: "The will is thought of as a faculty of determining itself to action in accordance with the conception of certain laws."⁸ The moral forms which it imposes on the world, can not be legitimized by proving their existence within the world itself. Thus, for Kant, the will is a faculty that facilitates the process of self overcoming and translates thoughts into action.

Nietzsche has no contention with Kant's claims that we use judgements in order to orient ourselves in the heteronomous world, but he denies that these need be universal. Furthermore, he also refutes the idea that there is an internal capacity known as the will which enables us to translate such moral judgements into action: "We believed ourselves to be causal in the act of willing: we thought that here at least we caught causality in the act..the causality of the will was firmly accepted as given as *empirical*. Meanwhile we have thought better of it. Today we no longer believe a word of all this. The 'inner world' is full of phantoms and will-o-the-wisps: the will is one of them. The will no longer moves

⁸Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork on the Metaphysics of Morals* in *Kant* edited by Lewis White Beck, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. 1988), p. 272.

anything, hence it does not explain anything either-it merely accompanies events:it can also be absent"(TI IV.3). First of all Kant's concept of the will takes for granted the existence of the thinking subject as an agent that can work towards actualizing its moral conceptions. While Kant admits that the unity we confer upon objects are necessary structures of the mind, enabling one to make sense of a mass of inchoate perceptions⁹, he also postulates that the activity of connecting perceptions presupposes a unified subject that is capable of synthesizing experiences: "I think must be capable of accompanying all my presentations; otherwise something would be presented to me which could not be thought at all, which means no less than: the presentation would be either impossible or at least nothing to me.. Consequently every manifold of perception has a necessary relation to the I think in the same subject in which the manifold is found." ¹⁰

For Nietzsche, the very idea of the subject itself is a necessary illusion. Unlike Kant, Nietzsche does not take the existence of the subject and its agency for granted and tries to determine how such an idea of agency itself is constituted. Rather than beginning his enquiry by examining the mind, he inverts Kantianism by suggesting that such agency is rooted in the body: "Belief in the body is more fundamental than belief in the soul: the latter arose from unscientific reflection on (the agonies of the body)"(WP 491). At the

⁹Perhaps the most noted example used by Kant is that of causality. According to Kant, we organize experience according to the synthetic *a priori* judgement of causality. It does not inhere in the universe but we attribute it to our experience in order to draw connections between events.

¹⁰Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), B 132.

same time, one must be careful not to accuse Nietzsche of reifying the body. What appears to be a disproportionate emphasis on the body is merely an attempt to reestablish the connection between body and soul or mind, which refused to acknowledge their mutually constitutive nature: "Granted that the 'soul' is an attractive and mysterious idea which philosophers have rightly abandoned only with reluctance-perhaps that which they have since learned to put in its place is even more attractive, even more mysterious. The human body, in which the most distant and most recent past of all organic development again becomes living and corporeal, through which and over and beyond which a tremendous inaudible stream seems to flow: the body is a more astonishing idea than the old :soul"(WP 659).

Before we are subjects, agents and creatures of reason, we are bodies. As Heidegger points out "We do not 'have' a body; rather , we 'are' bodily."¹¹ This is not an attempt on Nietzsche's part to reduce all thought, willing and action to crude physiological phenomena. Instead, he uses the body as a metaphor that illuminates the complexity of our being. The body affirms a separation and individuation from the world around us. Its contours are clearly defined and yet tactile and audible sensations collapse the distinction between our bodies and the external world. The capacity for individuation as well as disindividuation therefore inheres within a single body. Thus, Nietzsche deepens the

¹¹Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche* vol 1. *The Will to Power as Art*. tr. David Krell. New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 23.

analysis he begins in the *Birth of Tragedy* by pointing out that even the body which would seem to be pointing to the most "individuated" aspect of our existence is not simply individuated. As Foucault avers, the body is both a field in which various forces converge, but at the same time a force that interacts with others to form new bodies. It is both self and non-self.

In fact, it is the act of constituting itself, that makes the body a body. Nietzsche goes so far as to say that it is an agent of interpretation, which resists certain influences while imbibing others: "The organic process constantly presupposes interpretations" (WP 643). It must constantly redefine its limits, since it is incessantly bombarded with "external stimuli". Nietzsche is not claiming that the body's efforts to define its own limits are conscious, but is simply pointing out that it must act and change in order to remain the same. It is not simply at home in the world, it must make itself at home within it. Its survival is under threat from its very inception and therefore it must engage in activity to maintain its boundaries which are by no means simply guaranteed. Even animals must actively search for food in order to stay alive. At the same time, the drive to stay alive does not originate within any single body, but moves through bodies. Our desires to individuate ourselves are at the same time a testament to our integration. The flux that moves through bodies, sustaining life, also destroys it. In order for my body to remain the same, I must change. I cannot simply surrender myself to life's current, I must also ward it off. I must act against life in order to uphold it. Simple regenerative tasks such as

eating, and sleeping are attempts to fend off its destructive aspects. In order to participate *in* life, I must also struggle against it. Growth is a part of the process of decay and decay is part of the process of growth.

According to Nietzsche, it is inaccurate to say that the body represents our integration with nature while the mind is a vehicle for its transcendence, since the impulse to go beyond the body has its roots in the body itself. We use thought to posit the existence of an ego that is distinct from its empirical determinations. However, the conception of this ego is in part made possible by reflection on our physical borders. Because we have a distinct body, we deduce that our mind is also distinct. The concept of autonomous selfhood is a derivative of the body, whose borders are clearly defined: "In all ages, there has been more faith in the body as our most personal possession, our most certain being, in short our ego" (WP 659). From this I deduce that *I* am the author of my actions, heralding the sovereignty of my ego. Yet, the functions of my body also escape my complete control, indicating that even my body is not completely my own, but becomes nature's vehicle. Such an uncomfortable truth may have prompted philosophers to affirm the separation of body and spirit, even though the concept of an independent spirit may owe its existence to the body. Only by severing the mind's connection to the body could they posit a realm of pure autonomy. The reification of the mind is really a reification of the body.

Just as the body continually redefines its limits in order to survive, so does the

mind. We invent categories that filter out information in order to be able to orient ourselves. Thus, *I* not only interpret, but *I* am also the result of an act of interpretation. In order to steer our boat through Dionysian water we must circumvent obstacles that nature thrusts in our path while at the same time using the wind and the waves to propel ourselves forward. To say that the categories we employ are equivalent to the truth is tantamount to proclaiming that an understanding of how to steer the boat through the water can be equated with an understanding of the river. Biological processes and self interpretative processes are linked in Nietzsche's philosophy. He extols non-rational drives, not because of their "superiority", but in order to dismantle the hierarchy that had placed reason at a pinnacle and attempted to expunge our non-rational drives. By "locating" the "origin" of the "will to power" in bodily drives, Nietzsche inverts traditional metaphysics "wherein the *rationalitis* defines the essence of the *animal rationale*; the *animalitas* becomes determinant in Nietzsche's definition of man."¹² Having said this, it is important to bear in mind that Nietzsche is not trying to establish a causal relationship between mind and body, but to cast doubt on the mind/body dichotomy. Since we cannot know what it is like to be without mind, we cannot simply say that one imitates the other. Instead I suggest that he uses the body metaphorically. Even the body, which has symbolized our integration with nature is not guaranteed its place

¹² Christopher Fynsck, *Heidegger: Thought and Historicity*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 75.

within it: "The drive to approach-and the drive to thrust something back are the bond, in both the inorganic and the organic world. The entire distinction is a prejudice. The will to power in every combination of forces, lunging at the weaker, is more correct"(WP 655). Just as we must fight to remain alive in our biological home, we struggle to define limits in our conceptual home in an effort to create meaning: "Consciousness-beginning quite externally, as coordination and becoming conscious of 'impressions' - at first at the furthest distance from the biological centre of the individual; but a process that deepens and intensifies itself, and continually draws nearer to that centre"(WP 504). By suggesting that our minds imitate our bodies, he is exhorting us to recognize our connection to nature.

The kind of ambivalent relationship between our bodies and the world which they are in also applies to the relationship between mind and body. Nietzsche recognizes that while the two cannot exist in isolation from each other, they can also not be reduced to the other. The mind could not reflect upon the activities of the body if it did not enjoy a modicum of independence from it, and yet at the same time, it would not "mirror" the body in this way if it were not rooted in it. Nietzsche is not simply collapsing the dualism between mind and body upon which traditional metaphysics had been predicated; he is also upholding it. As I will point out in the next section, I could not create cultural and social bodies if I could not transcend my own physical body to some extent. I both am and am not my body. Because we can reflect upon the body, we also are catapulted beyond it, and

create new bodies through the interaction with other conscious beings. This in turn has an impact on individual bodies. At the same time, it is the interaction with other human beings that is responsible for the creation of our own consciousness. Consciousness also becomes a means by which we compensate for the body's deficiencies: "Morphology shows us how the senses and the nerves, as well as the brain, develop in proportion to the difficulty of finding nourishment"(WP 494). In fact, the relationship between consciousness and its body is one of both transcendence and adaptation. Consciousness for Nietzsche, like for Rousseau is the means by which a physically weak being is able to transcend its physical limitations. As such, it works both against the body and for the body by furnishing it with a new means of adaptation. I will engage in a more detailed analysis of the process of cultural and intellectual growth for my section on the *Genealogy of Morals*.

Pathos, difference and interpretation

Nietzsche has pointed out that both minds and bodies are constituted out of their relationship with the world around them and with each other. Thus, there is no single point of origin that can be labelled the will. Yet, there are interconnections between these multiple processes and this is what impels Nietzsche to use a single term to encompass them. I will try to keep these interconnections in mind when analyzing the bewildering

array of pronouncements that Nietzsche makes regarding the will. Despite his efforts to avoid identifying a primary source which unleashes the chain of reactions, he does proclaim that pathos is that which makes all our activity possible: "The will to power not a being, not a becoming, but a *pathos* -the most elemental fact from which a becoming and effecting first emerge"(WP 635). Pathos refers to the fact that we are all embodied in the world and therefore are affected by it; we are not neutral subjects. On the one hand, this is very reminiscent of Nietzsche's description of the primal unity of Dionysian revelry which recalls that we not only respond *to* the world we are in but are part of it. As such, we are not individual actors, but part of the stream of life itself: "A multiplicity of forces, connected by a common mode of nutrition, we call 'life.' To this mode of nutrition, as a means of making it possible, belong all so-called feelings, ideas, thoughts"(WP 641). Life infuses beings with a kind of primordial energy which impels them to grow. This is not tantamount to biological metaphysics, since it does not claim to understand what the world *is*. Rather, it expresses the feeling of our embodiment at both preconscious and subconscious levels. Our awareness of being-in-the world is not logical, it simply *is*.¹³

Yet, we are also affected not just by life as a primordial force but by particular

¹³Heidegger's philosophy is closer to Nietzsche than Heidegger himself is willing to admit. Heidegger examines what it means for a human being to be in a world. What the world actually is, is not significant, since we can never distance ourselves from our own being in it. *Dasein*, for Heidegger is thus ontologically prior. Yet, Heidegger breaks down the meaning of our own being into conceptual categories, while Nietzsche insists that our awareness of being is largely pre-conceptual.

objects or creatures that are in the world: "let us say that in all willing there is, first a plurality of sensations, namely, the sensation of the state 'away from which', the sensation of the state 'towards which', the sensation of this 'from' and towards themselves"(BGE 19). Thus, we react to separate forces, experiencing life in its fragmented and disharmonious state. I assume a position against and in relation to the whole and to the particulars that are in it: "Every centre of force adopts a perspective toward the entire remainder, ie. its own particular valuation, mode of action and mode of resistance. The 'apparent world', therefore is reduced to a specific mode of action on the world, emanating from the centre.. Now there is no other mode of action whatever; and the 'world' is only a word for the totality of these action. Reality consists precisely in this particular action and reaction of every individual part toward the whole-"(WP 567) Everything that is external is subsumed under a single category, that of the "outside". The whole is this "something" that I am in, whose exact boundaries I do not know. The term pathos thus includes both individuation and integration. I exist at a number of different levels. On the one hand, I define myself against the "outside" world and therefore see it as an undivided whole which both includes and excludes me. At another level, I encounter individual forces which I react to.

By using the term "will to power" to refer both to the nebulous totality that we are in, as well as to the dynamic created out of the interaction between forces. Nietzsche is underlining that all our characterizations of a "whole" are simply symbols or metaphors

that we use to make sense of that which we cannot grasp. While we know intuitively as well as reflexively that we are part of "something" we cannot know the nature of this "something" which we are a part of. Our use of metaphor gives meaning to something which we cannot understand. We acknowledge an interconnection that cannot be articulated. The whole that we are a part of does not have a predetermined shape or operate according to certain principles which are actualized through individuals. Nietzsche wishes to stress the dual movement that is at work whereby the whole gives birth to its parts, but the interaction of the parts also gives birth to the whole.

According to Nietzsche, all human beings share the desire to extend their own boundaries or grow. This emphasis on growth is not morally neutral but constitutes the cornerstone of Nietzsche's own value system. Any particular values that we may prescribe are deemed beneficial if they enhance growth and should be overcome if they stymie it. The refusal, on Nietzsche's part, to set limits to such expansion or to carefully outline his meanings has led many interpreters to balk at a philosophy which at times openly extols domination. I will argue in the next chapter, that he does try to set "limits" for such growth in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Nevertheless, one should not overlook the fact that for Nietzsche, domination can never be completely avoided, since one individual's growth may interfere with that of another. However, this is not to say that Nietzsche extols domination for its own sake, but rather that for him, it is an ineradicable part of the process of growth. The expansion of boundaries always implies a restriction of other

boundaries. It is this interplay which awakens within us a sensitivity to power differentials: "The will to power *interprets* (-it is a question of interpretation when an organ is constructed): it defines limits, determines degrees, variations of power. Mere variations of power could not feel themselves to be such: there must be present something that wants to grow and interprets the value of whatever else wants to grow"(WP 643). In growing, I am always already acting upon something else. I feel and/or reflect upon my growth because I notice the effect that my activity has upon others. If my growth were not somehow reflected in the "external world" I could not enjoy it. I always grow *in relation* to something else. It is this relational aspect that Nietzsche stresses when using the term "power".

Destruction is an indelible part of creation, and indeed acts as a catalyst. Because I am a limited being, I cannot imbibe all the forces of life without destroying myself. Too much "external" growth may inhibit my own. I must therefore build a kind of protective shell that deflects "harmful" stimuli. However, I always establish these limits against something else; destruction is an inevitable part of the creative process: "The will to power can manifest itself only against resistances; therefore it seeks that which resists it"(WP 656). The very act of erecting these walls transforms me and thus I transcend my own limitations by trying to protect them.

Nietzsche's profligate use of terms such as 'conquest' and 'commanding' prompt some thinkers to argue that Nietzsche's philosophy of power is primarily about

relationships of domination and servitude¹⁴: "Appropriation and assimilation are above all a desire to overwhelm, a forming, shaping, and reshaping, until at length that which has been overwhelmed has entirely gone over into the power domain of the aggressor and has increased the same"(WP 656). Nietzsche definitely does not want to turn a blind eye to the destructive aspects of power, but it is important to recognize that he does not wish to equate creativity with conquest. In fact, he plays on the ambiguity of the German word '*Macht*' which stems from '*machen*' or to make: "Why is all activity, even that of sense, associated with pleasure? Because before it an obstacle, a burden existed? Or rather because all doing is an overcoming, a becoming master, and increases the feeling of power? -Pleasure in thinking.-Ultimately it is not only the feeling of power, but the pleasure in creating and in the thing created; for all activity enters our consciousness as consciousness of a 'work'"(WP 661). For Nietzsche, the power *to* do something, always involves the power *over* something else. In order to act, I must close off and resist certain avenues. In this sense, he anticipates Foucault, who notes the interconnection between the productive and destructive aspects of power: "relations of power are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships.. but are immanent in the latter..relations of power are not in superstructural positions, with merely a role of

¹⁴Stern assumes that the desire for conquest underlies Nietzsche's philosophical enterprise. Once moral values are stripped of their veneer of legitimacy, only brute power politics remain. According to Stern, the will to power is always a justification for ruling and domination: "The purpose of all self-overcoming that is not decadent is the validation of command." J.P. Stern, *A Study of Nietzsche*,(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 123.

prohibition and accompaniment; they have a directly productive role wherever they come into play."¹⁵ Differences between individuals or various forces generate change. While one can interpret this as an interaction between individuals, one can also see this as an internal struggle through which an existing body transforms itself. Thus, if I am part of a social body, struggles between myself and someone else do not only represent a jockeying for power, but the "internal" change of a social body of which we are a part. Power "over" another creature is also at the same time power within another body.

Kaufmann tries to mitigate Nietzsche's language of conquest by couching it in moral language. For Kaufmann the will to power in its highest form is a drive for self-perfection in which mind controls matter.¹⁶ He thus imbues the will to power with a moral connotation which Nietzsche would try to dissociate himself from, claiming that "rationality to be the mark of great power."¹⁷ Although conquest is an act of overcoming resistance, Kaufmann argues that as we become more sophisticated, we begin increasingly

¹⁵Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1.* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), p. 94. In this work Foucault does describe dominant regimes of bio-power. He also argues that the subjects which are constituted through power can also in turn use the discipline imposed upon them to their own advantage. Thus, domination not only disempowers, but also "empowers" the subject.

¹⁶Kaufmann distinguishes between 'lower' and 'higher' forms of the will to power. Political domination and conquest are lower forms of power than moral self-overcoming. He claims that the will to power of the barbarian is manifested by torturing his neighbour. In the "middle of the scale" is the tendency to elicit the admiration and envy of one's neighbour by "elevating him." At the top end of the scale is moral self-overcoming. Kaufmann's Nietzsche therefore comes very close to Kant. Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, pp. 195-207.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 199-200.

to target internal sources of resistance, rather than external ones. Cooperation could also be a form of conquest, since it enables one to unshackle internal chains. From this perspective, "conquest" becomes simply a catchword for growth and the transcendence of limitation.

While Nietzsche would not disagree with Kaufmann that power can also be exerted against oneself, he would not necessarily equate this with the highest form of power. It is not Nietzsche's intent to gloss over the darker side of human nature, and he wants to underscore the fact that there can be no growth without suffering. Furthermore, he insists that we take pleasure in such destruction: "That commanding something which the people call 'the spirit' wants to be master in and around its own house and wants to feel that it is master; it has the will from multiplicity to simplicity, a will that ties up, tames, and is domineering and truly masterful"(BGE 230). In order to affirm life, we must acknowledge its negativity. Violence is an indelible part of the process of life. We cannot walk through the forest, without trampling on some of the flora that ornament its floor: "The will to power, in every combination of forces, defending itself against the stronger, lunging at the weaker, is more correct"(WP 655).

According to Nietzsche, in struggling to define our own boundaries, we are defining ourselves both against the "world" that surrounds us in an effort to avoid being absorbed by it. At the same time, we are manifesting the "force" of life which pulsates through all of us. Our own will to power therefore highlights the link between creation

and destruction that is part of the cycle of life: "And do you know what 'the world' is to me? Shall I show it to you in my mirror? *This world is will to power and nothing besides!* And you yourselves are this will to power and nothing besides"(WP 1067). This statement underscores the notion that the will to power is present in all living things and at the same time points out that our own particular will to power is exerted *against* the threat of nothingness or our own annihilation. Thus, the word "nothing" denotes the 'presence' of nothingness in the lives of human beings. The ongoing effort to grow is in part a struggle against death and nothingness.

Deleuze's interpretation, unlike Kaufmann's equates domination with creativity. By describing life as an interaction between forces, he leaves open the possibility that these forces occur within an individual, between individuals, between various social bodies, or between organisms. In short, like Nietzsche, he tries to provide a non-anthropomorphic basis for his theory. Furthermore, by focusing on the interplay between forces, he is able to focus on the importance of process as does Nietzsche: "'Life; would be defined as an enduring form of processes of the establishment of force, in which the different contenders grow unequally. To what extent resistance is present even in obedience; individual power is by no means surrendered"(WP 642). We act because we are acted upon. It is the process, and not the goal of power that is important for both Nietzsche and Deleuze.¹⁸

¹⁸Paul Patton, 'Power in Hobbes and Nietzsche,' *Nietzsche, Feminism and Political Theory* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 152.

However, Deleuze's distinction between active and reactive forces is problematic since he simply equates creativity with domination and reactive forces with the utilitarian end of adaptation. Active forces are "what makes the body superior to all reactions ...is the activity of necessarily unconscious forces."¹⁹ He associates these active forces with a Dionysian energy that is then forcibly contained by reactive forces.²⁰ Active forces are defined not by what they lack but simply by a discharge of energy. Reactive forces are understood in relation to what they lack and try to impose limits on these creative outpourings. Their only activity is putting a halt to the activity of others. However, in order for the reactive forces to block the power of active forces in this way, they cannot use the same means which gives the active forces the advantage but must find other means of diverting this active energy. This in itself is an expansion of boundaries which cannot be held to be purely adaptive. If you push me to the ground, and my physical force is no match for yours, then you have dominated me. My "falling" is simply a reaction to your action of pushing. The quantitative difference in our forces is easily determined here. However, this is not always the case. If we both live in a garden, and you deliberately eat all the fruit that I rely upon for my own sustenance, forcing me to plant a garden for myself in order to survive, it is the reactive force which is most creative, even though it has not dominated. Creativity and transformative ability are not equivalent to domination.

¹⁹Gilles Deleuze, 'Active and Reactive,' in *The New Nietzsche*, p. 82.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 83.

Furthermore, in the example I have used, it is not so clear which force is most active, since it is the reactive forces that have created something out of the destruction inflicted by the active force.

One must not underestimate the radically creative potential of "reactive forces". Only a being that recognizes boundaries and limitations in some way can deliberately strive to overcome them. Only those beings or forces that individuate themselves by separating their own will to power from that of life as a whole can then contribute to its stream of energy. At the same time, they would not need to act against this current if they were not at the same time part of it. Creativity emerges out of the interplay between active and reactive forces.

The virtue of Deleuze's analysis is that by differentiating between active and reactive forces in this way, he is able to recognize that they occur simultaneously and within the same body, whether this body be an individual, or a social group. On the one hand, the will to power represents a kind of primordial energy that simply "is." It is this energy that Deleuze would term "active." On the other hand, this energy is created by beings who lash out against the destructive aspects of this very energy. Viewed in this way, active and reactive cannot be so neatly separated and each becomes part of the other, despite their separateness. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that while they cannot be separated, neither one of these moments can be reduced to each other, for it is the fact that we experience them very differently that allows for their interplay. For

Deleuze, it is primarily the play of difference that constitutes life. My feeling of power is enhanced by effecting change on both myself and on others. However, Deleuze ignores the integrative aspect of the will to power. Ecstasy of growth is not merely a case of the "differential element of forces" manifesting itself as a "differential sensibility"²¹, as Deleuze suggests. While the overcoming of resistance facilitates growth, reaffirming our position in the cycle of life, my desire to grow both precedes and proceeds from the interaction with others. Nietzsche's pluralism should not impel us to obscure his "monism". In fact, the production of difference can be exhilarating not only because I have distinguished myself from other forces, but because in this act of differentiation I have participated in the process as a whole. Such a moment is both Dionysian and Apollonian. I have individuated myself demarcating my own territory, but also disindividuate myself by succumbing to the rhythm of life in doing so. As Bernstein argues, the world is a monism since everything is will to power but also a pluralism which is not subject to divine organization.²²

Thus, Nietzsche is not simply following the Hobbesian and Machiavellian model which pits individuals against each other in an incessant power struggle. These theorists presuppose a radical separation between individuals, denying all possibility of the existence of a unity that envelops them. If Nietzsche were merely echoing Hobbes, he

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 95.

²²John Andrew Bernstein, *Nietzsche's Moral Philosophy*, (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1987), p. 23.

would not continuously undermine the idea of a unified self or subject that precedes activity. For Hobbes, goods are simply the objects of our desire, and we aim to provide a continuous means for obtaining these goods. The power of one individual depends upon the relative capacity to secure its own ends; if my capacities exceed yours, I am more powerful than you. For Nietzsche it is not only my power over you, but my growth that is important. We do not merely do what is necessary for self preservation, but rather we strive to become more than we already are: "The difference lies in the fact that for Nietzsche the fundamental principle is not the goal but the process, not the momentary stasis attained by the satisfaction of the need or desire but the expenditure of energy itself."²³ By striving to be more than we already are, we are both individuating ourselves against others and taking our place in the stream of life. Growth is therefore not just a matter of domination over other beings, but a means by which we integrate ourselves with them.

B. The Historical and Social Will

Up to this point, I have used the concept of the will to power to examine the relationship between individuation and integration primarily in terms of the individual's relationship to nature and to other individuals. While I have outlined the challenge

²³Paul Patton, 'Power in Nietzsche and Hobbes,' p. 152.

Nietzsche poses for metaphysical presumptions about human subjectivity, I have not examined the social factors which are involved in its constitution. Indeed, his analysis of this matter is so complex, that it necessitates an extensive examination of its own. I will argue that the conscious "interpretation" of life which distinguishes human beings from other animals develops as a result of and in conjunction with social relationships. The processes of individuation and integration take on a new complexity since it is integration within a society that makes individuation against nature possible and to some extent it is the desire for integration with nature, that impels us to individuate ourselves against that same society. The subject is created out of power relations within social structures and does not precede them. Thus, an analysis of the *Genealogy of Morals* helps us to see the complexity of the will to power which cannot simply be reduced to categories of domination and servitude. The revolt of the reactive slaves, a dominated and "degenerating" group of individuals, had a much more powerful impact on "human nature" than the ebullient and powerful masters. Thus, Nietzsche acknowledges the important role that social relationships played in developing further our capacity to overcome ourselves.

However, the irony in Nietzsche's view, is that out of the very social relationships which have made self transcendence possible, emerges an ascetic morality which in his view attempts nothing less than to put a halt to the process of self overcoming itself. Nietzsche does not object to the imposition of social norms per se, but to a morality

which is absolutized, demanding of all individuals that they become the same. In order to encourage human beings to overstep their own moral barriers, Nietzsche conducts a genealogical inquiry into the history of morality itself. In tracing the history of morality Nietzsche robs it of its alleged universality. It is important to recognize that the method employed by Nietzsche does not purport to be "objective" since it aims to legitimate a process of continuous creation. However the exhortation to go "beyond good and evil" does not amount to a complete repudiation of morality since Nietzsche recognizes that morality played a vital role in constituting the self-interpretive subject, adding an extra dimension to the will to power.

Nietzsche uses the term 'genealogy' to distinguish his approach from more traditional historical enquiries which adopt a chronological view of history and try to find the root causes which spawn all future effects. By fitting everything into overarching schema, such approaches deny the arbitrary nature of processes at work and suggests that there is a grand design that is being unravelled through the march of history. Nietzsche's analysis stresses the contingent and haphazard nature of historical development in order to reflect a greater openness to change²⁴ and becoming. Foucault, in his commentary on Nietzsche maintains that he resists the "search for origins."²⁵ He makes much of the

²⁴Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 112.

²⁵Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy and History,' *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 77.

distinction between the words *Herkunft* and *Ursprung*. According to Foucault, *Ursprung* suggests that we can unearth the roots of modern identity, whereas the term *Herkunft* is much more fluid, refusing to focus on a single point of origin and examining the "various modes by which the human being has been created as a subject."²⁶ The German term *Ursprung* suggests a point of origin or source while *Herkunft* means "from where it comes" and is thus more ambiguous. There is no hidden meaning to be unveiled in Foucault's view. History is instead the process by which certain rules and norms, devoid of intrinsic meaning, are imposed. There is no necessary continuity to be found here, only a struggle between various life forces. The connection between them is not preplanned, but rather arbitrary. The act of imposition is not premeditated but instead is a constellation created out of the interaction between various forces. This is encapsulated by the term *Entstehung* which designates emergence from processes of struggle.

Nietzsche recognizes that if he is to convince his readers of the "legitimacy" of his own quest, he cannot simply hold up his model of the will to power as the yardstick by which to judge morality. His aim is to shatter the allegiance of people who subscribe to the moral worldview. Thus, he must launch an internal critique, which exposes the inconsistency festering within certain moral paradigms. He points out that morality falls short, not only by his standards, but by its own. Recognizing that agents rely upon internal consistency in order to engage in acts of interpretation, he hopes to unveil discrepancies

²⁶Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche contra Rousseau*, pp.120-121.

that could help to delegitimate morality. Secondly, Nietzsche must somehow forge a link between the moral worldview and his own, so that we begin to see the potential within morality for its own transcendence. Thirdly, he examines the conditions under which value judgements were made, in order to illustrate why certain practices have been adopted. This historical analysis helps to refute claims of universality. By responding to certain conditions, morality itself gave birth to new ones which demanded new solutions. According to Nietzsche, morality serves particular kinds of people living under particular kinds of conditions. These conditions change due to the imposition of morality, and therefore morality itself must be overcome.

Master and slave

Nietzsche's account of the development of morals begins with the master-slave dialectic. He relies heavily on etymology, tracing the process by which "material terms develop into moral ones."²⁷ According to Nietzsche, his reflection into the origins of the word 'good' lead him to the conclusion that the word is connected to aristocratic cultures: "The signpost to the *right* road was for me the question: what was the real etymological significance of the designations for 'good' coined in the various languages! I found they all led back to the *same conceptual transformation* -that everywhere 'noble,' 'aristocratic'

²⁷Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche Contra Rousseau*, p. 126.

in the social sense, is the basic concept from which 'good' in the sense of 'with aristocratic soul,' 'noble,' 'with a soul of a high order,' 'with a privileged soul' necessarily developed"(GM I.4). Powerful individuals established their own actions as good, not because of any intrinsic merit, but simply by virtue of the fact that *they* were behind them. They did not hold up external yardsticks by which to measure themselves.

Most analysts have assumed that the master-slave dynamic represents the struggle between two different types of people: the powerful and the powerless. I will argue that Nietzsche uses the master-slave dialectic metaphorically as well, and that the categories do not refer solely to the class distinction between the nobility and the plebeians. By conducting his own enquiry in this way, he demonstrates that *we* imbue categories with meaning, it does not inhere in the categories themselves. It is unclear whether or not the master-slave interplay occurs within the boundaries of a social organization or is prior to them. The ambiguity here is deliberate, for Nietzsche conjures up a metaphor that can be applied both to our transition from nature to culture as well as to the transition from political to moral forms of social organization. In fact, moral imperatives grow out of political ones. The overlap between the political and the natural suggests that the dynamic of nature is suspended within the political realm. Politics is simply a new way of heeding the voice of nature. Moreover, by pointing out that the transition is *from* the political *to* the moral he repudiates the notion that moral codes are necessary precursors to political structures and must be invoked to legitimate them. In so doing, he demonstrates a

decisively Machiavellian strain. Politics for Nietzsche emerges out of the propensity to dominate and the struggle to assert oneself over others. Here he differs from Rousseau who asserts that the appetite for domination is an acquired trait that develops in tandem with social dependence. Thus, the dialectic in Nietzsche between master and slave can be seen as both pre-social and post social.

Those individuals or groups who can exude greater strength will overwhelm and engulf weaker life forms, not because they harbour great evil, but simply because there is a natural tendency to discharge internal energy: "The knightly -aristocratic value judgments presupposed a powerful physicality, a flourishing, abundant, even overflowing health, together with that which serves to preserve it: war, adventure, hunting, dancing, war games and in general all that involves vigorous free, joyful activity"(GM I.7). This kind of spontaneous outburst can also represent human beings in their pre-reflective stages. It is an expression of the will to power as pathos, in its raw unmediated form. The pulse of life is felt by these masters, who seek to discharge it. The values of the masters are acted rather than thought. The master enjoys releasing his energy conceiving "the basic concept of the 'good' in advance and spontaneously out of himself"(GM I.11). Nietzsche intimates that the master has no need for reflection, because there are no obstacles that block his actions. Because he does not think, he comes very close to being an undivided self. His values are not universal, nor do they profess to change other people to meet their own standards. Their aim is not to assert control over others, but simply to act

immediately upon their instincts. Nietzsche thus points out that moral categories apply to human beings first, whose affirmation of their actions constitutes an affirmation of themselves.

Yet, at the same time, Nietzsche also equates the masters with an aristocratic class, which implies that certain customs have already become ritualized and entrenched within a social order. Thus, the effervescent spontaneity exercised by these knights has to be secured by setting up structures of dominance. Nietzsche makes it clear that the unconstrained release of energy can only be achieved within a political hierarchy. If we compare this to Rousseau's proto-human, one can detect similarities but also marked differences. Like the protohuman, these masters do not confront external obstacles. However, they are not content simply to tend to their needs but rather have an insatiable desire to release energy which overwhelms others who step across their path. There is no natural balance in place which prevents them from harming others.

Yet, while the masters do not reflect on their actions per se, they are cognizant of the distance that separates them from the weaker beings that they engulf and out of this distance they confirm their own goodness: "Rather it was the good themselves, that is to say the noble, powerful, high stationed and high-minded, who felt and established themselves and their actions as good, that is, of the first rank, in contradistinction to all the low, low-minded common and plebeian. It was out of the pathos of distance that they first seized the right to create values and to coin names for values"(GM I.2). Thus, the

comparisons with their "inferiors" gives them satisfaction. However, they have no need for self evaluation as long as their actions are unimpeded and successful: "Everything it knows as part of itself it honours: such a morality is self-glorification. In the foreground there is the feeling of fullness, of power that seeks to overflow"(BGE 260). The pathos of distance necessitates the existence of some kind of political order which enabled the masters to notice differences between themselves and their inferiors. Such an order allowed for the kind of repetition of experience which made the masters cognizant of these differences.

The slaves, whose actions are blocked by the masters, are prevented from releasing their own life energy, and thus negate the outside world that is the source of their misery, giving voice to their *ressentiment*: "While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is 'outside', what is 'different', what is 'not itself' and this NO is its creative deed"(GM 1.10). The slaves draw the sharp distinction between themselves and the outside world, since they are threatened by it. Unlike the masters, their identity is completely dependent on others. Yet, because of this they are also aware of their own boundaries. Like Rousseau, Nietzsche holds that there is no separation from nature as long as nature is not menacing. The slaves denounce the masters' act of domination because it frustrates their

own efforts to release energy: "The slave is at bottom a frustrated master."²⁸ Their negation also requires the observation of consistent patterns of domination. The psychological makeup of the slaves and the masters is not significantly different according to Nietzsche since both share the desire to grow and expand. They too feel the pulse of life, but are unable to act upon it.

Because the weak also wish to affirm themselves but cannot do so based on their own capacities, they must negate the obstacles they face. It is interesting to note that they are prevented by nature from succumbing to its Dionysian forces. The pulse of life that runs through them is undercut by coming into contact with more powerful creatures who exude energy of their own. By negating the outside world they separate themselves from the natural world, for instead of simply perishing due to their natural shortcomings, they determine that the natural world is not as it should be. Such negation is a precondition of morality for it is the beginning of the distinction between the 'ought' and the 'is'. Disadvantaged by their physical inferiority, the slaves are forced to conceptualize. They have need for utopias, or a world to strive for that negates the existing one because they are deprived of the capacity for self expression. All that is evil is imputed to the master, and the master's opposite, namely the slave is good. The master's action is chosen, as is the slave's inaction. Thus, Nietzsche insists that an illusion lies at the root of morality.

²⁸Thomas Pangle, 'The Roots of Contemporary Nihilism and its Political Consequences according to Nietzsche,' *Review of Politics* January 1983 Vol XLV no 1, p. 57.

The slave invents the will out of his defiant opposition to the master and his own inaction. He wilfully deludes himself into thinking that his inaction is a conscious choice. The ability to *will* action or choose action, derives from the inability to act. The slave becomes a self-interpretive being, because his actions are continuously being thwarted by the master. In a sense, his frustrated will to pathos leads him towards the will to power as interpretation. Nietzsche attests that the distinction between the doer and the deed is intended to undermine the powerful physicality of the master and to saddle them with a responsibility for their deeds: "To demand of strength that it should *not* express itself is strength, that it should *not* be willing to overcome, a desire to throw down, a willing to become master.. is just as absurd as to demand of weakness that it should express itself as strength...For just as the popular mind separates the lightning from its flash and takes the latter for an *action*, for the operation of a subject called lightning, so popular morality also separates strength from expressions of strength, as if there existed a neutral substratum behind the strong man, which was *free* to express strength or not to do so. But there is no such substratum; there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting becoming; the 'doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed"(GM I.13). Morality, far from being rooted in altruism is born out of the selfish demands of the slaves. Thus, the slave's handicap gives birth to the ability to *choose* action and to interpret it. The division between the desire to act and the inability to do so marks the genesis of the will. External divisions are internalized. The capacity for choosing action demands that I have to be able to step back

from my actions. This distance is forced upon the slaves, and their necessity marks a step towards realizing a new kind of freedom.

The slaves' illusion leaves a permanent imprint on not only the slaves but the masters. Excessive force by masters over slaves was no longer sufficient; domination had to be justified not only to the slaves but to the masters themselves. Slaves had forced masters to adopt an external yardstick by which to measure their actions. Furthermore, they engineered an internal split which pitted a raging Dionysian desire against sober reflection. However, in doing so they did not merely stunt growth, but redirected it by inventing a new "conceptual" arena where they too could grow. By limiting one aspect of existence, they open up another.

In a sense the distinction between master and slave parallels Rousseau's distinction between *amour-de-soi* and *amour-propre*. *Amour-de-soi* is simply a complete immersion in the pulse of life while *amour-propre* refers to the tendency to depend on others for one's self identity. However, for Rousseau, *amour-de-soi* placed natural limitations on the behaviour of the proto-human, while the master morality is characterized by a complete absence of limitation. Furthermore, for Rousseau, *amour-propre* is born out of cooperative relations between people. Initially we compare ourselves to others, not because we are hostile to them, but because we must cooperate with them in order to survive. Nietzsche insists that such concern for others has no basis in nature, and arises from a position of weakness. Yet, while for Rousseau, the deception that poisoned *amour-propre* was born

with a rise of inequality brought on by exchange relations, for Nietzsche it is bred by the internal conflict between our natural urges and the new 'external standards' which we impose on ourselves, and therefore is intrinsic to *amour-propre* itself.

The slave, who is forced to go beyond the existing world which only suffocates him, also precipitates the quest for meaning. Only in the context of suffering do we look for meaning in our existence. The frustration of our desires gives rise to a feeling of estrangement which we overcome by constructing a fictitious world in which we can be at home. We are only impelled to search for meaning in the context of suffering. Again we can see here the connection between nihilism and meaning for it is the agony ensuing from my inability to act upon my instincts that sends me on the quest for explanation. Once this fictitious world has been created, I must also embark on the path of self overcoming in order to make myself conform to its standards. Such a bestowal of meaning upon existence is at once an affirmation and a negation for it is born out of the denial of the immediate world but at the same time, makes it possible for us to affirm it.

Culture and politics

Much of the confusion surrounding the metaphor of the master and slave arises from Nietzsche's tendency to attribute the spontaneous, pre-reflective outpouring of energy to an aristocratic class. Habermas assumes that this reflects Nietzsche's desire to return

to an aristocratic political order.²⁹ However, Nietzsche is not affirming the legitimacy of aristocratic rule, but rather pointing to the arbitrary manner in which such rule was established. The nobility did not enjoy its position of privilege because of its inherent legitimacy, but rather due to their superiority in brute force. In making this link, Nietzsche also suggests that the political struggle between social classes mimics but does not transcend the struggle against nature. Within the social arena, it is not merely the physical inability to act on one's instincts that gives rise to the slave's resentment, but the entire conceptual apparatus which the masters use to legitimate their rule. Once the master-slave relationship is assessed within the context of a political order, the categories of master and slave become more nebulous and in many respects converge.

In effect, they can only be recognized as masters once they have encountered the resistance of the slaves who challenged their rule. The bully who knocks me down on the sidewalk is not my master unless he establishes a means by which he can do this on a continuous basis. In order to exercise political power, the masters must learn from the slave to constrain their actions and make prudent calculations in order to set the conditions that prevail within the order that they control. This is necessary in order to offset challenges to their power. A degree of predictability is needed to guarantee the longevity of their rule. Perhaps the interaction with the slave whets the master's appetite for a more

²⁹ see Jürgen Habermas, 'The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Rereading *Dialectic of Enlightenment*,' *New German Critique*, 26 (Spring-Summer 1982).

institutionalized form of dominance. Prior to experiencing the slave's resistance, the master did not truly command but trampled upon another creature by overwhelming him with his strength. Once this creature began to show signs of rebellion, the desire to establish a more consistent basis for domination was evoked and customs were imposed. Brute force was no longer sufficient and the masters had to underpin their domination with a system of rituals. Their rule could not simply be imposed upon the slave, but had to be made part of the slave's identity. To do this they relied on the habituation of custom, which lends "familiarity, stability and continuity to the world."³⁰ Patterns of behaviour are imposed on individuals by these dominant classes: "The oldest 'state' thus appeared as a fearful tyranny, as an oppressive and remorseful machinery, working until this raw material of people and semi-animals was at last not only thoroughly kneaded and pliant but also *formed*"(GM II.17). Custom counteracts the disarray and confusion that mark the natural world. The repetition of symbols navigates us through life, providing a stable framework from which we can derive our own individual identity. Thus, unlike Rousseau, Nietzsche suggests that the community can only be held together by force. The social order is not premised on affective ties between citizens but is imposed upon them. Power, not need, acts as the social cement.

Culture not only held together the social order, but imbued the individual with a sense of continuity. Before the human animal can be transformed into a creature that is

³⁰Mark Warren, *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, p. 48

capable of making promises and taking responsibility for its own actions, it must first be made calculable and uniform. When human beings are simply living in accordance with the rhythms of life, they still have the capacity to forget. This means that they remain open to new stimuli and can endure nature's cycle of creation and destruction. It enables us to affirm life without allowing a seething resentment against it to build up: "To close the doors and windows of consciousness for a time; to remain undisturbed by the noise and struggle of our underworld of utility organs working with and against one another; a little quietness, a little *tabula rasa* of the consciousness, to make room for new things, above all for the nobler functions and functionaries, for regulation, foresight, premeditation...-that is the purpose of active forgetfulness, which is like a doorkeeper, a preserver of psychic order, repose and etiquette: so that it will be immediately obvious how there could be no happiness, no cheerfulness, no hope, no pride no *present* without forgetfulness"(GM II.1).

To enforce continuity upon the human creature, a memory had to be seared into her: "If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to *hurt* stays in the memory"(GM II.3). Our conscience is not the reflection of our most divine attributes, but becomes the upshot of the most cruel and base instincts: "All these prerogatives and showpieces of man: how dearly they have been bought! how much blood and cruelty lie at the bottom of all 'good things' "(GM II.3).

Bad conscience

Once the memory has been cultivated, the daily rituals of custom can be observed. Nevertheless, these routines act against the instinctual desire for increased growth, and thus create an agonizing division within man. When the gestures that have to be performed have become habit, they become dissociated from the masters that imposed them. Thus, entrapped within the walls of custom, individuals have no outlet for their instincts and turn them inwards against themselves, deprived of an external enemy who can become the scapegoat for their discontent: "The man who, from lack of external enemies and resistances and forcibly confined to the oppressive narrowness and punctiliousness of custom, impatiently lacerated, persecuted, gnawed at, assaulted...this deprived creature, racked with homesickness for the wild, who had to turn himself into an adventure, a torture chamber, an uncertain and dangerous wilderness-this fool, this yearning and desperate prisoner became the inventor of the bad conscience"(GM II.16).

The divisions created by the walls that encircle the individuals provide a continuous basis for struggle. On the one hand, she feels part of the cultural home that has been made for her, but on the other hand, her nostalgia for the "wild" is a source of ongoing torment. An internal battle is waged between the tyranny of custom trying to enforce a rigid consistency, and the undisciplined forces of nature. This is very similar to the dynamic described by Rousseau where the voice of nature reminds us that we are not quite

at home within our civil order, and provides a constant basis for its regeneration. It is this division, which gives rise to the need to carve out our own identity. We individuate ourselves because we long to be integrated into two realms at once. The self requires something that she can feel a part of before she can begin the process of disentangling herself from the whole in order to forge her own identity. The capacity of individuals to individuate themselves is a function of the community's efforts to ward off the threatening aspects of nature: "If we place ourselves at the end of this tremendous process, where the tree at last brings forth fruit, where society and the morality of custom at last reveal *what* they have simply been the means to: then we discover that the ripest fruit is the *sovereign individual* , like only to himself liberated again from morality of custom, autonomous and supramoral"(GM II.2). For Nietzsche, harmony is not something that is endemic to nature, but is a concept that develops as a result of the constraints of social barriers. One can only feel *part* of something when one is aware of its boundaries. The purely natural man, who is oblivious to any boundaries could not feel *part* of the natural world.

However, the ultimate sovereignty of custom depends upon its moralization and had to hold sway over the individual, even when she steps outside the community's boundaries. This meant that rituals had to be imbued with an intrinsic legitimacy that was not dependent upon the community in which they had arisen. Morality demanded a kind of universalization of custom. According to Nietzsche, it was in the realm of legal obligation that morality was born: "It was in *this* sphere then, the sphere of legal

obligations, that the moral conceptual world of 'guilt,' 'conscience,' 'duty,' 'sacredness of duty' had its origins: its beginnings were, like the beginnings of everything great on earth, soaked in blood thoroughly and for a long time"(GM II.6). He argues that the moral concept of guilt (*Schuld*) develops out of the legal sphere of debts (*Schulden*).

Nietzsche's account of the creditor-debtor relationship points out that social responsibility begins with a measurement of the self by external standards which are imposed on individuals by the more powerful forces in society: "...the feeling of guilt, of personal obligation, had its origin, as we saw, in the oldest and most primitive personal relationship, that between buyer and seller, creditor and debtor: it was here that one person first encountered another person, that one person first *measured himself* against another"(GM II.8). Numbers provided an abstract uniformity that allowed for a universalization of value: "Perhaps our word 'man' still expresses something of precisely *this* feeling of self-satisfaction: man designated himself as the creature that measures values, evaluates and measures, as the 'valuating animal as such"(GM II.8). Punishment was imposed on individuals, not because they deserved it, but rather in an attempt to restore equilibrium. By repaying injury with injury, a balance was restructured. We repay debts because of the fear of punishment that is held over us.

The community retains this relationship, standing "to its members in that same vital basic relation, that of the creditor to his debtors"(GM II.9). The individual who refuses to acknowledge his debt to the community, or breaks its conventions is thrust out and

ostracized. However, with an increase in the power and security of the community "the penal law always becomes more moderate"(GM II.11). The standards which prevail within a community are always imposed by the powerful. In an effort to deflect the *ressentiment* of the weak they invent laws: "From a historical point of view, law represents on earth-let it be said to the dismay of the above-named agitator...-the struggle *against* the reactive feelings, the war conducted against them on the part of the active and aggressive powers who employed some of their strength to impose measure and bounds upon the excesses of the reactive pathos and to compel it to come to terms"(GM II.11). By codifying their own power in legal documents, the powerful depersonalized their own power, and therefore robbed their subjects of a target for their *ressentiment*. Furthermore, it cast a shroud of universality over particular conventions. This paved the way for the internalization of moral codes and the directing of *ressentiment* against the self: "All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward* -this is what I call the *internalization* of man: thus it was that man first developed what was later called his 'soul'"(GM II.16). Politics was the basis of morality; morality was not the basis of politics.

Punishment alone could not breed the bad conscience, since the demands of the creditor's are still seen as external impositions: "It is precisely among criminals and convicts that the sting of conscience is extremely rare; prison and penitentiaries are *not* the kind of hotbed in which the species of gnawing worm is likely to flourish...Generally speaking, punishment makes men hard and cold; it concentrates; it sharpens the feeling of

alienation; it strengthens the power of resistance"(GM II.14). The transition that is made from the political to the moral is presented as a political ploy by priests who act in the interests of expanding their own power base. They internalize social norms by an act of extreme externalization. By maintaining that everyone is eternally indebted to God, a figure who is far beyond the grasp of man , they can sustain perpetual guilt. The fact that we cannot *see* God prohibits us from feeling resentment towards him, and so this resentment is redirected inwards and begins to infect our sense of self. In order to internalize these norms, they had to be forcibly divorced from their cultural and linguistic roots and imputed with an intrinsic legitimacy. The physical absence of God forces us to turn to that which is closest to us, namely ourselves. We believe ourselves to be responsible for our own suffering: "The advent of the Christian God, as the maximum god attained so far was therefore accompanied by the maximum feeling of guilty indebtedness on earth"(GM II.20). However, this suffering becomes a form of repayment that will lead towards the eternal bliss of the afterlife and so we wage continuous war against the sensuous and the instinctual: "He apprehends in 'God' the ultimate antithesis of his own ineluctable animal instincts; he reinterprets these animal instincts themselves as a form of guilt before God"(GM II.22). As a result, we begin to try to unleash ourselves from our natural moorings.

However, this internal split is also replete with promise, for only the individual who experiences it can learn to become truly sovereign and accept responsibility for

himself. Thus, Nietzsche remarks: "Bad conscience is an illness, there is no doubt about that, but an illness as pregnancy is an illness"(GM II.19). The internalization of external norms creates an internal rift which forces the individual to choose her course of action; she can no longer merely act on impulse. In Nietzsche's view, ideally, the efforts to transform oneself in an attempt to comply with normative standards would demonstrate the importance of self creation. The process of changing in order to meet these standards would eventually lead to their transcendence.

Asceticism: an inflated will to power

The potential of the bad conscience was not realized in Nietzsche's view, because of the heavy burden of guilt which Christianity imposed on human beings. Since their desires and ambitions were interpreted as a turning away from God, Nietzsche maintains that a curtain of conformity descends upon us and we are paralysed by our "guilt before God"(GM II.22). By identifying human beings themselves as the source of their own suffering and denigrating life, the priests enabled the weak to flourish: "*the ascetic ideal springs from the protective instinct of a degenerating life* which tries by all means to sustain itself and fight for its existence..the ascetic ideal is an artifice for the *preservation of life*"(GM III.13). Suffering is now imbued with meaning since it constitutes an atonement for past sins and thus will be rewarded in the afterlife. While senseless

suffering cannot be endured, meaningful pain is not only tolerated but glorified: "He receives a hint, he receives from his sorcerer, the ascetic priest, the *first* hint as to the cause of his suffering: he must seek it in *himself*, in some *guilt*, in a piece of the past, he must understand his suffering as a *punishment*"(GM III.20).

In fact, we attempt to expunge all residues of sensuality and ambition, which we are told constitute the wellspring of our agony. This is a Sisyphean task, since success would spell the end of our very existence: "We can no longer conceal from ourselves *what* is expressed by all that willing which has taken its direction from the ascetic ideal: this hatred of the human, and even more of the animal, and more still of the material, this horror of the senses, of reason itself, this fear of happiness and beauty, this longing to get away from all appearance, change, becoming, death , wishing, from longing itself-all this means -let us dare to grasp it- a *will to nothingness*, an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental presuppositions of life; but it is and remains a *will*"(GM III. 28). The ploy of ascetic priests is ingenious, according to Nietzsche, for it does not offer the promise of eradicating suffering, which would be an impossible mission, but rather furnishes the weak with an incentive and a reason to continue living not only in spite of but because of their anguish. It also presents them with an impossible goal, to rid themselves of their earthly attachments, and thus they can engage in a kind of perverse striving which tries to eliminate all the elements that make striving possible.

The problem with asceticism is that the weak infect even the strong and succeed

in "poisoning the consciences of the fortunate with their own misery"(GM III. 14). Their will to power differs markedly from that of nobles who do not attempt to mould all others in their own image, revelling instead in their difference. Conversely, the task the slaves set for themselves is to eliminate distinction and reduce everyone to the same level: "They walk among us as embodied reproaches, as warnings to us-as if health, well constitutedness, strength, pride, and the sense of power were in themselves necessarily vicious things"(GM III. 15). This marks the birth of the herd mentality, which Nietzsche scorned. According to Nietzsche, the weak are more ambitious than the healthy and strong, for they demand that everyone live in accordance with their standards: "The will of the weak to represent *some* form of superiority, their instinct for devious paths to tyranny over the healthy- where can it not be discovered. this will to power of the weakest"(GM III. 14). Furthermore, it obscures its own origins, presenting itself as truth rather than interpretation, and thus ascribing to itself an all inclusive universalism: "The ascetic ideal has a *goal* -this goal is so universal that all the other interests of human existence, seem when compared with it, petty and narrow; it interprets epochs, nations and men inexorably with a view to this one goal; it permits no other interpretation , no other goal, it rejects, denies, affirms and sanctions solely from the point of view of *its* interpretation...it submits to no power, it believes in its own predominance over every other power, in its absolute *superiority of rank* over every other power-it believes that no power exists on earth that does not first have to receive a meaning, a right to exist, a

value, as a tool of the ascetic ideal, as a way and means to *its goal, to one goal*"(GM III. 23). However, by rejecting all other influences, ascetic morality manifests a will to power that attempts to suffocate itself, for it scorns the pluralistic differences that maintain the momentum of life. Once power differentials are no longer noticeable, the incentive to grow also quickly fades. This, trumpets Nietzsche, tongue in cheek, is immoral: "Moralties must be forced to bow first of all before the *order of rank*; their presumption must be brought home to their conscience-until they finally reach agreement that it *is immoral* to say: 'what is right for one is fair for the other'"(BGE 221).

Christian thinking had engineered a split between body and spirit , sensuality and spirituality. It spurned life as a whole, turning it against itself. However, such denigration of the body was not unique to Christianity, and according to Nietzsche had tainted philosophy since its inception: "As long as there are philosophers on earth, and wherever there have been philosophers, there unquestionably exists a peculiar philosophers' irritation at and rancour against sensuality"(GM III. 7). Under the pretence of spurning egoism, such asceticism exalts it, for it represents an attempt to unhinge the self from all that is "external", glorifying it in its empty purity: "The philosopher sees in it an optimum condition for the highest and boldest spirituality and smiles-he does *not* deny 'existence' , he rather affirms *his* existence and *only* his existence, and this perhaps to the point at which he is not far from harbouring the impious wish: 'Let the world perish, but let there be philosophy, the philosopher, me"(GM III. 7). Thus, the philosopher tries to claim for

himself a realm of utter independence. He is infected by a will to power that seeks to overcome everything. He does not realize that in doing so, he is depriving himself of the material with which to overcome and indeed is completely eviscerating himself.

Nehamas asserts that there is a substantive difference between the moral ascetics and the philosophical ascetics. According to Nehamas philosophical ascetics abstain from pleasures in order to secure other pleasures which are valued more highly. This is simply utility in which one good is exchanged for a more highly valued one.³¹ Moral asceticists deny life in its entirety "involved in the effort to distance themselves from life as much as they possibly can and to renounce the goods they already possess for the otherworldly rewards which, from Nietzsche's naturalistic viewpoint, are nothing at all."³² However, while the goals of the two types of asceticism may differ, the effect is the same: a subject stripped of all its "external" attributes is just as empty as a subject that denies life altogether. In fact, Nietzsche points out that even a "nature turned against itself" serves life for the ascetic priest tries to find a means to encourage people to continue to live. Life becomes bearable because we know it is only temporary: "It will be immediately obvious that such a self-contradiction as the ascetic appears to represent, 'life against life,' is, physiologically considered and not merely psychologically, a simple absurdity... Let us replace it with a brief formulation of the facts of the matter: *the ascetic ideal springs from*

³¹Alexandre Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, p. 116.

³²*Ibid*; p.117

the protective instinct of a degenerating life which tries by all means to sustain itself and to fight for its existence...the ascetic ideal is an artifice for the *preservation* of life"(GM III. 13).

Nietzsche draws parallels between the hubris of the philosopher and the alleged humility of the ascetic Christian. The attempt to disentangle ourselves from our earthly roots in order to approach God masks the desire to become God. We wage an assault on nature in order to assume God's role: "our entire modern way of life, insofar as it is not weakness without power and consciousness of power, has the appearance of sheer *hubris* and godlessness: for the longest time it was precisely the reverse of those things we hold in honour today that had a good conscience on its side and God for its guardian. Our whole attitude toward nature, the way we violate her with the aid of machines and the heedless inventiveness of our technicians and engineers, is *hubris*"(GM III. 9). Paradoxically godlessness is an outgrowth of Christianity, according to Nietzsche. This explains Nietzsche's proclamation that not only is God dead, but "we have killed him." The disrespect that Christianity preaches for the natural invites us to exert our mastery over it. The aversion to sensuality soon eviscerates spirituality as conquest over nature becomes an overriding goal. Furthermore, Nietzsche asserts that the desire to transform everyone into equals, as ascetic morality sets out to do, masks a latent desire for absolute mastery.

Those who lash out against their body and its sensuality are attempting to destroy

all vestiges of our dependence on nature. They castigate themselves in an attempt to achieve a complete overcoming of the self, thereby destroying the vehicle of their own overcoming: "As men of frightful ages, they did this by using frightful means: cruelty toward themselves, inventive self-castigation-this was the principal means these power-hungry hermits and innovators of ideas required to overcome the gods and tradition in themselves, so as to be able to *believe* in their own innovations. I recall the famous story of King Vishvamitra, who through millennia of self torture acquired such a feeling of power and self confidence that he endeavoured to build a *new heaven* -the uncanny symbol of the most ancient and most recent experience of philosophers on earth: whoever has at some time build a 'new heaven' has found the power to do so only in his *own hell*"(GM III. 10). Because of the ascetic's attempt to shield himself from all other forces that may leave their mark on him, they strive to overcome the process of overcoming itself.

According to Nietzsche, Christianity had taken the avoidance of suffering to such extremes, that it had also managed to rid life of all its joy. The attempt to expunge suffering had impelled it to try to minimize all "external influences" upon the self, convincing it that in so doing it was approaching God. It tried to prevent individuals from experiencing the tensions that ravaged their soul. Without these tensions, human beings could neither try to integrate themselves into their world, nor differentiate themselves from it. To avoid suffering, it had to prevent human beings from living. Nietzsche does not condone absolute mastery, but rather supports a dynamic interplay between command and

obedience that the ascetic struggles to dispense with by monopolizing mastery. However, there is a profound irony that underlies the ascetic's quest, for absolute mastery and absolute servitude become indistinguishable, since the only means by which one can maintain complete control is through the complete destruction of the self. Slave morality had potential in Nietzsche's view, because it led to the possibility for self reflective action. It had given rise to a complex array of internal tensions: the need to integrate oneself into the community, the need to surrender to instinctive desires, and the need to distance oneself from the community and nature. Since these tensions could never be overcome, they could be a source of ongoing development. As the struggle between master and slave itself demonstrated, inequality could actually facilitate the development of human beings. The problem with Christianity in Nietzsche's view, is that it makes all tension a sign of human frailty and evil, rather than celebrating its potential. It prevented the weak from finding ways of overcoming their position of weakness by reducing everyone to their position. Asceticism was the attempt to do away with the complexities of the self. Nietzsche's objection was not just that the weak infected the strong with their suffocating nihilism, but that the weak were denied the possibility for overcoming their own weakness. Weakness was camouflaged as strength, and a self that shielded itself from "external" influences was considered strong. For Nietzsche, Christianity had attempted nothing short of putting an end to the process of becoming itself. It had forced human beings to will their own destruction. The ascetic element had led slave morality astray

for it refused to acknowledge that the capacity to transform depended on an openness to being transformed. Negation must be accompanied by affirmation. The *total* obedience to God advocated by the priests easily slides into total mastery and constitutes a complete negation.

This kind of morality had another ominous side-effect in Nietzsche's view. Not only did it have to proclaim that internal tensions were evil, but it also had to eradicate differences between individuals in order to prevent growth. I would maintain that what Nietzsche rejects is not morality itself, but a morality that claims to be universal in scope: "I negate a type of morality that has become prevalent and predominant as morality itself—the morality of decadence, or, more concretely, *Christian* morality"(EH XIV: 4). If human beings were not to spur each other's development they had to be homogenized. For him, the cry for equality was an ill-conceived attempt to reduce all human beings to the lowest common denominator so that they could not pose challenges to each other. Equality and homogenization were synonymous in Nietzsche's view. This did not strengthen the community but rather enfeebled it. Without tension between individuals, there is no incentive to make themselves part of the whole. The effort to rid human beings of their differences meant that they had no reason to join together. Asceticism had resulted in an atomization of human beings, rather than generating a community that was predicated on universal love. For Nietzsche, universal love was simply a catchword for universal contempt.

Such a devaluation of life has disastrous consequences according to Nietzsche:

"The ascetic treats life as a wrong road on which one must finally walk back to the point where it begins, or as a mistake that is put right by deeds...Read from a distant star, that majuscule script of our earthly existence would perhaps lead to the conclusion that the earth was the distinctively *ascetic planet*, a nook of disgruntled, arrogant and offensive creatures filled with a profound disgust at themselves, at the earth, at all life, who inflict as much pain on themselves as they possibly can"(GM III. 11). The will of the ascetic has tried to silence the voice of nature reverberating within him, and he has drowned in his own puritanical zeal: "What then is this struggle of the Christian 'against nature'? .. It is nature against something that is also nature"(WP 228). The danger of this unique European brand of nihilism, is that it has transformed the desire for growth into a desire to stagnate. By trying to silence the sensual within oneself, one closes oneself off to the pulse of life and suffocates Dionysus. The elimination of all differences between people extirpates all stimuli for growth. The weak need the strong in order to force them to conceptualize. By eliminating strength, they also eliminate weakness. The catastrophic result is a human being that is neither master nor slave, neither active nor reflective. Nietzsche does not condone domination for its own sake, as is all too often assumed. Rather he fears that the effort to rid the world of domination completely, is the most grotesque form of domination. Human beings have manifested an eerie power, namely the ability to turn the will to power against itself. By insisting that everyone succumb completely to a single

absolute law, asceticism had tried to sever completely the connection between integration and individuation. The life energy that ran through human beings was condemned and human beings were encouraged to repress it. They were convinced that their own destruction did not matter, since they were guaranteed eternal life and so did not have to individuate themselves. Such individuation itself manifested the sin of pride. In fact, the less they struggled to assert themselves, the greater their chances of gaining eternal life. Ironically, they were offered eternal life by being told not to live. Nietzsche is horrified by the image of nothingness that engulfs him. According to Nietzsche, the asceticism launched by Christianity has plunged human beings into the deepest abyss. It would require the most superhuman of efforts to extricate them from this morass.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE PHILOSOPHY OF LIMITS: NIETZSCHE'S ZARATHUSTRA

Zarathustra's down-going

The pervasive nihilism which earmarked modernity provides the setting for *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which is perhaps the most provocative and controversial of Nietzsche's works. The harsh ascetizing trend of Christianity, which in Nietzsche's view eviscerated the human spirit, is to be overcome. The abrasive rhetoric that had marked the *Genealogy of Morals* is replaced by the gentler narrative of Zarathustra, who endures moments of both tortuous despair and exhilarating ecstasy. As I pointed out in Chapter Six, according to Nietzsche, it was hubris and the refusal to accept one's own fallibility, rather than humility that led to the excesses of Christianity. The pursuit of a life devoid of suffering impelled individuals to retreat into themselves, shutting out in the name of a stale spirituality the "external" influences that could be a source of agony. According to Nietzsche, only by acknowledging our own limits, and celebrating our particularity can we learn to both participate in and shape the undulating rhythm of life. Spirituality is not condemned, but resuscitated by reestablishing our connection to nature and its "ring of recurrence." Our experience of life is always filtered through interpretations, and we must come to realize that our concepts are merely metaphors that assist us in navigating our way through the turbulent currents of life. We should not cling to them in desperation, but be

prepared to reinterpret them as new challenges and opportunities arise. Thus, the potential *Übermensch* learns to go *beyond* himself, because he realizes that his own approach is always a limited one and can never grasp life in its totality. However, this limitation is also the fountainhead of his joy, because it opens the door to new experiences. Because he cannot capture life, he can keep on living. Our finitude is what makes us eternal. Nietzsche makes us poignantly aware of the fact that the greatest difficulty in being human, is recognizing that we are human.

In order to rid himself of the excesses of an ascetic culture, Zarathustra has led a secluded existence, participating in and observing nature, "freed" from contact with other human beings. Nietzsche does not value such isolation in itself, but deems it necessary in order to reexperience the Apollonian and Dionysian aspects of nature since the community he comes from has stifled both. He has been living on a mountaintop alone with his animals. His "return" to nature, like that of Emile, teaches him to recognize his own limits. While the mountaintop affords him a magnificent view of the valley below, it also forces him to gaze upon the sun, which rises and sets in a daily rhythm. It illuminates the earth, but its illumination is temporary and must give way to darkness. To get to the mountaintop in order to be able to enjoy this panorama, he must navigate his way through the labyrinth of trees. He learns to both immerse himself in nature in Dionysian fashion and to distance himself from it by viewing it from afar. Thus, he recognizes that he is not beyond nature, but an integral part of it.

Yet, the sun, the ocean and the mountains, while affording Zarathustra with natural (rather than divine) inspiration, cannot listen to his words nor can they respond to him. His sole companions on his mountain are the eagle and the serpent. While they cannot share Zarathustra's insights, they are metaphors for the kinds of human characteristics that he admires. The eagle represents not only pride, but soars high above the earth, manifesting an independent spirit that is willing to depart from entrenched customs and traditions. He is also an Apollonian creature that glides through the realm of light, descending periodically in order to pounce on his prey. Conversely, the snake is wedded to the earth and is a symbol of sly cunning. Each animal contains traces of the other. The eagle, who bathes in Apollonian light is carried by the wind in Dionysian fashion. The serpent who is closer to the earth, uses deceit and cleverness to survive and "elevate" himself above the limitations of his anatomy. Their entanglement represents the rejection of rigid dualisms that had shaped the Western metaphysical tradition.

Thus Spoke Zarathustra opens with an ode to the sun that is an ironic inversion of Plato's cave metaphor. The sun would be nothing without those for whom it shines (Z P.1) It is not Good in itself, but derives its significance from the impact it has on other creatures and organisms.¹ It is important to recognize that the sun is not Zarathustra's god,

¹Stanley Rosen argues that the sun resembles Socrates's idea of the Good. Zarathustra's action is initiated by it, since it is the recreative force of nature. The sun is nature itself "moving, changing, repeating itself by manifesting its inner diversity." *The Mask of Enlightenment*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 25. However, I would argue that for Nietzsche, the sun is only one force in nature, and although it may be a metaphor for recreation,

and by addressing it with the familiar *Du*, Zarathustra emphasizes that there is nothing in the heavens that is superior to him. At the same time, he recognizes that he is not superior to anything in the heavens. Furthermore, the light of the sun is not the sole generator of life. Light could not exist without darkness. Zarathustra's cave is close to the sun, symbolizing the entanglement of darkness and light. Here the Apollonian and Dionysian elements are brought together, and Nietzsche demonstrates the importance of wandering between them. Zarathustra desires the sun after being sequestered in the cave and at the same time, seeks the cave after he has been exposed to the glaring blaze of the sun. The cave's darkness engulfs him, while the sun's brightness individuates him. Neither is complete in itself and it is in alternating between them that we find meaning. Hence Zarathustra descends from the glorious heights of the mountain, which are closer to the sun, towards the valley. This is a direct inversion of the philosopher's journey out of the cave and into the dazzling light described by Plato. Nietzsche, unlike Plato refuses to privilege light over darkness.

Zarathustra's "communion" with nature provides him with the psychological arsenal that he needs in order to forge new links with human beings. Once entrapped within the boundaries of a stagnant society, we have to turn to nature in order to rediscover the forces of life. Zarathustra seeks companions that can participate with him in the process of individuation and integration. Thus, he longs for a community that he can

it is not its source. Such a source, for Nietzsche is not identifiable.

both integrate himself into and that at the same time will act as a stimulus to his own individuation, by continuously challenging his own boundaries. While nature can make him aware of the interconnection between individuation and disindividuation, its ability to challenge his boundaries is limited and he needs to engage with other human beings. It becomes clear that Nietzsche is exploring the possibility of a community that is not based on force alone but allows individuals to engage with each other in the process of becoming. No longer is the relationship between integration and individuation presented as something that occurs only in relation to nature. Zarathustra does not aim to implant new codes and laws, but to encourage a kind of incessant renewal which incorporates sensual, emotional, and intellectual aspects of our being. He wants this not only for the sake of the community, but for himself.

Yet, Zarathustra is continuously frustrated in his efforts, because the ascetic culture remains deeply rooted in the minds of its citizens. They tenaciously cling to their moral truths, because they are afraid of falling into the pit of meaninglessness. It is interesting to note that Zarathustra is named after the Persian prophet who "was the first to consider the fight of good and evil the very wheel in the machinery of things: the transposition of morality into the metaphysical realm, as a force, cause and end in itself" (EH XV. 3). Since Zarathustra created the most "calamitous error" he is also invested with the responsibility for overcoming it. However, I should also point out that the fact that Nietzsche chooses the same figure who committed the errors to overcome them indicates

that these errors themselves must be made. If we did not cling to the truths in the first place, they would not have a transformative effect. It is when they cease to have a transformative effect, that they must be overcome.

In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche had pointed out that communities must be willing to confront the deepest abyss, by immersing themselves in Dionysian festivals which threaten to undermine the social order in order to be able to reconstitute themselves. In fact, it is the deepest abyss that makes us covet the highest peaks. According to Nietzsche, modern human beings stand at the edge of such an abyss because of the dissolution of the cultural norms that have sustained them. However, they refuse to peer into it and therefore cling to their old habits, even though they lack faith in their cultural foundations. The reluctance to confront the darkest features of our existence also prevents us from attaining the heights. A community that is faced with the possibility of its own extinction will be spurred to create new norms and traditions in order to keep itself alive. The slaves themselves invented morality because they faced the very real possibility of their own destruction.

Zarathustra makes his entrance at a time when the death of God has robbed the earth of its prior meaning. Without God to act as the bulwark behind Christian moral imperatives, humankind may either choose the path of the active or the passive nihilist. The active nihilist is similar to the *Übermensch*, who creates new meanings in response to the nothingness that surrounds him. The passive nihilist in Nietzsche is represented by

the last man, who, stripped of a higher purpose which he can aspire to, simply pursues the mundane and comfortable life. Rather than struggling to give birth to new values, he clings to old ones which have been expunged of their vivacity. He leads a life devoid of commitment or passion. The mob is eager to accept this type of complacency since it replaces meaning with comfort: "They have left the places where living was hard: for one needs warmth. One still loves one's neighbour and rubs oneself against him: for one needs warmth"(Z P. 6).

Zarathustra himself does not present himself as the figure who will lead the community during this treacherous journey. He totters and stumbles, speaks incoherently and lacks the blind self confidence characteristic of figures that become the founders of new social orders. He is neither a Rousseauian lawgiver, nor a Machiavellian prince. He cannot hold out the promise of salvation that must be brandished before citizens in order to entice them to accept a new political order. While he enjoys moments of self certainty, they are only moments. Zarathustra is very attuned to the difficulty involved in overcoming nihilism. In fact, it cannot be transcended without repeatedly sinking into its dark and disorienting waters. Zarathustra maintains that it is humankind's unwillingness to recognize the darkness in our souls that also prevents us from bathing in their light. The work is replete with paradoxes and contradictions which remain unresolved in order to precipitate an ongoing dialogue. It is this uncertainty which makes him incapable of revitalizing the community from the outside.

Rosen argues that Zarathustra is a new Socrates, highlighting the common imagery between Plato's *Republic* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.² Zarathustra, like Socrates is an outsider, who has overstepped the boundaries of the ethical community and hopes to sow the seeds of its revitalization, while refraining from playing a direct political role himself. He cannot simply impose his vision onto a community since he would be greeted with execration and ridicule. Therefore, like Socrates, he is confronted with the difficulty of finding an audience that would be receptive to his ideas. After having enjoyed ten years of solitude, he becomes "weary of his wisdom" needing "outstretched hands to take it"(Z P.1). His overflowing cup needs to be emptied and he descends into the valley in order to find a community that can act as a receptacle for his teachings. Without the opportunity to share his insights with others, they become meaningless. Unlike Socrates, Zarathustra recognizes that his "truths" can only emerge in interaction with others. He does not go to the town with the hopes of enlightening it, as Rosen claims, but in the hopes of finding people that he can interact with. Nietzsche entitles his work "a book for all and for none" since he recognizes that the art of becoming what we are, namely human, is a difficult one. Zarathustra hopes to inspire rather than teach: "But I need living companions who follow me because they want to follow themselves- and who want to go

²Stanley Rosen notes that the *Republic* begins with Socrates describing his descent to the Piraeus, just as Zarathustra descends from his cave. He is to become a "philosophical lawgiver or revolutionary founder of a new order." This he takes to be an "underlying theme of Western European Civilization." *The Mask of the Enlightenment*, p.22

where I want to go"(Z P. 3). In order to become creators themselves, his audience would have to willingly explore all aspects of their being. To the despair of Zarathustra, most people prefer to enjoy the comfort of dogmas, without having to undergo the dangerous journey to posit them. However, for Nietzsche it is precisely the journey that is important. Zarathustra's efforts are frustrated by people who only desire to swallow new "doctrines", without participating in their making. The death of God fills human beings with longing for new idols. Zarathustra solicits friends, rather than obedient followers, who can actively interact with him: "The creator seeks companions, not corpses or herds or believers. The creator seeks fellow creators, those who inscribe new values on new tables"(Z P. 9). Zarathustra is unable to rest content anywhere, wandering incessantly, dissatisfied in both his solitude and the complacent community that he repeatedly returns to.

The problem of communication plagues Zarathustra throughout this work. He arrives at a city situated at the rim of a forest. Despite its proximity to the wilderness, its citizens refuse to enter this dangerous and forbidden zone. As a result, they are plagued with a spiritual emptiness that is suffocating. Zarathustra addresses an audience that is reluctant to venture into uncharted territory and desires quick solutions to the spiritual bankruptcy that is starting to gnaw at their community. His first encounters with the marketplace are awkward, since he resorts to polemics, shouting out bombastic slogans that are quickly rebuffed by the community: "The Superman is the meaning of the earth.

Let your will say: The Superman *shall* be the meaning of the earth. I entreat you, my brothers, *remain true to the earth*, and do not believe those who speak to you of superterrestrial hopes!"(Z P. 3). He has recurring bouts of depression as a result of his inability to convey his message to a people that are unready to receive his gift: "There they stand, there they laugh: they do not understand me, I am not the mouth for these ears"(Z P. 5). Yet, the difficulty lies not only in the mob's lack of receptivity but in his own inability to properly convey his message.

The *Übermensch*

Zarathustra descends into the village in order to broadcast his message of the *Übermensch*, hoping to revitalize a community that was languishing in the aftermath of the death of God. It is this "prophecy" which has become one of the most contested aspect of Nietzschean thought, prompting critics such as Stern to denounce Nietzsche for heralding the dawn of a new "superman" who would dominate the world³ and nature by the sheer magnitude of his will and the superabundance of his creativity. The *Übermensch* has been mistakenly identified as a kind of megalomaniac political figure, who could deliver

³J.P. Stern argues that Nietzsche's superman has totalitarian implications, insisting that Nietzsche cannot distinguish between the "fanaticism that goes with bad faith from his own belief in the unconditioned value of self-realization and self becoming...No man came closer to the full realization of self created 'values' than A. Hitler." *A Study of Nietzsche*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 117.

Western civilization from the excesses of Christianity and codify a table of new values that would revitalize a phlegmatic society. His willingness to dominate set him above the complacent crowd that he has to remould. Conway also argues that Nietzsche envisions a heroic figure who is "best understood within the context of Nietzsche's enduring admiration for heroic individuals and higher humanity."⁴ However, Conway's *Übermensch*, unlike Stern's, is not a ruthless dictator, but rather a figure such as a Goethe or a Christ whose creativity enables them to provide human beings with the inspiration that enables them to accept drastic changes within existing social structures. These charismatic figures are estranged from "from the ethical life of the communities that produce them"⁵ and therefore provide the kind of fresh perspective that can help to revitalize a decaying community. Conway insists that the concept of the *Übermensch* is a reflection of Nietzsche's exaltation of the genius and the extraordinary figure.

Even though I do not deny that Nietzsche relies upon extraordinary figures to change the course of history, I would argue that Nietzsche's *Übermensch* is used as a metaphor rather than describing a "type" that will revolutionize existing social institutions. As a metaphor, the idea acts as a stimulant for developing a new posture towards life as a whole. The portrait that he paints of the *Übermensch* is deliberately nebulous, for Zarathustra does not want to attract a cult of disciples who will await the

⁴Daniel W. Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political*, (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 20.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 23.

coming of another Christ to redeem them from their current crisis of nihilism. He pleads with them to pull themselves out of the nihilistic slumber which they have fallen into. At the same time, he reluctantly admits that for most people, rather than acting as a stimulus to re-engage with life creatively, the *Übermensch* will offer solace only if he becomes a new idol that they can bow down to. Zarathustra's audience in the marketplace prefers the Ultimate Man, who "makes everything small" in order to live longer(Z P. 5). The Ultimate Man leaves places "where the living was hard" and prefers a herd-like existence where everyone wants the same thing(Z P.5). Thus, if Nietzsche does seem to pin all his hopes on the arrival of a creative genius, it is because he has lost his faith in the ability of most people to take the responsibility for renewing their relationship with life into their own hands.

It is evident that Zarathustra himself is unsure of what this *Übermensch* would be like. Conway downplays the significance of Zarathustra's uncertainty, maintaining that *The Antichrist* offers a more lucid account of the *Übermensch*. However, this overlooks the fact that Zarathustra often uses the image of the child to describe the *Übermensch*. The child is unformed potential and therefore does not lead us to conjure up images of domination or world deliverance. As I will point out below, the child does not have aspirations of grandeur, but rather is concerned with discovering the world for the first time, and making a home for herself within it. Nietzsche's use of this image suggests that the potential of the *Übermensch* is buried within all of us, for all of us have been children.

I would argue that there are therefore two contrasting models of the *Übermensch* which are held up by Nietzsche. One is that of the extraordinary figure that transgresses the norms of culture and tradition, and infuses life into a stagnant community. The other is a perhaps a more democratic vision of the *Übermensch* through which Nietzsche exhorts each of us to become like the child, receptive to new experiences, and willing to engage with the world that is to become our home. If Nietzsche falls back upon the former, it is because he fears that human beings lack the courage to readopt the receptive openness of the child.

Zarathustra first comes to propagate his message of the *Übermensch* when he wanders into a human community which has suffered as a result of the death of God, and is clinging to old values that have lost their vitality. This invests human beings with a new responsibility to recreate the world as their own. Zarathustra hears of the scheduled appearance of a tightrope walker and decides to use this figure to help illustrate the nature of the *Übermensch*. He proclaims that "man is a rope, fastened between animal and Superman- a rope over an abyss"(Z P.4). The fact that "man" is always suspended between his animal existence and the *Übermensch* suggests that the *Übermensch* is not a goal that can ever be completely realized, but something that is to be continuously striven for.

The relationship of human beings to the abyss is very paradoxical. On the one hand, it threatens to engulf us and forces us to create meanings which can counteract the

surrounding nothingness. The tightrope walker's awareness of the gaping meaningfulness is an essential catalyst to his onward motion. His precarious position prevents him from taking anything for granted, and he must focus all his energy on the task that lies before him. At the same time, the tightrope walker must concentrate solely on the tightrope and each step he makes in order to avoid tumbling into nothingness. He is at once both poignantly aware and deliberately unaware of the blackness around him. Nietzsche suggests that the awareness of self of the *Übermensch* depends very much on the menace posed by the non-self. The tightrope artist cannot cast his eyes upon the goal, but must concentrate on each individual step in order to avoid tumbling into the abyss. He must be completely absorbed in the moment. It is the abyss around him that forces him to remain focused on each step. Because of the risks he is taking, he is suspended high above the mediocre crowd below.

There is yet another dimension to Nietzsche's multifaceted metaphor. The lifelessness that encircles the tightrope walker is also representative of the stale abstractions that form the moral worldview. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, ascetic morality in Nietzsche's view had resulted in a denigration of life. By returning to the earth, the potential *Übermensch* distances himself from the crowds which shun a nature that threatens to encroach even further upon their crumbling moral system: "The Superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: The Superman *shall be* the meaning of the earth! I entreat you, my brothers, *remain true to the earth*, and do not

believe those who speak of superterrestrial hopes!"(Z P.3). This indicates that the metaphor of the *Übermensch* is not intended to lead human beings on exploits that will allow them to transcend their humanity and leave behind their earthly attachments. Instead, the metaphor is intended to encourage us to make a home for ourselves on the earth, rather than beyond it. This is no easy task and requires superhuman efforts because remaining true to the earth involves accepting one's own inevitable destruction and acknowledging the blackness that eventually will envelop us.

The tight-rope artist, who is a metaphor for the *Übermensch*, falls down. His fall is precipitated by a buffoon, who clothed in bright colours, derides and ridicules him until he plummets to his death. He scorns the artist's actions, by leaping over him. The tricks he employs are random and meaningless, causing the artist to lose his own sense of direction. The jester is contaminated by nihilism and manifests a cynicism which refuses to affirm anything. He lacks the courage to create his own values and scorns those who do, destabilizing them through his acts of buffoonery. His sole activity consists in undermining the activity of others.

Zarathustra demonstrates his respect for the fallen artist, by burying him, an act that even the town's gravediggers refuse to perform. The mob, which in Nietzsche's view has reduced everything to the lowest common denominator, cannot acknowledge anyone that dares to depart from their norm. Nietzsche finds such self-righteous cynicism disdainful. The problem with the herd for Nietzsche is not its humility but its arrogance.

They condemn both heights and depths. Because of their refusal to recognize anything that is *beyond* their grasp, they are poisoned by their own self loathing, since they sever their connection with anything which might encourage them to overcome themselves. They are in danger of choking on their own hatred.

Zarathustra is not trying to encourage his audience to become "overmen", but rather to prepare the way for such a figure. Just as we cannot revert to being animals, we may not arrive at the *Übermensch*. For Nietzsche, it is the journey *towards* the *Übermensch* that is important: "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal; what can be loved in man is that he is a *going-across* and a *down-going*" (Z P. 4). Thus, Nietzsche furnishes human beings with a goal that cannot be attained, in order to ensure that the striving itself remains of the utmost importance. At the same time, the *Übermensch* is a goal that is achieved in the very act of striving itself, for he is a figure that is constantly overcoming himself. In positing the act of striving itself as a goal, Nietzsche guarantees that it can never be realized.

Perhaps the metaphor of the three metamorphoses of spirit best encapsulates Zarathustra's concept of the *Übermensch*. It describes both the potential that inheres in the moral world-view and offers the possibility for going beyond it. The beast of burden, the camel, represents an ascetic stage of complete obedience and the repression of desires: "What is the heaviest thing, you heroes? so asks the weight-bearing spirit, that I may take it upon me and rejoice in my strength. Is it not this: to debase yourself in order to injure

your pride"(Z I. 1). The camel exalts in its own suffering and seeks out the magnification of its pain. His desert habitat symbolizes the life-denying posture that he adopts towards the world. However, the camel is still imbued with a kind of nobility that derives from his willingness to shoulder the heaviest burdens. He acts in accordance with the cultural standards that weigh upon his soul. He reveres that which is beyond himself. He does not simply parrot slogans, seeking a life of comfort and ease. Instead, he represents a kind of obedience that demands self sacrifice and struggle: "The weight-bearing spirit takes upon itself all these heaviest things: like a camel hurrying laden into the desert, thus it hurries into the desert"(Z I.1). He carries his load because he desires to seek its own strength. He recognizes the difficulties involved in succumbing to the demands of culture and makes a deliberate attempt to go beyond himself. The camel thus represents human beings at the earliest stages of morality, when effort had to be exerted in order to suppress their own interests and desires. By imposing these sacrifices on himself, the camel eventually becomes aware of his own sovereignty and the capacity for determining his own future. It unites the diverse experiences of the camel into an "I". He is thereby transformed into the lion when he destroys the loads that he has carried in order to become master of its own desert: "But in the loneliest desert the second metamorphosis occurs: the spirit here becomes a lion; it wants to capture freedom and be lord in its own desert"(Z I. 1). The transformation into the lion does not signify a complete repudiation of the camel, since obedience and the desire for complete domination are not as far apart as they may appear.

The camel suffers from loneliness, since it has severed its links from the world around it by merely accepting burdens placed upon it by others. The lion hopes to cure this loneliness by recapturing the world for himself and placing it under his sovereignty, denying all external influence. He tries to dissociate himself from his community. However, the lion retains the same rigid boundaries between self and other as the camel. For the lion, "thou shalt" and "I will" are synonymous: "All values have already been created, and all created values-are in me. Truly, there shall be no more 'I will'"(Z I. 1). Both the lion and the camel annihilate the self, for the camel accepts only the orders of the other, and the lion tries to stifle the other. Neither of them engage with the world that they are in. The lion's destruction cannot get him out of the desert and he suffers from the same loneliness as the camel. The fact that the lion does not embody the highest stage for Nietzsche indicates that pure domination is not the meaning of the *Übermensch*.

The lion's negation still falls short of the life affirming posture that Nietzsche extols. Once the lion has destroyed everything, there is nothing against which he can direct his rage, and he is free as the child: "To create new values-even the lion is incapable of that-but to create itself freedom for new creation-that the might of the lion can do" (Z I. 1). His rejection of everything that surrounds him means that he is forced to remake a home for himself in the world. The child represents an innocence that is returned to as a result of having spurned the rigid dualisms that infect our souls. Once the lion has negated everything, he finds himself in a void that needs to be filled. The child fully

embraces the spontaneity of life, and enjoys the moment without worrying about the future or dwelling in the past. She represents a new beginning with no preconceptions of who she is and yet is most herself because she participates in a process of self creation. Since she has not yet sharply differentiated herself from her surroundings, she is fully open to the forces in life that fuel self creation. The child is a synthesis of both the camel and the lion. Only her receptiveness to the forces of life, allow her to reshape them. She says "no" and "yes" simultaneously, by taking what she is given, playing with it, and thus making something new out of it. Thus, she is a symbol of integration rather than dominance. She is full of life, because she has no need to grasp it. Her modesty and receptiveness to the world are virtues which the *Übermensch* must emulate. We must return to this innocence by looking beyond the rigid dogma with which he have strangled the world: "The child is innocence and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a sport, a self propelling wheel, a first motion, a sacred Yes"(Z I. 1).

However, this new beginning demands a tremendous sacrifice, for one must be willing to question and let go of all cultural and moral norms that have shaped one's individuality in order to begin anew. The child has not yet experienced the weight of the community upon her. She takes nothing too seriously and therefore is able to play with and transform the things that fall into her hands. She is humble because she has not faced the possibility of her own destruction and therefore must not staunchly defend her boundaries. During one of Zarathustra's dreams, a spirit enjoins him to adopt the modesty of the child:

"Of what consequence are you? You are not yet humble enough. Humility has the toughest hide"(Z II.22). The difficulty lies in "recapturing" the humility of the child while at the same time recognizing the very real possibility of one's own destruction.

While the camel simply takes upon himself all the burdens of the community, the lion rages against this community and like the slave negates that which has been imposed upon him. One submits, the other dominates, but both represent attempts to block out various stimuli in order to establish definite boundaries. The camel acts to preserve the frontiers of the moral community, while the lion struggles to define his own boundaries against the community. At the same time, he is only able to do this as a result of having the boundaries of the community imposed upon him. Nietzsche would not deny that such "individuation" is a necessary aspect of life. However, he would maintain that it has to be matched by a willingness to periodically succumb to Dionysian life forces, which encourage individuals to redraw their boundaries. Both the camel and lion resist succumbing to Dionysian life-giving forces and in doing so find themselves languishing in a desert. The child on the other hand, continuously makes and remakes her own boundaries because she still allows the pulse of life to flow through her. However, it is easier for her to do so because she is not yet aware of the possibility of her own destruction. This is why it requires superhuman efforts to maintain the playfulness of the child as an adult.

Despite his criticisms of both the lion and the camel, I do not think that Nietzsche

is exhorting us to adopt a posture of permanent boundarylessness. Nietzsche recognizes that boundaries have to be drawn and defended, even if this means that certain stimuli have to be filtered out. However, Nietzsche insists that we must do this with the knowledge that such boundaries are never permanent and must be periodically abandoned in Dionysian revelries. It is the process of making and destroying these boundaries that for Nietzsche constitutes life.

Gift giving and the *Übermensch*

The kind of playful posture which is symbolized by the child suggests the possibility for a community that is not predominantly based on relationships of domination. A willingness to redraw one's own boundaries in order to participate in the flux of life suggests a greater receptivity to others who could spur on the process of one's own development by challenging one's boundaries. The child constantly remakes herself by playing with the things that come within her reach. Her identity is always shifting and she does not conceive of others as threats to her identity. Zarathustra himself struggles to become as receptive as the child. He abandons the disciples whom he could easily dominate, for they simply imbibe his doctrines, failing to enact his ideas by carving out a unique path for themselves. He does so not only for their sake but for his own, for he cannot engage in self creation if others do not pose a challenge to him: "I now go away

alone, my disciples! You too now go away and be alone! So I will have it. Truly, I advise you: go away from me and guard yourselves against Zarathustra! And better still: be ashamed of him! Perhaps he has deceived you. The aim of knowledge must be able not only to love his enemies but also to hate his friends. One repays a teacher badly if one remains only a pupil...Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only when you have all denied me will I return to you"(Z I. 22).

At the same time, Zarathustra cannot suppress his need to solicit the company of loyal followers. Upon being presented with a mirror in which he sees the devil's grimace, he rushes towards the community, proclaiming that his enemies have distorted his doctrine and vilified him: "Truly, I understand the dream's omen and warning all too well: my *doctrine* is in danger ...my enemies have grown powerful and have distorted the meaning of my doctrine"(Z III. 1). The paradoxes and agonies of friendship are revealed here. Those who agree with him negate his teaching while those who disagree with him affirm his teachings for they have allowed their independent spirit to step forward. Zarathustra cannot resist the temptation to equate friends with followers. He solicits the recognition of others who will simply accept his gifts without giving him anything in return: "This, indeed, is the most difficult thing: to close the open hand out of love and to preserve one's modesty as a giver"(Z III. 1). Overcome by the desire to "hurl his words into the valleys", he is eager to "enlighten" the community, preserving his dogma from the onslaught of his "enemies".

Thus, Zarathustra does not recognize the devil in himself which seeks mastery. He still enjoys conceiving of himself as the saviour of humankind, who will lead us out of our dark slumber, and awaken us to the beauties of creativity: "And you yourselves should create what you have hitherto called the World: the World should be formed in your image and by your reason, your will, and your love! And truly, it will be to your happiness, you enlightened men!"(Z II. 2). The love that Zarathustra professes for his community is not yet real, since he showers the community with gifts as a token of his leadership. A genuine love would be reciprocal and allow the recipients to give back to him.

Only at night, when the boundaries between self and other have collapsed, do "the songs of lovers awaken"(Z II. 9) Here Zarathustra acknowledges that he does not yet know the joy of being a receiver, admitting that stealing seems "more blessed than receiving"(Z II. 9). In stealing one asserts one's dominion over another, just as one asserts a superiority in giving. Thus, he laments that it is "my poverty that my hand never rests from giving"(Z II. 9). Zarathustra has not learned how to give, because he has not learned how to receive. If I give something to you, and you give something back to me, then I know that I truly have given, for in giving I have offered you material with which you can transform yourself, so that you can in turn transform me. If I give to you, and you are continuously indebted to me, I prevent you from participating in this process of mutual development. By giving to others, we should also be indirectly giving to ourselves. This is why the *Übermensch* is not incompatible with the community, but expresses the hope

for a community where real reciprocity is possible.

Yet, the gift that Zarathustra gives does not come only *from* him. Caputo, in his work *Against Ethics*, implies that the gift giving tendency in Zarathustra is a means of asserting one's dominance and power over another. It is therefore devoid of the element of sacrifice that is characteristic of true gift giving: "It gives like a great, kind, generous benefactor, like a wealthy but generous lord, not because the common folk around him have any claim upon his wealth...it gives because it gives, that it does not respond to anything, but gives by its own inner generosity and immanent will to spill over."⁶ The image of the honey offering appears to corroborate Caputo's position, for the honey seeps out of Zarathustra's hands and he needs a vessel which can receive his abundance.(Z P. 1) However, the liquidity of honey also represents the interconnection between all living things, for it is not only Zarathustra's gift but a fruit of nature, gathered by his animals and produced by the bees. Nietzsche recognizes that he cannot give without taking: "For although the world is like a dark animal-jungle and a pleasure-ground for all wild huntsmen, it seems to me to be rather and preferably an unfathomable, rich sea, a sea full of many-coloured fishes and crabs for which even the gods might long and become fishers and casters of nets: so rich is the world in strange things, great and small!... My happiness itself shall I cast far and wide, between sunrise, noontide and sunset, to see if many human

⁶John Caputo, *Against Ethics: Contributions to a poetics of obligation with constant reference to deconstruction*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 59.

fishes will not learn to kick and tug at my happiness"(Z IV. 1). Thus, all gift-giving is a kind of recycling. In order to be able to give something new, we must transform it. In giving a gift, I am not only overcoming a rift that separates myself from another, but I am also acknowledging that I am an inseparable part of the natural world which embraces me. It thus affirms the duality of my connection to the world. In giving I affirm both my estrangement from and my embeddedness in it. I would not have to give to someone else, if I did not feel estranged from them. At the same time, in giving the gift, I am forging a connection with them. Because we ourselves are part of this cycle of giving and taking, we must learn to accept our death which is the ultimate gift, a "spur and a promise to the living"(Z I. 21). Death has a double meaning for our annihilation is also a reunion with the mother earth that gave birth to us: "I want to become earth again, that I may have peace in her who bore me"(Z I. 21). At the same time, the fear of death incites us to live, impelling us to "love the earth more"(Z I. 21).

Thus, the *Übermensch* is someone who knows not only how to give gifts, but how to receive them. Giving depends upon receiving. Therefore, he cannot exist in isolation for he is in need of friends who receive his gifts by also giving. Zarathustra himself is not the *Übermensch*, because he cannot find suitable recipients. The *Übermensch* thus cannot lead a lonely existence, for he would then lack the opportunity to receive. A life of domination would be too lonely for him. In his stroll through the forest, Zarathustra encounters the hermit, who sympathizes with the difficulties Zarathustra has faced: "Give

them nothing,' said the saint. 'Rather take something off them and beat them with it-that will please them best; if only it be pleasing to you!'"(Z P. 2). The market mob is suspicious of extravagant gifts, for they expect that something is demanded of them in return. As Shapiro points out, they have internalized the principles of the market economy⁷ and they expect that anyone who comes as the bearer of gifts hopes to harvest more than he has sown. The irony is that Zarathustra does indeed demand far more of his recipients than they can give, because he requires nothing less of them than self transformation. His gift is only given, if they in turn, can give back.

Thus, gift giving is not a selfless act, not even in the case of the "humble" prophet, Zarathustra. It exemplifies the attempt to achieve a sense of belonging and become part of a community. The hermit was unable to find this in the marketplace and therefore returns to nature in order to commune directly with God and satisfy his own craving for harmony: "With singing , weeping, laughing, and muttering I praise the God who is my God. But what do you bring us as a gift"(Z P. 2). Recognizing the sad state in which the hermit finds himself, Zarathustra refrains from telling him that God is dead, because this would strip him of his one remaining source of comfort and the medium through which he overcomes his isolation.

Towards the end of the first part of the book, Zarathustra's disciples present him

⁷Gary Shapiro, *Alcyone: Nietzsche on Gifts, Noise and Women*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 19.

with a staff, "upon the golden shaft of which a serpent was coiled about a sun"(Z I. 22). He is delighted that his disciples too, are learning to give. The fact that the staff is made of gold is significant, for the value of gold does not inhere in the material itself which is "uncommon and useless" but in the worth that is bestowed upon it: "only as an image of the highest virtue did gold count to have the highest value"(Z I.22). This means that the action of making it valuable constitutes its genuine worth. According to Rosen, such gift manifests the desire to dominate, and thus Zarathustra makes the comparison between his disciples and wolves, who steal without returning what they have stolen. Thus, Rosen argues the "genuine gift giver is a robber who drains old values of their strength in the selfish desire to impose his own will. The virtue of giving is that of strength, not generosity or disinterested philanthropy."⁸ However, such a lust for power is not what Nietzsche has in mind. Zarathustra accepts their present by playing with it and interpreting it, thereby continuing the momentum of life. His reception is not passive, but active and thus the cycle of giving is kept alive. We make a gift valuable by using it to give further gifts. Real gift giving is therefore a participation in the process of life, rather than a stagnant exchange of quantifiable equivalents: "you compel all things to come to you and into you, that they may flow back from your fountain as gifts of your love"(Z I. 22). It is not a lust for mastery, as Rosen claims.

⁸Stanley Rosen, *Mask of Enlightenment*, p. 129.

Receiving the tragic: against pity and revenge

According to Nietzsche, we must not only use positive gifts to spur on the process of self creation, but must use "negative" gifts to the same effect. The Dionysian experience involves pain, suffering and death. To reject these tragic aspects of our experiences is for Nietzsche tantamount to rejecting life as a whole. The Christian promise of eternal life epitomized such a rejection of gifts, since the suffering of this world was used to posit a realm in which there would be no such suffering. People stopped striving in this life in anticipation of the next one. Nietzsche exhorts people to appropriate their pain and use it in order to catapult themselves to new heights. Rather than viewing their fate as something that must be accepted because it is out of their control, individuals must accept that nothing is completely outside of their control, nor completely within their control. Paradoxically, I must learn to accept that the "not-I" is an inevitable part of who I am. Those elements of life which appear to cripple me, also make me who I am. By stating that I have willed the past, I am recognizing that the "I" is something that eludes my complete control. I must act upon "alien" impetuses in order to become myself. My will is not completely my own, but constitutes a meeting point at which various forces collide, and their interaction creates new moments. To accept the self, I must also accept that which is not-self. Without the menace of the non-self, I would not be able to *become* myself. Thus, it is only by *acting* upon the past, that I am able to negate it. At the same

time, I am affirming it, because I cannot ignore its existence. In this way, I transform an event that has happened *to* me into an event that I have *made happen*. I start anew, not in spite of the past, but because of it. All gifts, be they negative or positive, help me to become who I am.

This re-appropriation of one's fate has been coined "*amor fati*" by Nietzsche. This does not imply that fate is something that should simply be surrendered to because of its inevitability. Stambaugh points out that Nietzsche differentiates between Turkish and Russian fatalism. Turkish fatalism "conceives of man and fate as separate" where fate is simply something to which human beings are subjugated.⁹ Nietzsche's idea of fate suggests that our agency emerges out of the process of dealing with the limits that are imposed upon us. We are always both subjugated and subjects. All of my actions are reactions to past actions upon me, and in rejecting the latter I also reject the former. If I was not presented with limitations that I am to overcome, I would be incapable of acting.

The enormous difficulty involved in developing this kind of receptivity to our fate is manifested for Nietzsche in the emotions of pity and revenge. When we succumb to these emotions, we respond to negative events by stymieing growth and attempting to put a halt to the process of life itself. Because we begin to associate pain with life, we try to prevent ourselves from living in order to eradicate the pain. This kind of posture stems from the attitude that I either accept my fate and reject my own agency, or accept my

⁹Joan Stambaugh, *The Other Nietzsche*, p. 81

agency and therefore reject my fate.

Revenge is the propensity to be overcome by our past and a refusal to engage with life due to negative events that have occurred. We write with resentment against the impact of these events: "'It was': that is what the will's teeth-gnashing and most lonely affliction is called. Powerless against that which has been done, the will is an angry spectator of all things past. The will cannot will backwards; that it cannot break time and time's desire-that is the will's most lonely affliction. ..It is sullenly wrathful that time does not run back; 'that which was'-that is what the stone which it cannot roll away is called"(Z II. 20). Revenge does not refer to the anger felt as a result of events which have transpired, but rather to the desire to erase our misfortunes by "willing backwards" in a vain attempt to return to a state where these ills have not yet occurred. Nietzsche is not exhorting us to welcome with open arms all disasters which may have befallen us, but rather to relinquish the propensity to try to purge ourselves of our past. Nor is Nietzsche trying to prevent us from feeling anger towards the past, for such rage is necessary in order to overcome it and continue the process of living. By determining that something should not have happened to me, I begin to draw the parameters which help me to constitute the "I" that I want to defend. If nothing seemed hostile to me, I could not even begin to speak of a "self", nor could I begin the process of overcoming.

Zarathustra begins his discourse on such "redemption" by addressing an audience of cripples and beggars. The hunchback claims that Zarathustra's teachings have not yet

gained credence amongst the cripples, for he has failed to rid them of their handicaps. Zarathustra retorts that in taking away the hump of the hunchback, one takes away his spirit. The cripple cannot engage in self overcoming, if he repudiates the self that he is to overcome. He must create something new with the obstacles he faces, rather than hoping for a miraculous release from his ailments. Rather than performing the Christlike miracles that his audience demands, Zarathustra asks them to seek redemption for themselves by willing the past that is part of their present makeup in order to shape the future: "To redeem the past and to transform every 'It was' into a 'I wanted it thus!'-that alone do I call redemption"(Z II. 20). In order to make the past a product of one's will, one has to act upon it in the present, rather than simply resigning oneself to one's fate or railing against it. By shaping it in the present, it becomes part of my will. Only in this way can one overcome the obstacles thrust in our path. Without accepting our limitations, it becomes difficult to overcome them.

It is important to point out that Nietzsche is not advocating a passive resignation to or a stoic acceptance of all the ills that may befall us. Rather he is suggesting that there will always be events that negatively influence our lives and that incite our anger. Instead of allowing our anger to fester, he insists that we should try to act upon these limitations and overcome them as far as is possible rather than surrendering to them and refusing to live life. Nietzsche is not trying to downplay the tragedy of the hunchback's existence. He is, however, refusing to offer the hunchback a false hope of a life without his handicap,

which would prevent him from living here and now while he awaits a release that may never come.

According to Nietzsche, the refusal to accept the past can have disastrous consequences. By focusing exclusively on a particular handicap, I become a victim to it and can no longer extricate myself from its clutches. Furthermore, I may be inclined to compensate for it by overdeveloping its supposed opposite, ending up as the inverse cripple that Zarathustra arraigns against: "I walk among men as among fragments of the future"(Z II. 19). This is a common political and social phenomenon. For example, the Enlightenment's preoccupation with dethroning the ruthless authority of tradition and religion impelled it to promote science in its stead, in an effort to expunge all mystery from human experience. It thereby merely substituted one form of mastery with another. Revenge focuses on one aspect of our being, and unwittingly blinds itself to other impetuses. A fixation on the past, robs humanity of its present, and therefore stymies its creative activity. To reject life because it includes suffering also constitutes the repudiation of an important catalyst to activity.

The problem with Nietzsche's analysis inheres in its inability to differentiate between the suffering that can act as a catalyst to creativity and the kind of suffering which can be completely debilitating. This oversight leads him from the conclusion that life involves suffering to the idea that: "life is *essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker; suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms,

incorporation and at least, at its mildest, exploitation"(BGE 259). Indeed he ignores the extent to which the exploitation of others diminishes their creative talents and thereby also reduces their ability to enable others to create themselves. The importance he attaches to suffering impels him to undermine the ideal of reciprocity that was suggested by the gift-giving virtue.

Nietzsche's failure to distinguish between excessive and "necessary" suffering is most pronounced in his attitude towards pity. According to Nietzsche, pity is another emotion that can have detrimental affects on the process of becoming. Nietzsche uses the term "pity" in a dual sense. On the one hand, it denotes the sense of satisfaction gleaned from observing others whose lot in life is less favourable than one's own. My contentment with my own situation increases because I relish my own superiority. Nietzschean "pity" is not the same as compassion, since it involves a condescension towards the other. Stambaugh claims that pity is a way of "debasing another person."¹⁰: "For I saw the sufferer suffer, and because I saw it I was ashamed on account of his shame; and when I helped him, then I sorely injured his pride"(Z:II. 3). It constitutes negative rather than positive self affirmation because it does not inspire me towards action. Rather than pursuing a meaningful life, we rest content because we do not have to endure another's misery. At first glance, pity may seem to be a point of contention between Nietzsche and Rousseau, since Rousseau considers pity to be a humanizing influence that curbs the

¹⁰Joan Stambaugh, *The Other Nietzsche*, p. 43.

excesses of civilization. Yet, pity in Nietzsche's view is antithetical to the process of self creation because the misfortune of another becomes the source of our satisfaction. Therefore, Nietzschean pity more closely resembles Rousseau's *amour-propre*, which uses the other as a yardstick by which to evaluate the self: "Truly, I do not like them, the compassionate who are happy in their compassion: they are too lacking in shame. If I must be compassionate I still do not want to be compassionate; and if I am compassionate then it is preferably from a distance"(Z II. 3).

There is another aspect to pity , which is directed at life in general. It impels us to identify life with suffering and fills us with a profound nausea or disgust. As Stambaugh attests "pity in the sense of feeling sorry for him seems to exclude all else of significance, it simply engulfs the man pitied and paralyzes him."¹¹ Christianity, in Nietzsche view, created a community out of suffering, encouraging people to wallow in it: "They are at one in their faith in the morality of *shared* pity, as if that were morality in itself, being the height, the *attained* height of man, the sole hope of the future, the consolation of present man, the absolution from all former guilt"(BGE 202). Because suffering becomes the basis of the community itself, people are discouraged from using their suffering to transform themselves. Ironically, because each individual was encouraged to "relish" his or her own pain, each refrains from interacting with others, resulting in a growing conformity. This diminished the very suffering which had been the basis of the community to begin with.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 47.

However, there is also a darker side to Nietzsche's contempt for pity. He fails to recognize that an amelioration of people's suffering is also a transformative effort, permitting them to resume control over their existence. The problem inheres in his refusal to distinguish between compassion and pity, concepts which, in German, are both included under the term *Mitleid*. If I have compassion for someone, I do not assume that his entire being is consumed by his misfortune. The elimination of suffering does not necessarily demand that we transform all individuals into identical clones. Enabling another human being to participate more fully in life does not contravene the will to power, nor is it necessarily a denigration of life. In fact, suffering could not be the catalyst to creativity that Nietzsche describes, if we did not aim to overcome or move beyond it.

The eternal recurrence/return of the same

Nietzsche uses the metaphor of the eternal recurrence to foster a new attitude towards life which is not predicated on resentment or self pity. Like other catchwords in Nietzschean philosophy, the eternal recurrence has been the source of much contention. Zarathustra himself reacts to the "thought" with both extreme disgust and elation, emotions which he soon discovers are tightly intertwined. Through the eternal return Nietzsche tries to reconcile the natural and historical elements of our being. On the one hand, there is a repetition in the cycles of the seasons, day and night, and creation and destruction. At

the same time, we are historical beings who build upon the past in order to create the future, thereby both negating and affirming past moments. Each moment both perishes and is upheld(*aufgehoben*) in future moments. Thus, Nietzsche encourages human beings to affirm life by embracing both its destructive and creative aspects. He does not thereby extol a passive resignation to life but rather demands an active shaping of our experiences. This necessitates negation, for I cannot create something new without simultaneously excluding certain elements of life that present themselves to me. Paradoxically, according to Nietzsche, it is by recognizing that I am a limited being that I am able to affirm life as a whole. Only finitude can lead us to eternity, and it is not interpreted by Nietzsche as a lack, but rather enables the individual to interact with others and with her environment to perpetuate the endless cycle of life. The eternal return therefore also demands an awareness that we are part of something that is larger than the self. The love of this larger "whole" whose precise contours we cannot discern helps us to not only accept but also to celebrate our own finitude.

In order to gain a better understanding of the eternal return, it is important to recognize that Nietzsche uses it to launch an assault on the prevailing Christian worldview. According to Christian dogma, sin constitutes a privation: a turning away from God. Our passions leads us astray and thus are considered worthy of punishment. We are judged according to what we *are not*, and focus obsessively on the negative features which tarnish our own existence. The mistakes of the past never cease to hound us, for we must

endure ongoing punishment for them. As a result, we develop a vitriolic resentment towards the past which prevents us from creating the future. Nevertheless, Christianity offers compensation for our suffering by inculcating the hope that we are eventually redeemed by the grace of God and granted eternal life. Because we need to be rescued from the ravages of time, death and sin, we concentrate almost exclusively on those aspects of our existence which point to the need for salvation. According to Nietzsche, this constitutes a negation unaccompanied by affirmation, for redemption occurs only at an unforeseeable point in the future and cannot be experienced. While our negation is concrete, we affirm only an eternal future which we cannot experience in the present. Our mortal life assumes meaning primarily as a passage to this eternal realm of perfection which we cannot know.

The desire to transcend history and time by entering God's realm of eternity is for Nietzsche tantamount to a will to nothingness, since such transcendence would mark the end of activity itself. According to Nietzsche, the interplay between *limited* beings fuels the process of life and is the wellspring of our creativity. If we invest God with the responsibility for redemption, we adopt a passive posture towards our life as we wait to be redeemed for the mistakes we have made. While we wait, the past continues to haunt us, preventing us from living. Nietzsche does not want to put off such redemption until the next life, but insists that it must occur in the here and now. Like the Christians, he recognizes that death poses a major obstacle to the affirmation of life, for it threatens to

render all our activity meaningless.

The desire to eternalize ourselves is therefore transformed by Nietzsche rather than perfunctorily dismissed. His understanding of the term "*das Ewige*" both comes out of and is opposed to its more traditional connotations. Löwith suggests that Nietzsche is dispensing with Christian linearity and returning to a Greek cyclical notion of time.¹² The eternal return becomes a secular substitute for the Christian desire for eternal life. Rather than referring to a state Beyond which is used to cast judgment upon this world, Nietzsche suggests that there is no end to life itself. Eternity does not inhere in individual lives, but in life itself as a whole. Only by contributing to this whole can we truly eternalize ourselves. We are eternal because the world that envelops us is eternal. Yet, the endlessness of this process depends upon our finitude, and the constant interplay between destruction and creation. In accepting eternity, I also have to accept my own death. In this way, Nietzsche succeeds in reconciling the notion of eternity with the affirmation of the process of life itself. It is the activity of becoming which goes on forever and forever. There is no God or final state in which all opposites are reconciled. I can never complete an action, since it always sets off a chain of events that escape my control. My finite action becomes infinite because it is always an *interaction*.

At one level, the eternal return refers to the repetitive momentum of the natural

¹²Karl Löwith, *Nietzsche's Philosophie der ewigen Wiederkehr des Gleichen*, (Stuttgart 1956), p. 60.

world, in which all experiences which have occurred in the past will recur in a cycle of perpetual repetition. Nietzsche draws upon scientific principles in order to lend a semblance of "objectivity" to his notion. If a finite amount of matter exists, then it must periodically be destroyed in order to transform itself into something new. Change demands destruction. A goalless cycle is set in motion, which has neither beginning nor end: "The world exists; it is not something that becomes, not something that passes away. Or rather: it becomes, it passes away, but it has never begun to become and never ceased from passing away-it maintains itself in both-It lives on itself: its excrements are its food....If the world may be thought of as a certain definite quantity of force and as a certain definite number of centres of force- and every other representation remains indefinite and therefore useless-it follows that in the great dice game of existence, it must play through a calculable number of combinations"(WP 1066). A similar message is conveyed to Zarathustra by his animals: "'O, Zarathustra' said the animals then, 'all things themselves dance for such as think as we: they come and offer their hand and laugh and flee-and return. Everything goes, everything returns the wheel of existence roll for ever. Everything dies, everything blossoms anew; the year of existence runs on forever'"(Z III. 13). The animals accept a truth that human beings can only realize after a rebirth. Our own existence is only one small part in the ring of recurrence, and we are unable to overcome the force of its necessity.

The aimless repetition of life appears difficult to reconcile with the purposive and

goal oriented behaviour of human beings, who long for a continuous overcoming. However, it is precisely such a reconciliation that Nietzsche hopes to achieve. Commentators such as Laurence Lampert have interpreted the eternal return to be at odds with Nietzsche's doctrine of the *Übermensch*. According to him, both the will to power and the *Übermensch* suggest a linearity while the eternal return is circular.¹³ As Stambaugh points out, the relation between "increase" associated with the will to power and the "same" is "difficult to fathom."¹⁴ On the one hand, human beings find themselves in an ongoing struggle against nature, for they are unwilling to surrender themselves to a world that eventually engulfs them in its endless cycle of repetition. However, the reflection upon our own limitations induces us to create truths that satisfy our own penchant for understanding, at least temporarily. We build our own home which shelters us from the seemingly meaningless repetition of natural cycles. Yet, in doing so we also reproduce the very rhythm of nature that we try to extricate ourselves from. All of our truth claims merely scratch the surface and are destroyed as circumstances change and they are no longer valid. While we establish them in an effort to ward off the eternal flux of life, they are inevitably destroyed by this flux. Each stable truth is stable only because of what it leaves out. Because they can never penetrate the essence of life, we are forced to engage in a continuous process of revaluation, as old truths die and new ones take their place. The

¹³see Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

¹⁴Joan Stambaugh, *Nietzsche's Thought of Eternal Return*, (Washington: Centre for Advanced Research in Phenomenology Press, 1988), p. 16.

difference between human "cycles" and natural ones is that the new truths we create are similar but never identical to prior truths, since they are always a reaction to past truth.

Deleuze reconciles the will to power with the eternal return by suggesting that it functions as a kind of categorical imperative which weeds out the weaker forces in life.¹⁵ The individual would be encouraged to ask himself whether or not he would want that which he wills to return eternally. While active forces would be affirmed, reactive ones would perish. As Ansell-Pearson points out, this would rob life of the spontaneity and innocence which Nietzsche favours.¹⁶ By willing that a certain event be endlessly repeated, I am denying the immediacy of the moment, and downplaying the process of transformation by which I continuously reshape my own will. Furthermore, Deleuze's contention directly contravenes Nietzsche's claim that even the infirm and the small minded continuously resurface. By describing a will which would eliminate reactive forces, Deleuze attributes to Nietzsche the kind of resentment which Nietzsche himself inveighs against.

Magnus' approach resembles that of Deleuze, conceiving of the eternal return as

¹⁵Deleuze notes that the eternal return functions as an ethical and selective thought, which "gives the will a rule as rigorous as the Kantian imperative." He claims: "Active negation or active destruction is the state of the strong-minded who destroy the reactive element within themselves, submitting it to the test of Eternal Return and submitting themselves to this test...However far they go, however deep the becoming-reactive of forces is, reactive forces *will not* recur. The small, petty, reactive man will not recur." in 'Active and Reactive Forces,' *The New Nietzsche*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), p. 102.

¹⁶Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche as Political Thinker*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 114.

an existential imperative which fosters an affirmative attitude towards life. We must live our lives in such a way, that we would want to live again. In order to be able to crave the eternal recurrence, one must affirm life.¹⁷ According to Magnus, "that which possesses value can be willed unto eternity."¹⁸ Despite its Kantian implications, Magnus' idea differs from the categorical imperative because there are no absolute normative criteria which can be applied; only an individual's judgment confers worth upon his actions. However, the problem with this type of analysis is that it presupposes that I invest the present with meaning only by eternalizing it and denying its finitude. For Nietzsche the moment becomes eternal not by prolonging it but through its interaction with other moments.

The historical dimension of humanity bestows upon us a different kind of eternity than that which is found in nature, a fact which Zarathustra's animals cannot possibly fathom. By reworking the past, human beings create a future that embodies the past but is not identical to it. There is no eternal world of Forms or Kingdom of God which lends direction to our striving nor is there a Hegelian *Geist* which unfolds through our actions. As Stambaugh emphasizes, there is nothing lacking¹⁹ which we are to uncover in our engagement with history. While the future and the present build on the past, they are not

¹⁷Bernd Magnus, *Nietzsche's Existential Imperative*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 144-45.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹⁹Joan Stambaugh, *The Other Nietzsche*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 98.

subordinate to any ultimate purpose.

However, everything that I may create is bound to be destroyed and overcome. The dwarf utters a Sisyphean truth about the eternal recurrence: "'O Zarathustra,' he said mockingly, syllable by syllable, 'you stone of wisdom! You have thrown yourself thus high, but every stone that is thrown-must fall! Condemned by yourself and to your own stone-throwing: O Zarathustra, far indeed have you thrown your stone, but it will fall back upon you!'" (Z III. 2). However, this is not necessarily at odds with the constant desire for growth that constitutes the will to power. Growth demands destruction. In re-creating the past, I destroy it. One could even argue that growth is a response to destruction and without destruction there is no growth. If Zarathustra's stone did not fall, he would not need to throw it again. Similarly, the new moments that I create are both destroyed and upheld in their re-appropriation by others. Because I am not alone in my overcoming, and am surrounded by other forces that also covet growth, I must accept the impermanence of my own creations which are swallowed up in the process of becoming. The very fact that they are incorporated and appropriated by others, ensures that it is never the same stone that is thrown back at me.

The threat of being consumed by nothingness also acts as a catalyst to creation. The German word for abyss is "*Abgrund*" which refers not only to "groundlessness" but also to the ground or basis itself. When the dwarf utters the horrible nihilistic truths into Zarathustra's ear, his anger incites him to action: "But there is something in me that I call

courage: it has always destroyed every discouragement in me: this courage at last bade me stop and say: 'Dwarf! You! Or I!'"(Z III. 2) The dwarf's weight tempts Zarathustra to succumb to a stultifying pity and become completely absorbed by the meaningless nature of his own existence. However, his courage reflects his own resolve to continue in spite of this meaninglessness. This courage is the best "*Todschläger*". A *Todschläger* is both something or someone that beats someone to death, as well as representing the assault on death itself.

The acceptance of even the negative elements in the past is a necessary component of self affirmation, for even they comprise an indelible part of one's identity. "I will" cannot be separated from "I am". Instead of attempting to emulate a God that created something out of nothingness, we create from the material at hand. As a result, we must be prepared to accept even the revolting features of our existence. There is no moment at which he can wipe the slate clean; we cannot seek refuge in a final redemption. Zarathustra's disgust is represented by the shepherd who chokes on the snake that coils itself around him and constitutes the "diabolical" image of the eternal return(Z III. 2). The serpent crawls into the peasant's throat while he is sleeping. His inactivity allows nothingness to pervade the deepest recesses of his soul. Sleep is rejuvenating because of its disindividuating effect, but at the same time it is symbolic of the obliteration of the self in death. After all, death is the ultimate disindividuation. Just as sleeping enables me to function the following day; my death allows life to continue. Nevertheless, in order to live

we must fight death, despite its inevitability. We cannot allow the fact that we will one day dissipate into nothingness hamper our creative efforts. Yet, without the threat of meaninglessness to challenge us, and to wake us up out of our slumber, we would not be compelled to create meaning. Death is as necessary to life as life is to death. It is important to recognize that Nietzsche uses the image of death both literally and figuratively. I descend into a slumber when I cling unquestioningly to the truths that I and others have posited. Only a crisis which threatens to eradicate all I have known, can awaken me from my sleep. The shepherd must bite off the snake's head and not cling to its memory. His suffering must be transformed into joy and laughter. He does not allow the serpent's presence to cloud over the rest of his life. Only by being released from darkness, do we learn to appreciate the life. This means that darkness enables us to experience joy. Paradoxically, the shepherd's joy is dependent upon his misery. Thus, the epiphany that Zarathustra enjoys in "The Vision and the Riddle" does not enable him to overcome his nausea permanently. These emotions continue to haunt him as he recommences his journey. Without the depths of depression, he could not experience the heights of ecstasy.

Zarathustra's own assault on death and on the abysmal thought is achieved by revelling in the moment. It is upon reaching the gateway of time, that Zarathustra finds relief from the weight of the dwarf perched on his shoulder. The gateway represents the moment, which is pregnant with both the past and the future: "And are not all things

bound fast together in such a way that this moment draws after it all future things? *Therefore- draws itself too?*"(Z III. 2). The paradoxical assertion that the moment drags the future behind it constitutes a repudiation of a conception of history as linear and progressive. Whatever point we occupy on a circle is both the highest and the lowest point; there is no natural culmination or termination of our activity. The very aimlessness of the cycle invests the creative moment with a profound significance, for it is no longer a mere stepping stone en route to a higher transcendental goal nor is it simply a cog in a wheel which derives its meaning from a grand master plan. By focusing on the act of creation itself, rather than on what is created, we are able to counteract the burden of nothingness that weighs upon us. At the same time, it is the menace of nothingness that enables us to concentrate on the moment. The tightrope walker focuses on each step, not in spite of, but because of the nothingness that surrounds him. Thus, Nietzsche avers that the attitude we take towards time plays an important role in shaping our posture towards life. The eternal return promotes an attitude which focuses primarily on the present, and does not resent the wasted efforts of the past, nor does it rush to realize the distant goals of the future. In the eternal return the past and the future becomes absorbed in the immediacy of the present. In nature's whirlwind, where everything is repeated, only the present allows us to differentiate one moment from the next.

By celebrating the moment, I can affirm the "whole" even though I cannot capture it. "If we affirm one single moment, we thus affirm not only ourselves but all existence.

For Nothing is self-sufficient, neither in us ourselves nor in things; and if our soul has trembled with happiness and sounded like a harp string just once, all eternity was needed to produce this one event-and in this single moment of affirmation, all eternity was called good, redeemed, justified and affirmed"(WP 1032). Each moment constitutes an intersection of past and future. Because all moments are interconnected in this way, an affirmation of the part is tantamount to an affirmation of the whole. I drink from the chalice of "deep sweet eternity" by appropriating the past to create the future. My eternity stems from my finitude: "Oh how should I not lust for eternity and for the wedding rings of rings_the Ring of Recurrence"(Z III: 15). Warren argues that the eternal return draws attention to manner in which we experience the self over time²⁰ and forces us to accept the historicity of our being. Because the past is embedded in each moment, we are continuously replaying our history. The German word "*wiederholen*" more clearly expresses this relationship, for it has the connotation of actively re-appropriating the past to create the future, rather than alluding to a repetition of perfectly identical events.

The moment itself is an interpretation that allows us to mark time, distinguishing between past and future. Without this marker there would only be a single seamless road. We identify the moment by deciding that we have reached a crossroads at which a new course of action has to be decided upon. The symbol of noon represents this time of decision. Noon is the period during which the sun stands highest and there are no

²⁰Mark Warren, *Nietzsche's Political Thought*, p. 201.

shadows which obscure our view. Everything is immersed in a blinding clarity, but this omniscience is merely momentary, soon to be encroached upon by the return of the shadows. The brightness of noon, which is devoid of the shadows of the past, and thus a symbol of eternity is in itself only an "*Augenblick*"(a moment). It affords new opportunities and represents a turning point in our experience. Each day the occasion for this new beginning re-presents itself. Zarathustra, unlike his animals, understands that the moment of extreme light is also a moment of darkness. He falls into a slumber at noon which awakens his soul. He experiences a kind of mystical union with the world in which the detached "mode of experience of seeing is absent."²¹ Noon, whose dazzling light is the most Apollonian of images, becomes a Dionysian experience that breaks down the boundaries separating Zarathustra from life as an organic whole. Thus, we must learn to recognize that each moment is incomplete in itself and contains both Dionysian and Apollonian elements. Noon and midnight are among the most important symbols in Zarathustra's experience, for they represent Apollonian and Dionysian aspects of being. In the brightness of noon, there are no shadows that shroud the distinct contours of the surroundings, while midnight disindividuates and bathes everything in darkness. We crave for the individuating effect of the light, but also seek the comforting self annihilation that darkness brings. This dualism within our soul ensures that we are continuously striving: "The abyss where the glance plunges *downward* and the hand grasps *upward*. There the

²¹Joan Stambaugh, *The Other Nietzsche*, p. 147.

heart grows giddy in its twofold will. ..That my glance plunges into the heights and that my hand wants to hold on to the depths and lean there, that, that is *my* abyss and my danger"(Z II. 21).

Nietzsche suggests that we cannot begin each moment anew, even though it is important to experience it as such. I use the material of the past in constructing a future. While I cannot choose the past, I can choose what to *do* with the past. I never dispense with old values entirely, but appropriate them and reshape them. In so doing, I am forging other moments, but I do not create a moment to end all moments. By underscoring our indebtedness to the past, Nietzsche collapses the distinction between freedom and necessity. The German word for necessity, "*Notwendigkeit*", illustrates the connection with freedom, for it means to "turn necessity". It is this "turning of necessity" that constitutes our freedom.

Higgins, using music as a metaphor, is able to characterize the eternal return without losing either the immediacy or the history embedded in each moment.²² Every note in a work of music points to other notes, and the meaning lies not in that which each tone directs us towards but in the activity of the music itself. No sound can be separated from that which precedes or that which follows it. The work is experienced simultaneously as flux and as a unity. The relationship of the individual tones towards the whole is akin to that of the individual moment to the whole of time. Even though the way in which we

²²Kathleen Higgins, *Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, p. 182.

experience an individual melody depends on the musical events which preceded it, we experience each moment as a new beginning, fully absorbed by the immediacy of the piece. The whole is contained within each note, otherwise it would have no meaning; music is completely present-centred.²³

The eternal return thus represents our relationship towards our own history, towards others and towards nature. It alerts us to the interdependence of both freedom and necessity, and forces us to come to terms with the most grotesque and the most ennobling aspects of our existence. Zarathustra himself loses consciousness as a result of trying to face the abysmal aspects of life. His recognition that even the ugliest man will recur in this cycle fills him with a crippling nausea: "I had seen them both naked, the greatest man and the smallest man: all too similar to one another, even the greatest all too human! The greatest, all too small-that was my disgust at man! And eternal recurrence even for the smallest! that was my disgust at all existence." (Z III. 13) When he awakes, he recognizes that human beings are "eternally separated". At each segment in time, we stand alone, forced to make a decision regarding the direction we would like to pursue. At the same time, we acknowledge our interconnectedness as part of an endlessly recurring cycle. Everything that I do is linked to what others have done before me and will do after me. At the same time, I link myself to others in part by defining myself against them. Individuation and integration come together. It is the opposition between my own sense

²³*Ibid.*, p. 183.

of connectedness, and my feeling of alienation that forces me to give it a voice, thereby establishing a new form of communion with the world: "How sweet it is, that words and sounds of music exist: are words and music not rainbows and seeming bridges between things eternally separated"(Z III. 13). Nietzsche claims that "every soul is a world of its own", while also asserting that there is nothing outside the individual(Z III. 13). We are at once separated from nature and also irrevocably immersed in it. The eternal return is Nietzsche's most poetic expression of the divided self.

These contradictions account for the difficulty involved in becoming human. Like Rousseau , Nietzsche suggests that a return to nature is necessary in order to be able to make ourselves at home in our world once more. However, we must keep returning, because we lose our connection to nature, as soon as it becomes the object of our interpretation. Because we need to define our role in the world, we construct Apollonian illusions that differentiate us from the whirlwind around us. These illusions inevitably cut us off from certain experiences and so we lose ourselves in a Dionysian experience. In the process we lose ourselves in the confusion and create new illusions to provide ourselves with a sense of bearing. Zarathustra desires both the company of other human beings and the solitude that allows him to return to his natural home.

We cannot deny that our reflection on nature allows us to conceive of a world without death and fill us with a longing for a kind of eternity that is denied us. Because we experience the joy of growth, we cannot accept its termination. Ironically, our efforts

to eternalize growth compel us to try and stop it. Nietzsche recognizes that the inevitability of death perpetually haunts us. At the same time, he acknowledges that the process of life requires death and that the interaction of limited beings makes growth possible. Ironically, our struggle with death cannot end as long as we continue to live. Thus, we are exhorted by Nietzsche to embrace our finitude, recognizing that our limitations fuel the process of self creation. It is only because I am finite, that I can be part of something larger than the self. In affirming my own finitude, I affirm the whole of which I am a part, but which I can never attain. My limitation paves the way for a new kind of limitlessness, since my incompleteness fills my heart with longing, propelling the constant process of becoming. In accepting my limitation, I am able to go beyond it. My affirmation of my own finitude also constitutes its negation.

Thus, Nietzsche's mouthpiece, Zarathustra surrenders the quest for a kind of permanent satisfaction, because he recognizes that striving itself is endless. He finishes his tale, as he had begun it, with an ode to the sun: "'Great star,' he said, as he had said once before, 'you profound eye of happiness, what would all your happiness be if you did not have *those* for whom you shine!'"(Z IV. 20). A chord of both optimism and pessimism is struck in the final moments of the book. On the one hand, Zarathustra's mission has failed, because he has not found an audience that is receptive to his gift. However, this failure also provides him with a new opportunity to create the future and thus he greets his morning with jubilant elation: "'This is *my* morning, *my* day begins: *rise up now, rise up*

great noontide!' Thus spoke Zarathustra and left his cave, glowing and strong, like a morning sun emerging from behind dark mountains"(Z IV. 20).

Nietzsche's politics: Zarathustra forgotten?

The *Übermensch*, the gift-giving virtue and the eternal recurrence of the same, all underline the necessity of recognizing that we are limited beings who must use these limits creatively to engage in the process of becoming. Rather than paying tribute to an individual that struggles to dominate the world, these metaphors reinforce the idea that each individual is part of a larger process that he must participate in. Each of our interpretations is incomplete and serves both to separate ourselves from the Dionysian pulse of life, while also allowing us to participate in it. We are continuously exhorted to reassess the boundaries that we construct for ourselves, and recognize that we always react to "external" forces in order to exert our own subjectivity. It is therefore nonsensical to try to affirm our independence from the world, since we are always at once both created and creative beings. As such we must recognize that others not only hinder but enhance our own subjectivity. Misguided efforts to dominate the world would cut us off from the sources we need in order to be able to create ourselves.

Thus Spoke Zarathustra would therefore seem to suggest the possibility for a democratic community, since it highlights the importance of reciprocity and shuns

delusions of mastery. Zarathustra himself is in constant search of companions, who will not sheepishly follow him but will be able to engage with him in genuinely inter-active relationships. What is perhaps most striking about Nietzsche's political ideals is that they do not reflect the notions of reciprocity and friendship that Zarathustra considers conducive to human creativity. Mark Warren suggests that this marks a contradiction in Nietzsche's work, since he combines a postmodern philosophy with a pre-modern politics.²⁴ Yet, at the same time, Nietzsche makes it quite clear that the kinds of relationships which Zarathustra covets are inaccessible to him in the modern "democratic" community. According to Nietzsche, only a few exceptional individuals are willing to acknowledge their own limits and subject themselves to the uncertainty of Dionysian life forces. Those who have grown accustomed to the life of comfort in the town are unwilling to plummet towards the abyss for the sake of creativity. They do not want to redeem themselves; they prefer to be redeemed.

In Nietzsche's view, the fear of suffering that dissuades people from joining Zarathustra in his journeys has its roots in suffering itself. Suffering and pity became the basis of the Christian community and encouraged individuals to revel in their pain. Individuals who were all sinners before God turned inward, limiting their active engagement with each other, thereby becoming increasingly assimilated. Rather than strengthening the community, this trend made it unnecessary. Individuals who are clones

²⁴Mark Warren, *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, p. 207.

of one another and consider their home to be in the world beyond, have less need to interact with each other to make a home for themselves on earth. Even this fictitious home was described only negatively as a realm that is devoid of suffering. Democracy in Nietzsche's view, aimed to bring the promised heaven, which is devoid of suffering, back to earth. To diminish suffering, it had to make all people equal: "Indeed, with the help of a religion which indulged and flattered the most sublime herd-animal desires, we have reached the point where we find even in political and social institutions an ever more visible expression of this morality: the *democratic* movement is the heir of the Christian movement"(BGE 202). In so doing, it did away with the need for God and heaven and thereby removed the one thread that united these narcissistic beings into a collectivity. "Democratic" imperatives even impel us to murder God, in an act of revenge against the being that is immune to suffering. Once we begin to pity ourselves, we despise those who are beyond pity and try to overcome our inferiority by negating those who belittle us. We murder God, because he is resistant to the kind of levelling which alleviates our own suffering. Without God, the moral structure which underpinned the herd community was quickly eroded, exacerbating the atomization which in Nietzsche's view was born in Christian culture. Nietzsche was poignantly aware of the dangers endemic to an atomized and conformist society, since it paved the way for authoritarian political structures. The lacuna left by God was all too easily filled by bureaucratic institutions such as the state, or nationalist symbols which provide a common source of identification but did not unite

people.

I would argue that Nietzsche's contempt for democracy and his propensity to lavish praise on aristocratic regimes stems from the exaggerated importance he attributes to suffering. He attributes the banality of democratic social orders to their zealous efforts to eliminate pain. Because Nietzsche too easily identifies suffering with creativity, he extols aristocratic forms of government: "Every enhancement of the type 'man' has so far been the work of an aristocratic society-and it will be so again and again-a society that believes in the long ladder of an order of rank and differences in value between man and man, and that needs slavery in some sense or other"(BGE 257). Nietzsche ignores the extent to which suffering can also be debilitating. Someone who faces starvation on a continuous basis is more likely to worry about staying alive than self creation. If the elite in aristocratic societies are more willing to accept suffering for the sake of creativity, it is because they are immune to its most vicious forms.

Nietzsche sees aristocracies as the only regimes which protect those who are willing to accept the challenges of suffering against the herd who want to spread their conformist venom. These exceptional types must be granted a realm in which they need not be poisoned by the many who want to deny them an outlet for their creativity. The kind of "democratic" reciprocity that is suggested by the gift-giving virtue is anathema to most people, according to Nietzsche, and will only be engaged in by a cultural elite.

Thus, Nietzsche insists that only a class system gives rise to the kind of plurality

of human types that will allow the creative spirit to flourish. He praises the Indian caste system for recognizing that the healthy must be shielded from the sick. Its aim is to "concede to a people the right henceforth to become masterly, to become perfect-to be ambitious for the highest art of living"(AC 57). Furthermore, culture grows only if some people do the menial labour for others: "The essential characteristic of a good and healthy aristocracy, however, is that it experiences itself *not* as a function...but as their *meaning* and highest justification-that it therefore accepts with a good conscience the sacrifice of untold human beings, who, *for its sake* must be reduced and lowered to incomplete human beings, to slaves, to instruments. Their fundamental faith simply has to be that society must *not* exist for society's sake but only as the foundation and scaffolding on which a choice type of being is able to raise itself to its higher task and to a higher state of being" (BGE 258)

Nietzsche's praise of ancient aristocracies should not be confused with an acceptance of modern class systems, which are shaped by material and economic imperatives rather than cultural ones. In fact, Nietzsche might argue that the process of cultural assimilation launched by Christianity in part propelled the incessant race for economic gain endemic to modern societies. Rather than promoting cultural excellence, modern democracies would contribute to the denigration of culture. Oppression is not used to allow the higher classes to develop their capacities to the fullest, by providing them with the leisure time for higher pursuits as Nietzsche would hope. (HAH 238) Rather they

are motivated by the same "base" desires for comfort that in Nietzsche's view are predominant among "weaker" types. In fact, Nietzsche consistently opposes the mechanization of human experience which occurs when too high a premium is placed on labour: "It is clear, what I combat is economic optimism: as if increasing expenditure of everybody must necessarily involve the increasing welfare of everybody. The opposite seems to me to be the case: *expenditure of everybody amounts to a collective loss: man is diminished* -so one no longer knows what *aim* this tremendous process has served"(WP 866). Yet at the same time, he asserted that without drones to perform such baser tasks, no higher types can be bred: "a reverse movement is needed-the production of a synthetic, summarizing, justifying man for whose existence this transformation of mankind into a machine is a precondition, as a base on which he can invent his *higher form of being*"(WP 866).

Nietzsche's emphasis on cultural achievements drives a wedge between culture and other aspects of life. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the sphere in which creativity is to be exercised is left much more open and there is no indication that Zarathustra is necessarily an "artist" in the conventional sense. Thus, Nietzsche fails to examine carefully the conditions under which culture, labour and politics have become divorced from each other and seems to merely accept their separation. Nietzsche implies that a kind of cultural levelling contributed to the incessant pursuit of material goods characteristic of the modern era, without considering the possibility that the reverse is also true. Because he fails to see

the powerful impact of economic forces, he underestimates the extent to which economic inequality might contribute to the cultural corrosion that he witnesses. The fear of powerlessness in the face of these forces is a powerful disincentive to creativity and reciprocity.

Nietzsche might retort that the struggle against domination in the past has forced human beings to become creative and is an ineradicable aspect of human experience. The fact that one must always destroy in order to create makes violence a permanent feature of our existence. The master-slave relationship is a perfect example of the kind of creativity that can emerge from violence. It is inevitable that there will be power struggles when the self creation of one individual or group of individuals interferes with the self creation of others. The process of mediating or resolving these tensions is part of the process of self creation itself. However, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche also makes us aware of the negative aspects of domination, encouraging us to recognize our limits, so that we do not cut ourselves off from "external" sources of growth in a paranoid attempt to secure our own boundaries. Each of us must both command and obey in order to grow. Yet, he notes that in modern societies equality has made individuals more rather than less reluctant to engage in this interplay. Nietzsche ignores the fact that cultural assimilation is also coupled with a profound economic inequality. The desire for growth has been channelled into the economic sphere, where a radical departure from established norms threatens one's survival. Growth is associated with material gain. Inequality thereby

strengthens, rather than undermines the conformist impetus. It is because individuals are only equal in an abstract sense, that they find a figure such as Zarathustra so threatening. They struggle to preserve the modicum of equality that they do enjoy in the cultural sphere, where they are all alike, since it compensates in part for the inequality that pervades other aspects of their lives. Thus, Nietzsche does not consider the possibility that the combination of a cultural levelling with economic inequality, rather than equality itself, prevents them from embracing Zarathustra's ideals.

CHAPTER EIGHT: BODIES AND ETERNITY: NIETZSCHE'S RELATION TO THE FEMININE

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche tries to foster an understanding of life as process which enables us to affirm existence without strangling it by using rigid metaphysical categories or subjecting it to religious asceticism. Interpretations are established and collapsed, not only by replacing them with new interpretations but also by engaging in a kind of disindividuated frenzy which crumbles boundaries between things, and helps us to experience life as a primal unity. Nietzsche emphasizes that neither of these moments is possible without the other, for the construction of interpretations itself contributes to the Dionysian pulse that we must on occasion surrender to. He reminds us that this is not purely an intellectual activity by describing the process of integration and disindividuation at the level of the body. Bodily and cultural drives are interconnected and we are not to reduce one to the other. Rather than simply repeating the mind/body and nature/culture dichotomy upon which much of traditional thought is predicated, Nietzsche insists that in part we reenact what appear to be physical phenomena at the level of culture. Culture is a re-interpretation of the body, which not only transcends it but mimics it. In fact, even the art of interpretation can be learned by reflecting on the activity of the body. As I pointed out in Chapter Six, the body, like the mind is an agent of interpretation that must shape "external" stimuli in order to facilitate its growth. I am not claiming that Nietzsche posits a causal relationship which identifies the body as cause and the mind as

effect. Instead I maintain that for Nietzsche, body and mind are always mutually constitutive.

Since our first experience of the body is through and in relation to a woman, Nietzsche cannot turn a blind eye to the importance of the feminine in philosophy. Because of her reproductive role, women had traditionally been associated with a body that was considered inferior to the mind, and so Nietzsche could not resurrect the body without reassessing the role of women. He is forced to go beyond the crude dichotomy which had equated women with nature and man with culture.

Because we were all part of the maternal body, and yet must differentiate ourselves from her to assume our own identity, woman embodies one of the most fundamental contradictions, namely that between individuation and disindividuation. Thus, for Nietzsche, woman as mother becomes a metaphor not only for the revived body, but for life itself and Nietzsche's ambivalent attitude towards her mirror and/or shape his posture towards life. Yet, because she becomes a symbol for the process of life, which not only sustains us but destroys us, Nietzsche maintains that feminine sexuality is a dangerous whirlwind that threatens to dismember him: "May I here venture the surmise that I *know* woman? That is part of my Dionysian dowry. ..Perhaps I am the first psychologist of the eternally feminine. They all love me-an old story-not counting *abortive* females, who lack the stuff for children. -Fortunately, I am not willing to be torn to pieces: the perfect woman tears to pieces when she loves...Ah, what a dangerous, creeping

subterranean little beast of prey she is"(EH III: 5).

Perhaps the most powerful image of Nietzsche's ambiguity in relation to both the body and to woman is the metaphor of the eternal recurrence of the same. It suggests that our cultural achievements mimic the eternal cycle of birth, as we interact with the past in order to create the future. The eternal return also unveils a spiritual dimension in Nietzsche's thought which is often overlooked because it is cast in very non-traditional terms. Each time we give birth, both physically and culturally, we imitate the eternal process itself while at the same time creating it by engaging in this repetition. This very particular act is at the same time the most universal of acts. Birth becomes a metaphor of the eternal, just as culture becomes a metaphor for birth. As limited beings, we participate in the infinite, shaping it through our participation. Even though there is no all encompassing God or overarching principle that regulates the process, there is still a powerful unity that is spawned by our interactions.

While the use of woman as a metaphor for life could be considered a signal of Nietzsche's profound respect for her, it also makes her a target of his resentment since he arrogates to woman the responsibility for not only man's creation but his destruction. He falsely accuses her of wielding an overwhelming power over him and thus makes her the object of his hatred as well as of his love. It is this fear of woman that helps to account for his misogynist tirades against her. His resentment against her role is typified by his desire to become the masculine mother, thereby eliminating the need for interaction with

women. Thus, while he accepts woman and the contradictions she embodies, he tries to exclude her from his dialogue by becoming woman, indicating that he is fighting the very contradictions he is trying to affirm. While Nietzsche embraced the "truth" of woman, he also resented her for the very truth she represented. Ironically, she once again becomes the object against which man individuates and disindividuates himself rather than becoming a participant in this process herself. Her own participation is deemed unnecessary because she "embodies" this tension in a way that man does not. Nietzsche reifies her maternal body in such a way that it once again becomes the basis for exclusion, refusing to collapse the distinction between woman the metaphor and actual women.

Resentment towards the body

While on the one hand, Nietzsche opens up the possibility of including the feminine in philosophy, he ends up by closing the very door he had opened. However, before discussing Nietzsche's own ambivalent relationship to women, it is important to understand why woman was not only banished from philosophy but denigrated by it. Accounts that repeat the traditional narrative which relegates man to the cultural sphere and woman to the natural sphere are inadequate. According to this story, nature becomes the sacrificial lamb of culture which must wage a war against her untamed and chaotic forces. However, while this describes the relationship between nature and culture that has

been endemic to Western thought, it does not explain its development. One needs to examine what prompted man to silence the voice of nature within himself, and downplay the cultural identity of woman, who after all, also develops and uses language and reason to navigate her way through the natural world. The split between nature and culture which attempted to confine each of the sexes to separate spheres was not natural but contrived, and it is important to try to offer an explanation for such a "segregation".

Nietzsche's analysis of resentment and the master-slave dynamic can be a fruitful starting point for explaining why man engineered this split between nature and culture and relegated the sexes to separate realms. The master-slave scenario is used by Nietzsche to explain the shift towards moral behaviour. He maintains that it was human weakness and the inability to act that prompted slaves to invent moral values which would curtail the actions of the physically overpowering master. Yet, because the slave shared the natural inclinations of the master, the restrictive moral codes would gnaw at his own natural impulses, creating a soul that was divided against itself. It is the fact that the slave used his perceived weakness to create another world in which he himself could become master that proves to be significant when examining the relationship between man and woman.

Man and woman both had their primordial home within the womb, and enjoyed their first intimate relationship with their mother. Moreover, both had to distance themselves from her and endured the pain that forces them to come to terms with their own individuality. The awareness of the pain involved in individuation prompts Nietzsche

to repeat the wisdom of Silenus: "What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to *be* to be *nothing*. But the second best for you is-to die soon"(BT 3). We were part of our mother, and yet are expelled from her body. She represents at once both something we yearn for, and something we must distance ourselves from in order to construct our unique identity. Despite the agony involved, this separation also allows human beings to actively participate in the process of life. Nevertheless, such individuation is never complete, since we always also crave to return to the home which we have had to distance ourselves from. We oscillate between individuation and disindividuation; each moment being incomplete in itself.

Yet, while the movement between individuation and disindividuation produces both suffering and joy, man seems to have had more difficulty in accepting the contradictory nature of his identity. Because the mother is the first being against whom he must individuate himself, he makes her responsible for his agony. At the same time, he can never succeed in cutting himself off completely, and is thus indebted to her. The man's identity is muddled as Oliver points out: "How can this child be a man if he was once part of a woman? In order for the child to be autonomous, he must forget that he was once part of his mother, expelled from the womb."¹ Complete disindividuation is impossible, because he cannot return to her, and yet complete individuation also eludes him because he cannot suppress his longing for her. At any given moment, the mother

¹Kelly Oliver, *Womanizing Nietzsche*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1995), p. 146.

serves as a reminder of both who he is and who he is not, who he wants to be, and who he does not want to be. He cannot escape her presence since it is in relation to her that he first experienced both integration and the pangs of individuation. The knowledge that he wants to both escape from her and go back to him leaves him always grasping for his own identity.

Because she is the first being against and with whom he identifies himself, she represents for him both the agony and the joy of his existence and becomes the symbol of both his highest and lowest impulses.² He forgets his own role in the process of giving birth because it is less immediate than that of the mother. Furthermore, he also forgets that in addition to being the "wellspring" of his agony, woman undergoes the same torment as he does in trying to forge an identity for herself. He ignores the fact that she is not only his mother but also his sister. His first experience of life was through her and thus she comes to represent for him the process of living himself. He has made a symbol of her and then reifies this symbol, transferring both his hopes and his disillusionment onto her.

It is easier for man to turn woman into such a symbol because of her sexual difference from him. We do not tend to make scapegoats out of figures who are identical to us. Man then feels compelled to define his identity against woman not only because of her sexual difference but because of the enormous power he attributes to her. Like the

²Cultural symbols of the woman as both Eternal Feminine and whore attest to this attitude.

slave, he negates her in order to affirm himself: "Slave morality from the outset says No to what is not 'outside', what is 'different', what is "not itself" and this No is its creative deed"(GM I. 10). However, the slave is contemptuous of the master, not only because the master is different from him, but because the master's "outpourings of strength" prevent the slave from unleashing his own. Not only the master's difference from the slave but also his similarity to him gives rise to the slave's resentment. Even though the desires of the slave may not be different from those of his master, the slave must turn the master into his opposite in order to create an identity for himself. He then forces the master to become like him if he wants to remain human. The sexual difference between man and woman prevents man from turning her into himself and therefore his only way to resume control over her is to dominate her. Because he cannot make her like him, he must make her inferior to him. He must actively forge differences between them so that he feels like he has escaped her clutches. Gendered relationships are created in order to reinforce sexual differences.

In order for man to disentangle himself from woman, he carved out a world in which he would be master. Evidently, he could not take control of the reproductive realm, so he monopolized the world of culture and set it up in opposition to that of nature, driving a wedge between the two. Thus, woman is not scorned because of her connection to nature, nature is scorned because of its connection to woman. Culture is privileged and the body denounced, because his first connection to woman is through her body. Because

he can never really flee from his desire for her, his resentment is exacerbated by the very symbols that are meant to diminish her, since these act as poignant reminders of his longing. Phallic symbols that dot the landscape of Western cities become expressions of his power, but not of his love, because this would remind him too closely of the home he has tried to leave behind. Through them, he celebrates his ability to sever his connection with the womb. Yet, in doing this, he only adds fuel to the fires of resentment. Like the beleaguered slave, he cuts himself off from the "natural roots" that he longs to go back to: "the result of a forcible sundering from his animal past, as it were a leap and plunge into new surroundings and conditions of existence, a declaration of war against the old instincts upon which his strength, joy and terribleness had rested hitherto"(GM II. 16).

O'Brien also describes the resentment directed against women due to their reproductive role. She too dispenses with the traditional narrative which explains the inferiority of women by viewing reproduction as a handicap: "Traditional wisdom says: Women are naturally trapped in the childbearing function/ Women therefore cannot participate in social life on equal terms with men..Therefore the liberation of women depends on their being freed from this trap."³ Instead she argues that male exclusion from genetic continuity impels them to "make principles of continuity."⁴ Males assert control over a cultural and economic realm because of the minimal role they play in the process

³Mary O'Brien, *The Politics of Reproduction*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 20.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 33

of reproduction itself. In the act of copulation the male seed is alienated and his paternal connection to the child is an abstract one. Yet, O'Brien also points out that while the male "alienates the individual seed in copulation, the woman alienates the unified and transformed form of the originally opposing seeds in the act of giving birth."⁵ As a result the role that man plays in the process is not self evident. Consequently, the world from which man is excluded is deemed inferior, allowing him to affirm his own superiority. Man's insecurity about his own identity, thus stems from his own alienated role in the process of birth, both as father and as son. Woman becomes both a creator in a way that he cannot be, and the home that he cannot have. It is the overestimation of her powers and his inability to recognize his own role in the cycle of birth, rather than an underestimation of her powers that allows his resentment to poison him and impels him to try to monopolize the realm of culture.

The woman's body and psyche too are ravaged by the tensions of individuation and disindividuation. However, because of her sexual in-difference in relation to her mother, a resentment of the mother would also be a resentment of herself. She cannot as easily find an external scapegoat that she can hold accountable for her own suffering because in blaming her mother she would also be accusing herself. Thus, unlike the male, she cannot establish the same rigid dichotomy between herself and her mother. For her it is more obvious that the tension between herself and her mother is also an internal one. This is not

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 31.

to say that a woman is not tormented by difference or individuation. However, her resentment cannot as easily be turned outward because of the sexual "in-difference" to her mother.

Nevertheless, man's resentment against woman helps foster woman's resentment against herself. Surrounded by a cultural realm which man has appropriated and turned against her, she attempts to extirpate the traces of nature within herself in order to participate in a process from which she has been excluded. Man establishes a realm from which she is barred and this makes her crave the forbidden fruit even more. She seeks to reclaim this world for herself, but thinks that in order to do so, she must leave behind the world of "nature" which she has been forced into. Nietzsche's objections to the European feminist movement, while reprehensible also reflect a deeper understanding. On one level, he explicitly advocates the suppression of woman: "a man... must always think about a woman as *Oriental*s do: he must conceive of woman as a possession, as property that can be locked, as something predestined for service and achieving her perfection in that"(BGE 239). At the same time, he is protesting against a wholehearted embrace of what have been traditionally considered to be male virtues, at the expense of what are considered to be female virtues. It is the either/or approach that Nietzsche inveighs against: "To be sure, there are enough imbecilic friends and corrupters of woman among the scholarly asses of the male sex who advise woman to defeminize herself in this way and to imitate all the stupidities with which 'man' in Europe, European 'manliness' is sick; they would like to

reduce woman to the level of a 'general education,' probably even of reading the newspapers and talking about politics"(BGE 239). While he inveighs against the exclusion of feminine virtues, he does not allow woman to reclaim the cultural realm from which she has been forcibly excluded even though he insists on a "reproductive" role for man. In doing so, he will end up recreating the very rift between nature and culture that he was trying to overcome.

Ambiguity of woman

Thus far, I have pointed out that woman's symbolic role as a "source" of both integration and individuation prompts man to exclude her. If throughout the course of history she is associated with nature, it is due to the overestimation of her powers rather than a confirmation of her weakness. Man would not have to construct an entire cultural apparatus to justify the exclusion of women, if she was predominantly shaped by her biology. The ingenuity of patriarchal culture lay in its capacity to polarize the relationship between men and women and then claim that this polarization was natural. Ironically, Nietzsche uses motherhood, which has traditionally been identified with nature, to collapse the distinction between nature and culture, arguing that woman have a greater sensitivity to the interrelationship between the two. Her role in giving birth makes her recognize that nature can never be engulfed by culture and attunes her to the interrelationship between

individuation and integration.

Nietzsche uses the maternal body as a metaphor for life, because our first experience of life is through her. Moreover her body plays out the dynamic between individuation and disindividuation which I have argued is crucial to Nietzsche's philosophy. During pregnancy there are no boundaries separating the baby from its mother while the pain during labour makes her very aware of these boundaries. She does not merely represent the fluidity of nature, but also its more jagged edges. A baby does not simply flow out of the womb, it emerges after much agony and labour. There is perhaps no more potent reminder of the suffering involved in individuation than during the act of giving birth. Yet, at the same time, through such individuation we become integrated into the current of life.

Nietzsche acknowledges woman's ambiguity while gazing upon the sea. Here she represents both the ocean, a vast cauldron of primordial power, as well as a being which glides elegantly over its surface, seemingly unaffected by the turbulence below: "When a man is in the midst of *his* hubbub, in the midst of the breakers of his plots and plans, he there sees perhaps calm, enchanting beings glide past him, for whose happiness and retirement he longs-*they are women*. He almost thinks that there with the women dwells his better self; that in these calm places even the loudest breakers still as death, and life itself a dream of life. But still! But still! my noble enthusiast there is also in the most beautiful sailing-ship so much noise and bustling, and alas, so much petty, pitiable

bustling! The enchantment and the most powerful effect of women is, to use the language of philosophers, an effect at a distance , an *actio in distans*; there belongs thereto, however , primarily and above *distance*"(GS II. 59). The man is fearful of being engulfed by the sea, and deduces that he must try to capture it. The woman, on the other hand, is a mistress of deception, not because she shrouds the truth, but because she recognizes that culture can never control nature. She recognizes that she can never become one with nature, nor can she separate herself from it, and therefore she glides over its surface. Nietzsche claims that woman uses the rational language of philosophers at a distance, recognizing that it can neither represent nor embrace her entire reality. This realization accounts for her calm pose. Ironically, it is because she is aware of the complexity of the relationship between nature and culture that she is not engulfed by it. Man, on the other hand, is in the "midst of a hubbub" because he tries to capture nature through his cultural inventions. He assumes that the "impurity" of his concepts amount to the victory of nature over him. He refuses to accept his limitations, whereas she does not and hence while the two of them are on the same ocean, he is in a hubbub, while she glides off in the distance. She remains in the distance for him, because she refuses to either capture or be captured.

In an episode of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, entitled "The Dance Song", Life and Wisdom are represented by two women who are embroiled in a playful dance. Neither one can be reduced to the other. Life laughs at the man's caricature of her, in which she

becomes the unfathomable: "'All fish talk like that.' you said; 'What *they* cannot fathom is unfathomable. But I am merely changeable and untamed and in everything a woman, and no virtuous one'"(Z II. 10). She is neither comprehensible nor incomprehensible, because she is movement. In trying to comprehend her, we merely join her in her dance of change. Wisdom grows out of our love for life since we need maps to navigate our way through the chaos: "But that I am fond of Wisdom, and often too fond, is because she very much reminds me of life"(Z II. 10). By using wisdom to navigate our way through life, we join life. Life and wisdom are inseparable and yet cannot be reduced to each other. The love of the boat really reflects the deeper love of the sea; it makes no sense to construct a boat if we wanted to avoid all contact with the ocean. At the same time, if we did not need protection against the ocean, a vessel would be unnecessary. Thus, when Zarathustra tells life that he loves wisdom, she slyly asks him if he is not really expressing his adoration of her: "But whom are you speaking of..of me surely?"(Z II.10).

Nietzsche has painted a portrait of a woman that refuses to resolve the contradictions between individuation and disindividuation, suffering and joy. She represents both the turbulent waters and the graceful figure that flits across it. Nietzsche suggests that it is her recognition that she cannot conquer the water which accounts for the ease of her journey. She uses the language of culture at a distance, because she recognizes that she can never capture nature and therefore refuses to set up a hierarchical relationships between them.

Derrida appropriates Nietzsche's understanding of woman in *Spurs, Nietzsche's Styles*, arguing that she is the "undecidable" and becomes his metaphor for a deconstructive reading of texts. I should point out that Derrida uses the term "text" very broadly, and it can refer to everything from the manuscript at hand, to "life" in general. He thereby purports to avoid making presumptions about the essence of the entity with which he "engages." His alleged aim in reading these texts is to do away with hierarchical oppositions, refusing to identify its "essence" so that the reader can explore a multiplicity of meanings. Yet, by "privileging" the deconstructive task in this way, he seems often to lose sight of the role that exclusion plays in the constitution of meanings, even the multiple meaning that he celebrates. Furthermore, it is impossible to unveil the hidden contradictions that disrupt the unity of the text without first assessing what is "fundamental" to it. Nietzsche on the other hand, would argue that deconstruction is always part of a process which also involves reconstruction, and therefore it should not be reified. We need to establish boundaries in order to live. For him, woman becomes not only a symbol for deconstruction, but for the unity in life, a unity which Derrida would vehemently object to. For Nietzsche, life is not just text, for the notion of text suggests maintaining a distance from life which Nietzsche would find disconcerting.

Derrida's aim is to give voice to that which has been rendered voiceless by the exclusionary interpretive practices that have dominated Western metaphysics. While Nietzsche would argue that exclusion is inevitable, he would agree with Derrida that the

absolutization of certain truths is destructive. By shaking up a homogenous foundation, Derrida claims to be engaging in a "feminine operation": "Thus the style would seem to advance in the manner of a *spur* of sorts. Like the prow, for example, of a sailing vessel, its *rostrum*, the projection of the ship which surges ahead to meet the sea's attack and cleave its hostile surface. ..So, it seems, style also uses its spur as a means of protection against the terrifying, blinding mortal threat of that which *presents* itself, which obstinately thrusts itself into view."⁶ On one level, by unsettling predominant male truths, Derrida seems to suggest that women's actions are liberatory. Yet, on the other hand, by arguing that her role is primarily a deconstructive one, he denies her the opportunity to construct "exclusionary" meanings of her own, which allow her to mark her place in the world. She only de-marcates. Thus, he forces her to engage in a process whereby she defines herself against what she is not, rather than allowing her to create her own meanings, that would "deconstruct" the predominantly masculine ones not by simply piercing their veil but by offering alternatives.

Derrida goes even further and claims that he can adopt her undecidability and can "speak as woman." Once again he has the advantage because he can speak both as woman and as man. In doing so he is, as Oliver asserts "throwing the baby out with the bathwater."⁷ As a result, "not only is there no more opposition, but also there is no more

⁶Jacques Derrida, *Eperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 39.

⁷Kelly Oliver, *Womanizing Nietzsche*, p. 66.

difference; we can no longer tell the difference we cannot decide."⁸ She notes that by assuming the position of woman, Derrida does away with difference itself.

Nietzsche's philosophy is more dangerous than that of Derrida for he insists that prior to noticing internal dualities, we must draw sharp boundaries that divide us. Violence cannot always be avoided in the process, and thus the old woman in Zarathustra exhorts him to take the whip when he goes to woman: "Are you visiting woman, do not forget the whip"(Z I. 18). Nietzsche, goes further than de Beauvoir who recognized that women were not born but made. He suggests that we are made men and women because we are born as such. In other words, the obvious sexual differences between us impel us to create other differences which "reinforce" them. For Nietzsche, there can be no love without hatred. Without the slave's resentment of the master, he would not have learned to become master of his own instincts. The external divide between master and slaves accentuated the internal divisions which allowed the sovereign individual to flower. Thus, the exclusion of difference is as important as the embrace of it. Without drawing distinct boundaries which encircle the self and the other, we could not unveil traces of the other within the self. Once we have noticed the internal dualities, a less violent and more inclusive relationship with the other may be possible. Thus, Nietzsche is implying that tolerance is always preceded by intolerance, and that harmony cannot exist without prior discord. Derrida tries to tame Nietzschean contradictions by reducing everything to

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 66

difference.

There can be no difference without exclusion. If I am to savour the Dionysian aspect of a piece of music, I must unwind to free myself of my Apollonian rationality. Similarly, if I am to appreciate the symmetry and serenity of an Apollonian sculpture, I must muffle the Dionysian tempest within, otherwise I could not contemplate its outlines. What we have excluded always comes back to reclaim our attention. If I am in the midst of the Dionysian frenzy, the Apollonian calm can be appealing, just as the tired sailor appreciates the sight of land. However, the serenity of Apollo can appear stale when we are confronted with Dionysian exultant excess and so land locked creatures begin to long for the ocean. Apollo can jolt us out of a state of intoxication and Dionysus can relieve us from the static repose of Apollo upon making his dramatic entrance. Neither Apollo nor Dionysus can do without the other, yet they cannot be collapsed into each other. It is the movement between them that is so vital for Nietzsche.

While Nietzsche praises woman for the recognition of the contradictory relationship between individuation and integration, this has problematic implications, for it puts her in a disadvantageous relationship towards the male. He alone practices the art of exclusion and thus she is prohibited from participating in the very process that she allegedly epitomizes. He defines her boundaries and his, while she does not even define her own. Her relationship to integration and individuation becomes purely passive. To make matters worse, Nietzsche robs women of the motherhood which allegedly defines her

being and his texts abound with images of the masculine progenitor. Perhaps the most grotesque parody of the process of birth appears in the figure of Nietzsche's warrior. Here it becomes clear how woman's "embrace" of difference can be used to subjugate her, allowing the figure that excludes to gain the upper hand. In a curious role reversal, Nietzsche describes a male warrior who becomes the wellspring of life and is pursued by the woman, wisdom. The warrior becomes the incarnation of bodily desires, growth and sexual energy, while wisdom derives her nourishment from the male figure. Oliver suggests that Nietzsche puts the warrior in the passive position, while the woman becomes the active lover.⁹ However, she loves because she cannot stand on her own. He is the fountainhead of her energy and the depth to her surface: "And woman has to obey and find a depth for her surface. Woman's nature is surface, a changeable, stormy film upon shallow waters. But a man's nature is deep, its torrent roars in subterranean caves: woman senses its power but does not comprehend it." (Z I. 18)

Although man becomes the mother to woman, his motherhood is very different from that of woman since it is premised on exclusion. Violence and destruction are assumed to be the primary force in life. By using the warrior to symbolize a virile sexuality, Nietzsche pays tribute to the glory of destruction. The warrior dislodges the traditional and the sacred, making way for a new kind of vitality. Creativity follows in the wake of such decimation: "Man should be trained for war and woman for the recreation

⁹Kelly Oliver, *Womanizing Nietzsche*, p. 22.

of the warrior: all else is folly"(Z I. 18). The warrior in turn feigns indifference to her advances which only intensifies her lust: "Unconcerned, mocking, violent-thus wisdom wants us: she is a woman and always loves only a warrior"(Z I. 18) Nietzsche fantasizes about a man who is independent of woman but on whom woman is dependent. His energy is conceived out of himself, and she is ineluctably drawn towards him. However, her love is not reciprocated: "But let this be your honour: always to love more than you are loved and never to be second in this"(Z I. 18). He refuses to actively engage with her: "One should speak about women only to men"(Z I.18). By speaking to women about herself, one might invite her to participate in a dialogue. Man must conquer woman, not interact with her. It is in vanquishing woman, that the warrior guarantees his own rebirth.

Thus, in desiring the warrior, the woman desires her own self-destruction. Once she submits to intercourse with the warrior, she is possessed and becomes the fertile soil out of which the warrior grows. Her role is thus to surrender herself: "The man's happiness is 'I will. The woman's happiness is 'He will'"(Z I. 18). If man is the destroyer, woman is that to be destroyed. Yet, this constitutes the kind of negation born of resentment which Nietzsche scorns. The need to vanquish her points to the warrior's own impotence for he realizes that he can never appropriate her. He must destroy her, so that he is able to possess her. Instead of interacting with that which is different in order to create something new, the warrior destroys what is different so that he has no need to

change himself and can remain self-identical. This is a direct repudiation of the principles of reciprocity symbolized in Nietzsche by the gift-giving virtue I described in Chapter Seven. Rather than allowing male and female to contribute to each other's growth, Nietzsche envisions a world in which the male would contribute to female growth, and she would contribute nothing except her desire for him.

Therefore, the warrior unwittingly cuts himself off from the kind of growth and flourishing which Nietzsche praises. Change arises out of an interaction with something that is not the self. There is no such thing as pure self transformation. Self transformation is always at the same time transformation by an-other. We become ourselves through that which is not the self. In speaking to men about women, Nietzsche like Freud, is really speaking to men about men. He cannot speak about women, without first speaking to women. The women that he speaks about are his own creations. Even the female body that nurtures and reproduces the male warrior, is really only an extension of himself. In this way, he is able to give birth to himself. In "Speaking of Immemorial Waters", Irigaray points out that the woman in Nietzsche's text is only made in his image. His love for her does not transcend self love: "I am good or bad according to your latest good or evil. Muse or fallen angel to suit the needs of your most recent notion."¹⁰

Sexual difference becomes an important reminder of the importance of difference

¹⁰Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 11.

itself. Men and women cannot be reduced to each other, and the continuity of the species depends on the irreconcilable differences between them. At the same time, the differences between them can also impel them to see contradictions within. The woman sees the man in herself, while the man sees the woman in himself. Yet, as Irigaray points out this kind of reciprocity has not marked relationships between men and women. Man has used woman as a mirror to project his own image back to himself, rather than allowing her to reflect back a different image. While he actively shapes her identity, he does not allow her to shape his. Irigaray refers to this as a hom(m)o-sexual economy which refuses to engage in exchanges with women.

In *Marine Lover*, Irigaray poses as Nietzsche's lover who refuses to resume her prescribed role: "I am no longer the lining to your coat-your faithful-understudy. Voicing your joys and sorrows, your fears and resentments. You had fashioned me into a mirror, but I have dipped that mirror in the waters of oblivion -that you call life. ..I have washed off your masks and make up, scrubbed away your multicoloured projections and designs, stripped off your veils and wraps that hid the shame of your nudity. I have even had to scrape my woman's flesh clean of the insignia and marks you had etched upon it."¹¹

The book abounds with images of water, representing both the amniotic fluid and the waters of life of which Nietzsche lives in mortal dread: "One knows of the desire

¹¹Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, tr. G.C. Gill, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 4.

Nietzsche had to be a mother, and how much he suffered from not being able to be one. The marine element is therefore both the amniotic fluids, the deepest marine element which can't simply be an appearance and to which Nietzsche will never return, which escapes him forever, and it is also, it seems to me, something which represents feminine *jouissance* quite well."¹² Thus, Irigaray suggests that Nietzsche's desire to be a mother reflects his fear of returning to the womb he longs for: "Endless is your despair and your rage to destroy even the very beginning of this nothingness."¹³ She insists that she must leave him, in order to remind him of the importance of her difference: "If I no longer serve as your passage from back to front, from front to back, your time will let another day dawn."¹⁴ Once she has had the opportunity to individuate herself, she can return to him, not as a mirror but as a lover who challenges his boundaries as well as allowing her boundaries to be challenged by him.

Man cannot be reduced to woman and woman cannot be reduced to man. Both woman and man see reflections of themselves in each other and yet confront in each other a terrifying image of what they are not. Only by reflecting on each other's differences, can they begin to discover the elements of the other within themselves. The battle between man and woman occurs not only between them but also within them. However, these

¹²Luce Irigaray, *Le Corps-à-Corps avec la mère*, (Montréal: Les Editions de la pleine lune, 1981), p. 48-49.

¹³Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, p. 7.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 4

differences do not simply exist, they are created. To accentuate them, we impose a form on ourselves that muffles internal contradictions. Knowing cannot take place without exclusion. At the same time, without recognizing that the differences between each other are also internal differences, we would not recognize the other. Nietzsche could not recognize woman if she did not represent a part of himself. We recognize the other, because s/he is the self, and because s/he is not the self.

The eternal return and the "masculine mother"

Having paid tribute to the maternal body of women, Nietzsche repays her by redoubling his effort to exclude her. He disembodies her, allowing her to remain only a symbol that is relegated to the periphery of his world. Yet, rather than trying to remove all traces of the mother from his Garden of Eden, he becomes the masculine mother who will give birth to his own children: "'but blessed is he who is thus pregnant! And in truth, he who wants to kindle the light of the future must hang long over the mountains like a heaven storm"(Z III.16). It is in his theory of the eternal return of the same that Nietzsche allows his desire for motherhood to surface most forcefully. In giving birth, a woman performs an act that in some ways is identical to that of many other women who preceded her. Yet, in doing so, she brings a completely new life into existence. Thus, in repeating what many other women have done before her, she creates a unique individual, that has

never existed before and will never exist again. Although the child carries within her traces of both her parents, she is also distinct from both of them.

All our cultural achievements in some sense mimic the act of giving birth. Each of our actions contains the residue of the past, since we use the past selectively, weeding out elements that do not suit us. The future is both an affirmation and repudiation of the past, since it emerges in reaction to it. Thus, Zarathustra points out that past and future flow in opposing directions: "They are in opposition to one another, these paths; they abut on one another: and it is here at this gateway that they come together. The name of the gateway is written above it: 'Moment'"(Z III. 2). Yet, each time we enter the gateway we walk in the direction of the future and the past simultaneously. Since each moment is a culmination of past moments, we revisit the past in creating the future. At the same time, there is also an element of novelty that sets each moment apart from its predecessors. Because each moment in the past is pregnant with the future, and each future moment contains the residue of the past they can never be completely disentangled. Y e t , Nietzsche draws attention to the fact that this process itself is continuously repeated, accounting for the circularity of time: "But if one were to follow them further and ever further and further: do you think, dwarf, that these paths would be in eternal opposition.. 'Behold this moment!' I went on. 'From this gateway Moment a long, eternal lane run *back*: an eternity lies behind us. Must not all things that *can* have run have already run along this lane? Must not all things that *can* happen *have already happened*,

been done, run past?"(Z III. 2). Regardless of where I am, I always find myself at a crossroads between past and future and it is this moment that is being continuously repeated.

Despite the obvious relationship between the eternal return and the process of birth, Irigaray berates Nietzsche for using it to reject the feminine other: "And your whole will, your eternal recurrence, are these anything more than the dream of one who neither wants to have been born, nor to continue being born, at every instant, of a female other."¹⁵ She insists that the eternal return is the most profound testament to Nietzsche's resentment, since Nietzsche affirms the return of the same without allowing for the existence of the other. She maintains that Nietzsche tries to escape his associations with the earth, preferring instead to join Plato in the mountains from which he can survey the entirety of existence. She uses the symbol of the nuptial ring in order to highlight Nietzsche's exclusion of difference: "in the eternal return, she (woman) attends your wedding celebration, she (woman) takes part in it, but you yourself are bride and groom."¹⁶ Instead of giving birth through intercourse with the other, Nietzsche gives birth only to himself: "And your whole will, your eternal recurrence, are these anything more than the dream of one who neither wants to have been born, nor to continue being born, at every instant,

¹⁵Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 26.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 32

of a female other."¹⁷ He is only able to return to the mother, by becoming her.

According to Irigaray, by collapsing present and future into the moment, Nietzsche endeavours to erase not only his own birth but also his death. The death of God means that Nietzsche can no longer cling to the promise of eternal life and must confront his own death. Nietzsche reacts by once again turning away from both death and birth and refusing to accept his own finitude. His death is connected to his birth and therefore he rejects his mother. Thus, Irigaray accuses Zarathustra of giving voice to the same resentment towards life and death as his Christian predecessors. Rather than rejoicing in the interplay between creation and destruction, the eternal return rejects finitude once more by revelling in the moment.

Given that the eternal return serves as a reminder that our cultural achievements in part mimic the reproductive process, it is perhaps unfair of Irigaray to claim that Nietzsche forgets the earth. He does not scorn the depths by seeking out only mountains and height. The tale begins with Zarathustra's down-going and he always wanders between the ocean and the peaks. Yet, while Nietzsche wants to reaffirm his connection to the earth and to the depths, he makes every effort to minimize the connection of women to these realms. He tries to affirm the primordial waters of life, without affirming woman.

In the end, Nietzsche ends up by launching a cultural assault on the body, as Irigaray suggests, despite his careful efforts to avoid this. Perhaps his problem is that he does not

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 26.

properly acknowledge the distance between nature and culture and therefore ends up recreating the rift between them. Culture can mime nature, because it is different from nature. Yet, by attempting to become a masculine mother, Nietzsche neglects this insight. In doing so, he tries to assert his independence from the feminine body, eliminating his need for a genuine intercourse with woman. His adoration for the maternal body evolves into a pernicious contempt. By becoming a masculine mother, he once again strips woman of the one role he admires her for, and tries to engulf the natural realm. In doing so, he cannot help reverting to the Platonic contempt for nature. Try as he might, he cannot give birth to children, and thus they can only be "engendered from a language body alone."¹⁸ By leaving the woman out of the eternal return entirely, he once again privileges culture over nature. This is highly ironic, given his intentions to avoid doing precisely this.

On the other hand, his attempt to appropriate her may also signal a tacit acknowledgement on his part that he cannot transcend his own propensity to exclude her. His desire to become the mother proves that he can never be her. Unlike her, he cannot accept his limitations. This irony surfaces in a passage where he describes being pregnant upon a mountaintop. The mountain is a symbol of masculine ascendancy that is far removed from the primordial waters of birth: "But blessed is he who is pregnant! And in truth, he who wants to kindle the light of the future must hang long over the mountains

¹⁸Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, p. 65

like a heavy storm!" (Z III. 16). He can only conceive in an ethereal realm removed from the earth. Nietzsche thereby confirms that the masculine birth is limited to mimicry and metaphor.

Nietzsche's ambivalent relation towards woman reflects his ambivalent relation towards life. In giving birth to him, she gives him his life, but she also sets him on the road towards his death. Much of his life is dedicated to fending off the grim reaper. He must rebel against death in order to affirm life, even though there is no life without death. The shepherd must forcefully bite off the serpent's head in order to emerge laughing: "The shepherd, however, bit as my cry had advised him; he bit with a good bite! He spat far away the snake's head-and sprang up. No longer a shepherd, no longer a man-a transformed being, surrounded with light, *laughing!* Never yet o earth had any man laughed as he laughed!"(Z III.2). The serpent, coiled up in the shape of a ring, crawls into the throat of the shepherd while he is asleep and represents the destructive aspect of life. Life which nurtures us can also choke us, and therefore our rebellion against it must sometimes be violent. Every birth is preceded by a woman's nausea, and our disgust with life can never be fully overcome. While Nietzsche recognizes that he must rebel against death in order to live, he simply assumes that such a revolt necessarily constitutes a rebellion against woman.

Even if Nietzsche were to recognize his misguided propensity to equate woman with death, he would still argue that the relationship between man and woman cannot

avoid exclusion. The oppositions we confront cannot always dissolve into a friendly play of difference. Woman and man will both unite and remain in combat because of their differences. For Nietzsche, there can be no heaven on earth without hell. The multifarious battles raging both within individuals and between them will never cease and can leave many victims in its wake. Yet, the female leads to the male and the male leads to the female. Their rebellion against contradictions between them makes them aware of the contradictions within. Even though man and woman can never sing in unison, it is in alternating between them that we form a melody.

Marrying eternity

Nietzsche refuses to engage in an interplay with woman, and stresses the conflictual aspect of their relationship. Instead of marrying her, he marries eternity: "Never yet did I find the woman by whom I wanted children, unless it be this woman, whom I love: for I love you, O Eternity!" (Z III. 16). This is very ironic, since many of his conclusions about the nature of eternity mimic his relationship to woman. He cannot relinquish his desire to become woman, despite the impossibility of doing so. Because woman offers him a precious morsel, he cannot always resist the temptation to try and devour her. We would not struggle to grow, if we were not dissatisfied with our limitations. Nietzsche depends on woman to restrain an appetite that can be destructive.

He keeps chasing her because he wants to experience her in her entirety. She deprives him of this opportunity, because to surrender to him would be to discontinue the chase. Furthermore, he can never really have her, because he cannot be her. The desire to own her disguises his own desire to be her. Her difference makes the chase possible and it is the chase itself that Nietzsche invests with the greatest significance. If I could become the other, then my activity would cease. Nietzsche would agree with Derrida and Deleuze, that we can never appropriate the other. However, unlike these philosophers of difference, he does not overlook the importance of the attempt.

The profundity of woman for Nietzsche inheres in her shallowness, for she recognizes that one can only savour of the whole and cannot consume it. The child that is her creation is the outcome of an interaction rather than an appropriation. She gives birth to it, by joining with a man, who is not herself. She sees the identity in difference and the difference in identity: "Perhaps truth is a woman who has reasons for not letting us see her reasons? Perhaps her name is-to speak Greek-Baubo? Oh those Greeks! They knew how to live. What is required for that is to stop courageously at the surface, to fold the skin, to adore appearances in form, tones, words in the whole Olympus of appearance"(GS P. 4).

For Nietzsche, the truth of woman is more difficult to accept, and he continuously tries to appropriate the mother that he can neither return to nor be. Yet, the failure to appropriate also becomes the source of our creativity. Nietzsche remarks that it is the

mystery of woman that makes her seductive. She is always beyond her suitor's grasp and thus he assumes that her meaning is hidden. She escapes his clutches, not because she dons elaborate masks, but because she is not him. At the same time, if he did not recognize himself in her, he would not be so overwhelmed by the need to have her. In the process of trying to unearth her elusive "hidden meaning" we create our own. Thus, it is difference that incites us to create. Although we can never fill the gaps we long to fill, the awareness of their existence impels us to give birth to something new.

Nietzsche's relationship with eternity closely resembles his relationship to woman and is marked by both discord and unity. In "At Noontide" he appears to fall into eternity, experiencing timelessness, and wakes up to discover that no time has elapsed since he has gone to sleep. By completely immersing himself in the moment, he has immersed himself in the whole, and has been blessed with a glimpse of eternity itself. Only by surrendering to the finite, can he experience the whole: "What? Has the world not just become perfect? Oh, perfect as a round, golden ball?"(Z IV. 11) The feeling of harmony he experiences helps to sustain him throughout his journey and endure the contradictions that torment him. The circular nature of the ring of recurrence, suggests that Nietzsche does conceive of eternity as a whole, while challenging many of the fundamental conceptions that we would customarily associate with such a "totality." Eternity does not take the shape of a God that casts his eyes down upon the process of life. Nor is it a whole whose parameters can be neatly sketched out. After all, it is impossible to identify

the beginning or the end of the circle. Nevertheless it still forms a unity, and because of this, it fills Zarathustra's soul with love and longing.

Eternity usually comes to Nietzsche in the shape of the woman, not because she *is* eternity, but because the rhythms of her body suggest it. Observing the role that woman plays in the process of birth and rebirth enables Nietzsche to catch a glimpse of eternity itself. Furthermore, the cultural recreation of these biological processes also allow human beings to not only participate in but shape the whole of which we are a part. As I pointed out earlier, we reflect on our biological experiences and reproduce them through language, music, history, etc and in the process re-experience the body itself. Nietzsche suggests that just as culture imitates nature, thereby transforming it, each act of birth, be it physical and/or cultural, re-creates eternity itself. We are imitating eternity, in the same way that culture imitates nature. Yet, paradoxically, while we imitate eternity, it also only exists due to our imitations of it. It constitutes neither the source of our actions, nor their culmination, but both. An acknowledgement of this sort should dissuade Nietzsche from holding a woman accountable for his death, since even she is not the ultimate source. Making her responsible for his suffering is an act tantamount to killing the messenger.

Zarathustra does not love eternity in spite of the fact that he is a mere actor in its drama, but because of this. However, the drama he participates in is an unwritten one that unfolds through his movements. In echoing the rhythm of life, he produces it. It cannot exist without him, and yet he cannot exist without it. Thus, during his "religious"

experiences, Zarathustra does not pay homage to a God that is a grand puppeteer pulling his strings, nor does he think that he is such a god. In fact, rather than becoming one with eternity, he claims he longs to marry it: "Of how should I not lust for eternity and for the wedding ring of rings-the Ring of Recurrence"(Z III. 16). This constitutes a recognition that it shapes him and yet he shapes it. Moreover, in marriage two people join hands, but remain separate in spite of their union. Thus, Nietzsche will affirm the process that gives birth to him, and yet retain his distance from it because it also destroys him. He cannot be one with it and yet, cannot help but be one with it.

The relationship between man and woman can help to cast light on the relationship of human beings to the whole. Nietzsche was well aware of this, for he recognized that he would always fail to become woman. Thus, he could not exclude her although he could not resist attempting to do so. Similarly, we can never become the whole, because it can never become itself. To posit the existence of an infinite being, is to disaffirm the existence of finite beings that comprise the whole. If it were not for beings that fail to become each other, there could be no such thing as infinity for we would all be identical. At the same time, feeling the presence of the whole within me, increases the temptation to try to become it. Zarathustra knows that he comes from his mother and yet the being that gave him life, that is such an integral part of his identity, always remains a mystery to him. We are all created out of a whole whose contours we cannot even begin to discern. Just as we realize that the failure to fully know our mothers is also a failure to know

ourselves, we recognize that the inability to know the infinite prevents us from knowing ourselves. After all, we are the children of eternity. By trying to capture the whole, I am also trying to capture myself, a task which will always be marred by failure. I turn to creation in order to fill the emptiness that pervades my soul. I am eternal in my finitude precisely because I can never become myself.

When Dionysian sensuality induces us to break down individual barriers, we are not transcending the process but feeling its pulse run through us, and we momentarily forget that we are also a starting point, out of which the whole is created. The lucidity of Apollo encourages us to see ourselves as such starting points, while his light temporarily blinds us to the Dionysian whirlwind that sweeps us along. Each of these moments is only possible by momentarily excluding the other. They are not brought together in a synthesis but through the undulating movement between them. Thus, our actions emanate from life, which in turn is determined by our actions. The finite gives birth to the eternal, while the eternal gives birth to the finite. Life is neither a first beginning, nor a Hegelian idea which works itself out through its process. Because there can be no eternal without the finite, and no finite without the eternal, Zarathustra, unlike his Christian counterparts, does not have to frown upon the world in order to embrace the heavens.

Woman as metaphor

Despite Nietzsche's exhortations to acknowledge our connection to the earth and embrace rather than spurn our finitude, the limits of his own willingness to do so become very clear upon examining his relationship to woman. Although he excludes her, he does not do so due to presumptions about her weakness, but due to the power he believes she exercises over him. He overestimates her power by making her a metaphor for life as a whole and then transposes his fear of life onto her. As a result, she who allegedly embodies the tension between integration and individuation is excluded from the very activities that for Nietzsche fuel the process of self creation. She becomes a figure that he keeps at a distance, and he reduces her to a metaphor like the will to power and the eternal recurrence. Because he also recognizes that she is real, he develops a fear of her that induces him to push her even further away.

Examining the role that woman plays in Nietzsche's thought enables one to expose the undercurrents of resentment which ripple through his work. His repeated calls for self creation and the desire for rebirth unveil his latent desire to both sever the connection to the mother and to reestablish this connection. In the relationship between Nietzsche and the mother figure, one can observe the tensions that underlie the process of individuation and integration. We construct Apollonian structures, in order to protect ourselves against a nature that threatens us and yet at the same time, seek to reintegrate ourselves with our

lost home. Our first experience of both individuation and integration occurs not through nature in a "raw", unmediated form but through a cultural being, the mother. Social, cultural and natural forces are intertwined from our very inception. Culture becomes a means not only of making sense of nature by distancing ourselves from it, but is part of the experience of nature itself. Nietzsche is in awe of woman for recognizing that culture and nature can never be completely disentangled. Nevertheless, he continues to wage an assault on woman, not in spite of, but because of her wisdom. In doing so, he cannot help but reproduce the very divisions between nature and culture that he was trying to overcome.

CHAPTER NINE: THE ARTISTRY OF MORALITY AND THE MORALITY OF ART: NIETZSCHE AND ROUSSEAU RECONCILED?

Rousseau and Nietzsche are virulent critics of modernity and at the same time remain two of its most passionate defenders. Leo Strauss argues that the trio of Rousseau, Nietzsche and Machiavelli articulate the modern state of crisis arising from the inability to lay down a framework for realizing the good.¹ Instead of grounding their philosophy in natural law, or in a cosmic conception of the good, Strauss asserts that through them we are "radically liberated from the tutelage of nature."² However, this ignores the fact that it is precisely *in nature* that Rousseau and Nietzsche attempt to ground their philosophy. Because they maintain that we must remake our ties with nature on a continual basis, they refuse to espouse a categorical moral system. History is not set in opposition to nature, as Strauss avers, but demands a continuous readaptation to it. Rousseau and Nietzsche do not refuse to answer the question of how human beings fit into the "natural order." Instead they suggest that the process of adapting or integrating themselves into it is always incomplete. Not only must we recognize that we are historical beings, whose boundaries never congeal, but we must engage in the activity of history, by continuously remaking ourselves. Thus, while I would agree with Ansell-Pearson that Rousseau and

¹Leo Strauss, 'Three Waves of Modernity,' *Political Philosophy: Six Essays*, ed. Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1989), p. 81.

²*Ibid.*, p. 92

Nietzsche are brought together through their common understanding of history, I would go beyond this and suggest that the historical nature of humanity becomes the basis for a new modern ethics which demands a continuous re-making and re-integration into our world. Nietzsche and Rousseau are not relativists for whom "everything is permitted" following the collapse of absolutes. In fact, the absence of such absolutes saddles human beings with an even more profound responsibility for continually reconstituting their relationship with nature and with each other.

Thus, both Nietzsche and Rousseau view "human nature" as fundamentally self transformative, presenting both endless opportunity and agonizing dilemmas. Once saddled with the responsibility for making ourselves at home in the world, we also ensure that we always remain estranged from it. Our actions precipitate changes which we cannot predict, and the "new" world that we have helped to create is an unfamiliar one to us. Alienation becomes an indelible part of the modern psyche. Creating a nest for ourselves is also a process of distancing ourselves from our natural and social roots. In trying to integrate ourselves, we also individuate ourselves.

I have used the concepts of individuation and integration to orient my analysis of Rousseau and Nietzsche. I argue that according to Rousseau, we must constantly seek a reconciliation of these two tendencies by ensuring that one always leads to the other, avoiding the extremes of both. This is what I deduce becomes the basis for his moral philosophy. Nietzsche argues that one must experience the irreconcilable contradictions

between the two tendencies in order to become aware of their interdependence. Nietzsche fears that an overly cautious approach which always avoids "extremes" would cause us to lose sight of their interconnection. Therefore, I would maintain that Nietzsche is not against reconciliation, but rather that he insists that such a reconciliation can only be achieved by fully experiencing the tension between individuation and integration. He is cognizant of the fact that this may threaten the boundaries of any existing community, but also argues that without facing such a threat, it is impossible for the community to renew itself. Because he emphasizes the importance of overstepping existing frontiers and creating new ones, he claims that he is advocating an artistic rather than a moral attitude towards life. While Rousseau fears Nietzsche's "carelessness", Nietzsche fears Rousseau's "caution." Nevertheless, as I will point out, their fears come out of the enormous responsibility they attribute to human beings to create the world of which they are a part. Thus, neither Rousseau nor Nietzsche can be accused of adopting an amoral or immoral posture.

Leaving nature's womb: the birth of the self

Nietzsche and Rousseau needed to find something from which they could take their bearing while formulating their ideals, particularly when reigning moral and social orders had been ravaged by scepticism. Both chose nature as the foundation for their

philosophical edifice. Instead of following their classical predecessors and determining the highest end of human beings, they cast their eyes towards our beginnings in order to formulate their moral and aesthetic philosophies. This shift in orientation has profound implications. First of all, it reflects a new set of priorities which determines that being at home "in the world" rather than beyond it is of paramount importance. In addition, it underlines that the direction that we go in is always in part determined by where we have come from, and since nature is our first home, we need to try to understand it in order to make sense of our own striving.

Both Nietzsche and Rousseau would maintain that our departure from nature is instigated by nature itself. The repetitive patterns within nature attest to a regularity of process that makes us feel at home in the world. Yet, at the same time, irregularities in nature, such as fires and floods disrupt established patterns and seem to shatter our sense of belonging. Our natural instincts are insufficient to cope with the challenges we face, and thus we must develop our own means of survival, thereby becoming creatures that create ourselves. As we begin to reflect on our own activity, we realize that we are always both embraced and threatened by our natural home. We are creatures who cannot take our position in the natural world for granted, and therefore must make a home for ourselves within it.

In my view, it is nature that prevents these two thinkers from espousing a kind of relativism that Nietzsche in particular has been consistently accused of. We are the only

animals that can be evaluated by how well we integrate ourselves into the natural world, since our place in it is not given to us by nature itself. The very fact that Rousseau and Nietzsche invoke nature to judge humanity's "progress" is a testament to our departure from nature since one can only reflect upon nature once we have achieved a certain amount of distance from it. However, this is by no means a simple task because nature itself changes as a result of our interaction with it. In order to provide a touchstone for judging human beings, both Rousseau and Nietzsche are forced to speculate what nature would be like without being transformed at the hands of human beings.

The two thinkers paint a very different portrait of nature prior to its humanization. Rousseau tells the story of the proto-human who enjoys complete equilibrium in the natural world, since his capacities are directly proportional to his needs. The proto-human is content because he is unfamiliar with the agony of striving. He does not develop desires which exceed his needs. Rousseau uses the term "*amour-de-soi*" to refer to this condition of ignorant bliss. This creature lives in immediacy, and instinctively performs the tasks necessary for his self preservation. The rhythms of nature and his own needs are in harmony. The proto-human is separated from others, and yet is also completely integrated into his natural home. He is independent of others because he is completely dependent upon nature.

Once this proto-human can no longer depend upon nature to meet his needs, he loses his independence and becomes human. He both longs for the "independence" he has

surrendered, while at the same time desiring to integrate himself into the social community that now replaces his lost natural home. He can never again be completely integrated into nature, and thus the integration within the community is always an "insufficient substitute". Therefore, he makes an effort to assert his independence from the community that he is a part of. Morality for Rousseau becomes the means by which an equilibrium is established between the desire to individuate oneself from the social community and the need to integrate oneself into it. Only when we have left our proto-human state behind do we begin to recognize the necessity for "returning" to nature. Both the community as a whole and the individuals within it undergo continuous changes as they find new ways of both adapting to and distancing themselves from nature. As a result, the struggle to "restore" the lost equilibrium is a perpetual one.

Nietzsche, like Rousseau points to our contradictory relationship with a nature that is both hostile and nurturing. However, he insists that even an animal's existence is marked by both conflict and harmony. On the one hand, we are under assault from external stimuli and therefore must continuously redefine our limits in order to grow. At the same time, tactile and audible stimuli serve as a reminder that we are to some extent integrated into its world, and feel the rhythm and pulse of life run through us. Thus, from its inception, the body exemplifies a contradictory relationship towards both life and nature. The same life forces which give birth to us also destroy us, and therefore we must not only act in conjunction with them but also against them. For Nietzsche, there is no

harmonious equilibrium which can lend direction to our striving. Our experience with nature is both pleasurable and painful. Striving is a part of the natural process from the very beginning; it does not begin only once we have left nature.

For Nietzsche, life is characterized by the will to power. There is an innate drive in all living things, not only to survive, as in Rousseau, but to expand and grow. This tendency to constantly exceed one's own limits is not only a human creation, but rather is an integral part of the workings of the natural world. We do not bring chaos into the world, we emerge out of its chaos. One creature's desire to grow may stymie the growth of another. Disparate forces exist which force all creatures to continuously fend off unwanted incursions onto their own bodies and their territory. This is in stark contrast to Rousseau, who claims that proto-humans in the state of nature are relatively isolated from another, and that their paths rarely collide. For Nietzsche, conflict as well as harmony characterizes the relationship between all living things. In the process of trying to define its own limits, each body creates new limits for itself. In order to stay the same, it must change, both adapting to and resisting external impetuses. While for Rousseau, contradiction is something that human beings bring to nature, for Nietzsche, contradiction is inherent in nature itself and drives it forward.

The striving which for Nietzsche is part of the natural process, is for Rousseau a phenomenon that develops in conjunction with our self consciousness. According to Rousseau, the birth of self consciousness coincides with the movement towards society and

the concomitant emergence of culture. Threats to the survival of the proto-human necessitate increased social cooperation. Here Rousseau too points to a less "benevolent" nature whose natural catastrophes disrupt established patterns of existence. Thus, social behaviour becomes a means by which we adapt to nature and at the same time transcend it. With the disruption of the equilibrium, and an imbalance between needs and capacities to fulfil them, the proto-human's period of ignorant bliss comes to an abrupt end. The calamities thrust upon him by nature force him to invent means of feeding himself. Such an adaptation to nature, is also a process of creating ever new needs and distancing himself from nature.

According to Rousseau, it was an activity such as the hunt which demanded cooperation between human beings and contributed towards the formation of the first communities. Once human beings are enveloped by a community, they are no longer content to tend merely to their natural needs. Ironically, the awareness that they are part of a larger whole coincides with the awareness that they are separated from that whole and also nature. Rousseau uses the term *amour-propre* to account for this paradoxical phenomenon. We begin to compare ourselves to others, and notice that we are both like others and unlike them. We become aware of our own limits, by observing others who are different from us. I am connected to others, and yet at the same time, I am distanced from them. I am forced to try to make myself at home in the world by merging with others and soliciting the recognition of the my peers. Yet, I cannot simply blend in inconspicuously

but must stand out in order to elicit their recognition. The process of individuation and disindividuation are intertwined: I individuate myself in order to build a niche within the social order.

On the one hand, we have a profound desire to integrate ourselves completely into our environment, both social and natural, so that the boundaries separating us from nature as a whole are broken down. On the other hand, we aspire to individuate ourselves, by establishing these very barriers, maintaining a position that is both distant and unique. As I pointed out in Chapter One, in "primitive" communities these two seemingly antithetical tendencies are kept in a balance because the community as a whole grants recognition and our individuality is manifested in a public setting. Therefore I am affirming my membership in the community in the act of setting myself apart. A delicate balance is struck between individuation and disindividuation. The community both gives rise to and imposes limits on the human propensity to strive. It also acts as a kind of buffer zone, which shields us from the harshest aspects of nature.

Nietzsche does not offer as detailed an account of the development of the community as does Rousseau. However, he would concur with his predecessor, that the community is always established in opposition to nature. His early work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, focuses on the suffering and destruction that nature brings, especially in death. Death becomes the ultimate reminder that we are never completely at home in the world and attests to the impermanence of all things. For Nietzsche, the most important task of

the community is not simply to enable human beings to survive in a hostile natural world but to create meanings in an attempt to grapple with the reality of death and suffering. This is what for Nietzsche constitutes art. Nevertheless, his conception of art bears a striking resemblance to Rousseau's conception of morality since it provides a means by which our relationship to nature is continuously renewed. This does not mean that Nietzsche insists that all human beings become artists. Instead he uses art as a metaphor for a certain kind of encounter with nature. The artist recognizes that her "re-creation" of the world always leaves something out and that she must continuously renew her relationship with life by engaging in her creative projects. She is well aware of the fragile nature of what she produces. Yet, the perilous nature of her art also spurs her on. Destruction becomes a catalyst to creation. Meaninglessness precipitates the quest for meaning. It is the vitality of the artist that Nietzsche praises. We cannot protect ourselves against the suffering brought unto us by nature, but we can transform nature and thereby imbue it with meaning. We attempt to liberate ourselves from nature's clutches creating for ourselves a world that we can be attached to. Meaning derives from the process of making the world our home. At the same time, we recognize that nature continuously presents us with new challenges which demand new creative efforts. Thus, the relationship between art and life is a contradictory one in Nietzsche's view. The "homes" that we construct are continuously destroyed. However, this destruction is necessary for renewal. Art is both an act of rebellion against the cycle of creation and destruction and at the same time

participates in this very cycle.

The similarities between the approaches of Nietzsche and Rousseau should not impel us to overlook the differences. By insisting upon an equilibrium between individuation and integration, Rousseau hopes to minimize the amount of suffering we must endure. Nietzsche on the other hand, insists that suffering must be experienced if its meaninglessness is to be "transcended." He praised the Greeks for recognizing the necessity of suffering and using it to create beautiful art. They did not try to expunge the terrifying aspects of life, and instead celebrated it in the dramatic form of tragedy. Tragedy is characterized by the combination of what Nietzsche calls Apollonian and Dionysian tendencies. Dionysus represents an intoxication with life that breaks down all boundaries between things and therefore is both a source of creation and an agent of destruction. Through Dionysus we feel the rhythm of life run through us in all its fury and its glory. We recognize that we are not only agents, but that we are created and destroyed by life. Our own surrender to nature is inevitable. Apollo on the other hand, individuates, highlighting the precise contours of objects and shielding them against the chaos of these primordial Dionysian forces. We covet both the serenity of Apollo and the frenzy of Dionysus, recognizing that we are both created and creative beings. Whereas Dionysus smashes boundaries, Apollo maintains them. Neither one can be reduced to the other and they are interdependent because of their opposition. We would not desire to establish boundaries, if we did not feel the need to protect ourselves against destruction by the

forces of life. At the same time, we long to be "swept" up by life, because the same boundaries that "protect" us against life also distance us from it.

For Nietzsche the intensity of each moment can only be savoured by forcibly excluding the other. If I am to be enraptured in a Dionysian frenzy, then I must let go of my Apollonian thirst for serene contemplation. Conversely if I am to see the lines and boundaries that separate objects, I cannot at the same time be immersed in Dionysian revelry. In order to remember that I am created by life, I must experience what it is alike to relinquish control of my own being, and simply be swept along by life's forces. At the same time, Nietzsche recognizes that the interactions of individuated beings creates the whirlwind which we must on occasion submit to. I both act and am acted upon. In order to understand the entanglement of these processes, I must try to experience these two aspects of my being separately.

It is important to point out that by translating the desire for integration and individuation into art, we are diluting their full impact. Music tames the kind of Dionysian frenzy that was unleashed in bloodthirsty festivals of cruelty and therefore filters out its more destructive aspects. While Rousseau tries to reconcile the contradictions that define our relationship to nature through morality, Nietzsche uses art to express these contradictions in less devastating forms. In order to force us to remember that we are not only nature's "masters" but also her "children", we must remember what it is like to "lose" ourselves as well as to "create" ourselves. Only by experiencing the

difference between these moments can we begin to acknowledge that both are aspects of our lives. The Dionysian experience teaches us that our Apollonian forms can never be permanent, while the Apollonian forms teach us that our existence never completely escapes our control.

I would argue that there are ethical reasons which impel Nietzsche to use art as a metaphor for human self creation and expression. We do not attribute the same kind of universality to artistic forms that we would impute to ethical imperatives or political structures. According to Nietzsche, a community such as that of ancient Greece was so vibrant because it recognized the need to continuously reconstitute itself. This realization was reflected in the central role that art played in consolidating and developing its culture. For Nietzsche, art is not a sphere of life that becomes distinct from culture and politics; it is an integral part of life through which we engage in a process of continuous renewal both with nature and with each other.

Even though Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* does not neglect the community, it does not explain the processes by which both communities and our individual consciousness are formed. In fact, the problem with this early work is that the community emerges mainly in its capacity as the audience of a theatrical performance. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche offers a more detailed account of the birth of a community, using the master-slave dialectic. Like Rousseau, he recognizes that the community is born in opposition to nature. I have argued in Chapter Six that his infamous master-slave dialectic

not only accounts for the development of moral culture, but also represents the struggle by which human beings extricate themselves from nature. The masters, who spontaneously release energy, do not engage in reflection but react impulsively. They exhibit what Nietzsche considers to be a natural tendency to grow and expand, trampling underfoot weaker beings that step onto their path without giving thought to their actions. Unlike Rousseau's proto-human, these powerful creatures are not content simply to satisfy their immediate physical needs, but have an insatiable need to release energy. As long as they confront no obstacles they have no need for conceptual thought.

The actions of the slaves are blocked by the masters, and their own process of growth is undercut. The "state of nature" in Nietzsche's view, is not marked by equilibrium but by conflict. This lack of equilibrium compels the slaves to begin the process of conceptualization by negating the outside world which is so hostile to them. For the first time a distinction is made between the "ought" and the "is". They determine that masters *should* not be acting as they do and that they themselves refuse to act, because they have more control over their own activity. The capacity to choose and reflect on one's actions sprouts from the incapacity to act. The slave is forced to compare himself to others, devaluating mastery, because he himself cannot find an outlet for the energy that is festering inside of him. Nietzsche, like Rousseau suggests that the identity of the self depends on a comparative assessment with others.

Nietzsche's slave community is thus born out of fear. Rituals and customs are

imposed in order to standardize and regulate behaviour, thereby limiting the spontaneous desire to grow. At the same time, this growth impulse would not have to be limited, if the slaves did not also desire their own growth. The standards they impose foster an internal division, which is an integral part of the development of selfhood. The conflict, which used to exist primarily between organisms, now takes place also within them, adding a new dimension to creativity. We feel part of the cultural home and yet at the same time feel estranged from it because our internal energy continues to seek release. We long for the "nature" that we have left behind, just as Rousseau's "civilized" human being experiences nostalgia for his proto-human roots. Both the master and slave battle inside of us. For Nietzsche, as for Rousseau, the voice of nature within us cannot be silenced and the tension between nature and community is an important catalyst for creativity. It means that we can no longer act on pure impulse and must choose our action. To be a self- we must also be alienated from the self. We must feel the rift between "external" standards and "internal" desires. It is by trying to relate to something that is not entirely the self, that we assert our selfhood.

Thus, for Nietzsche, as for Rousseau, the tension between nature and community begins to develop our awareness of individuality. There could be no self without community and thus no individuation without social integration. We would not have a sense of our selfhood without feeling alienated from the world to some degree. The self emerges out of the process of trying to grapple with contradictions that ravage our being.

Thus, it is not the ownership of our behaviour or of our bodies that is responsible for the birth of the self. Rather the awareness of the divisions that mark our being-in the world enable us to begin speaking about our self identity. Since we never feel completely at home in our own world, we have to continue to struggle to try to make ourselves at home. Because we cannot take our place within the world for granted, our lives are invested with a tremendous sense of responsibility.

Children of modernity: alienation and subjugation

While both Nietzsche and Rousseau insist that the division between individuation and integration is necessary to the experience of selfhood, they would also concur that in modernity, both tendencies have become diluted and a pervasive conformity has begun to set in. According to Rousseau, this meant that the sense of equilibrium which had prevailed in primitive communities, had been drastically upset. The healthy balance that had been struck between individuation and integration was disrupted, since the community was completely eviscerated and individuals lacked any "whole" that they could integrate themselves into. Individuals became increasingly alike, but were missing a sense of belonging. While Nietzsche, like Rousseau, condemns the burgeoning conformity that soon was to become a hallmark of the modern era, his account for its development is different from that of Rousseau. He believes that the desire to avoid domination by other

human beings impels them to try to eliminate divisions between people making them increasingly alike. The community declines because there is no longer a need to actively consolidate it in the attempt to grapple with differences between people.

The institution of property relations heralds the decay of social relations for Rousseau. As soon as territory is cordoned off and divided into lots for the sake of agricultural production, the process of social fragmentation begins. People start to tend to their own plots of land, creating a split between private and public life. However, as long as people tend primarily to their own needs by farming their land, the public spirit could still be maintained through public festivals and activities. For Rousseau, the downward spiral begins with the division of labour which makes exchange possible, for this introduces a recognizable inequality into social relations. It is inequality that sounds the death knell for the community since it unleashes a pernicious competition for property, destroying the already weakened social ties. One must recognize that inequality cannot simply be equated with difference. In primitive communities, the differences between members of the group are played out. However, the institution of property provides a more quantitative basis for assessment, because a common point of comparison is available. For example, if your plot of land is twice the size of mine, I become aware that you are not just different from me, but that you have more than I do. The division between haves and have-nots that emerges out of the division of labour means that everyone is forced to struggle for power over others. In "primitive" communities, everyone shares

what is necessary for survival. This is no longer the case in early bourgeois societies.

The clamouring for property carries over into personal relationships as well. We adopt the same attitude towards our person as we have towards our property, trying to protect it from external incursions. The capacity for extending the boundaries of the self by interacting with others is drastically undercut. We become mere instruments of property acquisition. My relationships with other human beings soon are tainted by hypocrisy, for I must try to enlist them in order to serve my own ends. I need other human beings to acquire the material goods that I require, but I do not trust them. Mutual gain becomes the major premise for our interaction. At the same time, I assiduously protect myself against too much dependence on you, both economically and personally. Ironically, I am protecting a self that I do not recognize, except to say that I am not-you. Each of us orients ourselves according to the other. Paradoxically, when I ardently try to protect myself against you in this way, we become increasingly alike in subordinating our desire to acquisition. Each of us guards our own property and tries to ensure that the other does not gain the upper hand. I try to obtain what you have in order to prevent you from being able to dominate me. A cloak of conformity begins to suffocate the creative efforts of human beings. *Amour-propre* is not simply exacerbated within market society; it is transformed dramatically because of these stunted interactions. We no longer extend the boundaries of the self by noticing differences, but rather contract them. Insofar as you are different from me, I see you as a threat, and therefore try to prevent you from having any impact on me.

I can no longer solicit the recognition of others, because all of my social relationships are overshadowed by a pervasive mistrust. Home becomes a private asylum in which I can shield myself from external influences. Because I no longer strive to make myself belong to a larger whole, I become completely alienated. We neither individuate ourselves by developing our uniqueness, nor do we integrate ourselves. According to Rousseau, in a bourgeois order, neither individuation nor integration is possible.

Individuals increasingly withdraw into themselves in order to try to find the elusive home, hoping to unearth an inner self that lurks between the multifarious masks they don. We do not recognize that such an inner self requires an outer self in order to flourish. Because of a tendency to parrot each other, the only means by which we can stand out is by brandishing our property before others. While I seek recognition because I would like to belong, I fan the flames of resentment by flaunting my good fortune. Ironically, the more I try to "fit in", the more my "belonging" eludes me. In bourgeois society, the very activities that are socially recognized contribute to the destruction of the community.

Nietzsche too describes a society that seethes with resentment, but his account of this development differs markedly from that of Rousseau. In Nietzsche's view the modern community emerges out of what he terms the slave revolt in morals. In contrast to Rousseau, he identifies religious-cultural developments, rather than socio-economic ones as the primary impetus behind the development of the modern identity. As I pointed out above, the weak triumph over the strong by preventing them from releasing their latent

energy. Acting on impulse then comes to signal weakness rather than strength, for the physically strong individual is allegedly unable to assert control over his own activity. Nietzsche does not object to the internalization of external norms per se, since he recognizes that such a process is necessary if we are to assume control for shaping our identities. The slave refuses to take the status quo for granted and it is this "no" that constitutes his "creative deed." Because he cannot compete with the master on the master's own level, he has to invent a new level of behaviour which enables him to defend himself.

Once we measure ourselves by "external" norms that contradict and force us to suppress our natural impulses, we experience an internal division between that part of our self that wants to simply succumb to the forces of nature, and that part of the self which wants to transcend nature. However, these conflicting tendencies mutually constitute each other, and our desires also change in response to the imposition of cultural norms. Because Nietzsche does not believe in a natural equilibrium that inheres in nature, he also assumes that the foundation of the community is necessarily more violent, since we have to keep our natural desire for continuous growth in check in order to maintain the boundaries of the community. At the same time, the community channels this growth into new directions. Self overcoming only becomes possible when we learn to rein in our natural impulses. The external struggle between masters and slaves is transmuted into an internal struggle which enables human beings to create themselves. As I pointed out earlier, the divided self for Nietzsche is necessary if an individual is to remain self constitutive.

However, Nietzsche insists that the potential of this development is undercut by what he refers to as an asceticization of culture and morality that turns weakness itself into a virtue. The internal split between nature and culture, which according to Nietzsche is the basis of our creativity, is to become the foundation for a debilitating guilt. At first, our responsibility towards the community is enforced by erecting an elaborate system of punishments which tries to mould people into a single form. We pay our debts to the whole, or are punished. It is the threat of punishment that keeps us in line and maintains the boundaries of the community. However, punishment itself does not turn us into clones of one another; it merely ensures that we act in accordance with certain norms. According to Nietzsche, Christianity was ingenious for it provided a perfect mechanism for self enforcement that did not need to rely so heavily on the external instruments. It did so by inventing a God to whom we are all eternally indebted. Therefore, we are also eternally deserving of punishment. The split between nature and culture which had created the need for a system of rewards and punishments in the first place, is now said to constitute a form of punishment inflicted upon us by God. Because no one can successfully rid themselves of their "natural" desires, we are all equally guilty before God.

In Nietzsche's view, the alleged humility associated with the castigation of the body merely camouflages a contemptuous hubris. By subduing nature we hope to diminish our own suffering and eradicate all differences between people in order to avoid the kind of struggle that is an indelible part of life. We resent that aspect of our being which escapes

our control. By levelling the playing field, and forcing individuals to lead a life of atonement, Christianity not only attempts to eradicate sin, but in Nietzsche's view tries to eradicate nature itself. This constitutes a misguided and arrogant attempt to assert humanity's independence from nature.

Thus, for Rousseau it is the advent of inequality which tips the balance that had preserved the delicate equilibrium between the capacity for individuation and integration. As soon as this occurs, the community begins to disintegrate and individuals begin to compete with one another, becoming increasingly alike in an attempt to avoid becoming vulnerable to each other. According to Nietzsche, in the interests of equality, an attempt was made to make all individuals alike, so that they would no longer pose a threat to each other. Too much equality rather than too little produces modern stagnation. Prior to the asceticization of culture, standards of conduct and morality were simply enforced by the most powerful segments in society. These centres of power were continuously shifting and power struggles within individuals and between them would ensure that the community was forced to reconstitute itself on an ongoing basis. However, once externally imposed norms are internalized and the contradictions which led to internal struggle become sources of guilt, individuals became increasingly alike and the healthy conflict that had kept the community vibrant was stifled. Nietzsche assumes that political domination is the means by which the community's boundaries are established and that a shift in power relations forces these boundaries to be constantly redrawn. Once people within the community come

to resemble each other, the community itself disintegrates for the incentive to actively reshape it evaporates.

Nietzsche's emphasis on culture leads him to underestimate the role that economic inequality plays in fostering conformity. If individuals are constantly worried about economic domination by others, then their identity is largely absorbed by the quest for acquisition. However, Rousseau's analysis overlooks the religious-cultural developments that may contribute and reinforce such "socio-economic" behaviour. Despite the very different focus of Nietzsche and Rousseau's arguments, they can be used in conjunction with each other to help explain some of the features of modern society. The asceticization of culture and the cultural levelling that it gives rise to might actually help to sustain a system of economic inequality. Christianity ensures that individuals are no longer compelled to participate in the community in order to achieve a sense of belonging by forcing them to turn inward. Because all are equally guilty before God, any resentment they might normally incur towards the more powerful segments of society turns inward and individuals consider themselves the source of their own failure. Since they believe that all people are fundamentally equal, they become more inclined to blame themselves for the economic hardships they face. Paradoxically, economic inequality is accepted not in spite of the notion that people are fundamentally equal, but because of it.

Furthermore, one could argue that both the division of labour identified by Rousseau and the absolutization of culture outlined by Nietzsche erode social bonds,

giving rise to a pervasive conformity which characterizes modern social relationships. Once cultural norms are no longer assumed to be necessary for the survival of a particular community but rather are identified with truth itself, then the individual no longer feels compelled to go through the community in order to experience their meaning. Thus, one's attachment to the community quickly wanes. This makes it much easier for the kinds of selfish struggles for economic gain described by Rousseau to gain momentum since there is no longer a sense of responsibility to a greater whole. According to Nietzsche, the internalization of culture makes people feel less responsible rather than more responsible for the larger world of which they are a part. They concentrate almost exclusively on their own preservation, be this spiritual or economic. Thus, Nietzsche does not advocate a denial of responsibility towards the larger social orders which we are part of, but rather laments the turn inward which prevents individuals from actively shaping their communities. He objects to ascetic morality, not only on aesthetic grounds, but also on moral ones.

Rebuilding a shattered home: the philosophy of limits

Both Rousseau and Nietzsche argue that modern society has reached an impasse which needs to be surmounted. Individuals have become mere clones of one another, and despite their similarity and interdependence lead lives of virtual isolation. According to

Rousseau, the race for property has absorbed all aspects of their personality. In Nietzsche's view, modern individuals merely huddle together in order to maintain a life of comfort and ease. They can only tolerate others who were identical to them and therefore do not threaten their own boundaries. This bleak portrait of modernity impelled both Rousseau and Nietzsche to try to find ways of extricating human beings from this morass.

The task that both Rousseau and Nietzsche took upon themselves was to try to incite human beings to reassume responsibility for the world of which they were a part. Both recognized that this sense of responsibility could not arise by simply viewing others as individuals who are like us, but depended upon fostering the awareness that we create our world by interacting with others. We are responsible not only for our own identity, but also for that of others. The community not only limits the kinds of interactions I have with others, but is created out of these interactions. Rousseau recognizes that such notions might be anathema to individuals who are accustomed to seeing others as a menace and thus he has to somehow assuage their fears while at the same time enticing them to see each other as fellow members of a community. He proposes to do this by implementing "the general will" whereby each citizen would agree to legislate for himself as a member of the community. No individual can infringe upon the freedom of another since all are equally dependent on the whole which in turn is equally dependent on each of us. Thus I recognize that my individual freedom is not only dependent on your individual freedom

and vice versa but is dependent on the existence of the community as a whole. I force you to transcend your boundaries, and you force me to transcend mine. I must lay aside my own particular will in order to create the whole of which I am a part. Furthermore, by involving each of us in legislative activity, we become integrated into a community which we have made, rather than having it imposed on us. The reciprocity between us facilitates the act of self creation.

Rousseau realized that he faced a difficult dilemma. Bourgeois society creates a climate of pervasive social distrust which deprives individuals of all sense of community. They do not know what it means to feel at home in the world and therefore can not legislate as members of a social whole, for they would not know what this entails. Thus, Rousseau suggests that a relationship with a "neutral" nature should be rekindled before human beings are ready to create their cultural home. In this way he would provide the individual with a sense of belonging that he could then strive to emulate at the level of the community. The process of separation from nature was to be at the same time a reintegration into it. This would give the individual an idea of the kind of balance that has to be maintained within the community. Eventually, he would replicate this kind of relationship at a social level, and recognize that an individual's separation from the community should always be a means of reintegration into it.

In *Emile*, Rousseau describes the kind of childhood that will produce the citizen who will be receptive towards the general will. As a child, Emile must encounter no

tension between his own selfish needs and his ability to integrate himself into the natural world. When he does experience such tension, he must be capable of resolving it. Thus, Emile is to know harmony and happiness. His desires, which are still limited, are not thwarted and he is not unnecessarily constrained. If he experiences a profound schism between himself and the world that he calls home, he will lack the foundation which will encourage him to overcome tensions within the community as an adult.

For Rousseau, happiness consists in the balance between needs and the capacity to fulfil them. Therefore, Emile is permitted to tend to his immediate self interest without overt interference by others. Eventually he must more actively engage with his environment in order to adapt to nature, but he is not forced to do so prematurely. His introduction to rational thought, for example, occurs when he must find a means of satisfying his animal appetites. Nature's necessity impels him to exercise his freedom. In this way, Rousseau tries to protect Emile from the agonies of the divided soul.

Emile is also carefully shielded from conflictual relations with others. Even the dispute over territory between Emile and the gardener is peacefully resolved, since Emile comes to realize that the gardener had needed the plot where Emile had planted his beans in order to plant melons for the boy. There is no conflict of self interest experienced here and instead, Emile is taught a lesson in mutual compatibility. He therefore does not learn to conceive of other human beings as a threat. Emile has no experiences which threaten to undermine his own ability to meet his needs. Furthermore, his ambitions are kept in

check, because he is not subject to the temptations of a competitive society. Culture is a tool that he uses to adapt to nature. In developing his own skills, thereby individuating himself, he is always integrating himself with the natural world and finding new ways to make himself at home. The tensions he experiences are eventually resolved. Conflict gives way to harmony.

Sexual passion is the first destabilizing emotion that stirs within Emile. He experiences an overpowering thirst to be part of something larger than himself. However, according to Rousseau, such passion must be carefully managed since it can also efface the self, upsetting the necessary balance between individuation and integration. Emile's need to connect with others impels him to compare his lot to theirs. Rousseau therefore only exposes Emile to the less fortunate so that he will not become dissatisfied with his own life, and develop insatiable appetites. Instead his need to unite with others is expressed by helping them. In this way Rousseau ensures that Emile does not develop the propensity to submit to others who are more powerful than he, nor to dominate others in order to try to gain a position of advantage.

Eventually Emile's burgeoning sexual passion is directed towards Sophie. She becomes the link between Emile and the community, for she makes her relationship with him dependent on his service to the larger society. Conventions are not onerous for him because they are directly linked to his sexual drives. Once again, his individual desires are reconciled with his social responsibility. Furthermore, by merging with Sophie, he

learns that other human beings are not only his co-habitants but become part of himself. His self interest becomes more expansive. He comprehends that in order to extend the boundaries of the self he must also be prepared to surrender them to another.

Sophie links Emile's own interest to that of his family, which in turn becomes his incentive to participate in the public sphere in order to forge a secure home for his children. In this way, Rousseau hopes to bridge the gap between particular and public interest. He chooses the institution of the family to assist him in making this transition, because it is the only bourgeois social structure that is not propelled entirely by self interest. Through his relationship with Sophie, Emile has learned to transcend himself in order to integrate himself with his beloved. He learns to merge his soul with that of another person without surrendering himself to that person. In the political community which is continuously reconstituted through the general will, this process takes place at another level. I agree to legislate for myself as a member of the community and put aside my own particular interests for the sake of the whole. I thereby become part of something that is larger than myself. This does not mean that tensions between myself and the community are eradicated but rather that I will have the incentive to overcome them. Without the tension between the particular and the general will, the general will could not exist, since I would merely succumb to the whole without creating it. Both "public" and "private" interest are continuously redefined. However, Rousseau insists that without the guarantee of legislative equality, I would not be willing to put aside my private interest in

order to make the community of which I am a part. I allow myself to both be acted upon and to act, because I realize that my ability to shape your life is no greater than your ability to shape mine.

Nietzsche's hero Zarathustra, like Rousseau's Emile, must go back to nature in order to reaffirm his connection to the world and to rekindle a sense of belonging. However, unlike Emile, Zarathustra must experience the agony of contradiction in a much more profound way than Emile. For the child Emile, conflict eventually leads to reconciliation, so that as an adult, he will not abandon the quest to reconcile any tensions that he may encounter. His tutor takes great pains to ensure that his pupil does not lose a sense of himself when he is falling in love or when he enters into the community and thus shields him from a suffering that he thinks might become paralysing. This message would be too tame for Nietzsche's adult Zarathustra, who suggests that one must be prepared to lose oneself in order to become oneself. Zarathustra has many crises of identity, and faces the horror of nothingness on numerous occasions. According to Nietzsche, the threat of non-existence is a very powerful stimulant to the development of one's own individuality. The creation of meaning depends on a crisis of meaninglessness.

Zarathustra, like Emile, also lives much of his life in relative seclusion, maintaining his distance from the town which is situated in the valley below. He imbibes the rhythms of nature, revelling both in the blinding sun and in the darkness of the cave. In this way, like Emile, he comes to realize what it means to be integrated into his world.

While Emile's childhood is monitored in order to avoid extremes, Zarathustra receives an education of extremes. Zarathustra revels both in a Dionysian darkness which obscures all the boundaries between things, and Apollonian light which highlights these boundaries. He is drawn to both the heights of the mountain, which allow him to peruse the landscape from a distance, and the sea which represents the bowels of life and threatens to engulf him. He cannot be in both places at once and so continuously wanders between them.

According to Nietzsche, we can only learn of the interdependence between "opposites" by experiencing them as opposites. I cannot appreciate beauty without ugliness, nor can I appreciate light without darkness. It is precisely because one is not the other that they are complementary. For Nietzsche, if I am to learn what it means to be part of my surroundings, I must learn to surrender my agency and allow myself to be swept along by the currents of life, letting go of my propensity to steer my own path. Rousseau tries to ensure that even when Emile falls in love, he is not carried away by his passion but maintains a sense of identity that is separate from that of his lover. Nietzsche insists that we must experience such a loss of self so that we are motivated to protect it. Therefore, when we try to maintain our Apollonian boundaries we resist the very Dionysian hurricane that we have at other times surrendered to. This does not mean that Nietzsche disavows the connection between the two extremes. By resisting Dionysian disindividuation and attempting to establish my own boundaries, I interact with other forces and contribute to the very current that at other times sweeps me away. Apollo

needs Dionysus and Dionysus needs Apollo. If I did not establish my boundaries against this current, then I would be incapable of contributing to it. At the same time, if there was no primordial life force that reverberated within me, I would have no desire to construct these boundaries in order to protect myself against destruction. Even though Nietzsche insists on the opposition between these moments, this does not mean he sees them as "pure" categories. The ocean of Dionysus cannot be traversed without the aid of an Apollonian vessel, nor can one gaze directly into the glaring light of the sun, for then one relapses into Dionysian darkness. Yet, in order to experience each of these seemingly contradictory moment to the fullest, one must purposely "forget" the other. While I am playing a piece of music and feeling it echo through me, I must forget that it was put together by combining a series of individuated notes. At the same time, while I am composing this music, I cannot be swept away in a Dionysian frenzy, otherwise I am incapable of writing it down. In order for Dionysus and Apollo to work together, we must experience them as opposites.

Thus, it could be argued, that Nietzsche like Rousseau seeks reconciliation but it is a reconciliation that can only be achieved by sharply differentiating individuation from integration. To experience one, we must exclude the other, so that we can then move between them. It is in the movement between them that they are to be reconciled. Nietzsche's exhortation to his readers to embrace the contradictions in life, rather than trying to reconcile them does not mean that he conceives of life as a series of unconnected

pieces. Instead he points out that the differences between our experiences allow them to be joined together. If Rousseau points to the dangers of separating integration from individuation, then Nietzsche sheds light on the dangers of melding them too closely. The two writers complement each other because of their "contradiction."

Ironically, if Nietzsche is less willing to reconcile individuation and integration, it is because he is at once both more pessimistic and optimistic than Rousseau. For him, the attempt at such a reconciliation often eventuates in a reduction of one to the other. In his view, modern culture was born out of the excessive rationalization initiated by Socrates and Plato which silenced Dionysus. However, once Dionysus had been silenced, the beauty of Apollo also began to wane. The pleasurable and serene illusion of Apollo evolves into the stale reality of scientific fact. Only by recognizing the need to move between these apparent extremes, could one ensure that a balance is maintained between them. One must recognize that one is *not* the other, in order to enable them to work together. They form a whole, not in spite of, but because of their "opposition."

At the same time, Nietzsche recognizes that the kinds of extremes coveted by Zarathustra make him incapable of settling permanently within the community. The boundaries of the community would collapse if all its members experienced the wanderer's lust for extremes. If each person wandered between mountains and oceans, no one would settle in the valley. Nietzsche, like Rousseau, recognizes that the modern community demands compromises which are unacceptable to the wandering soul. It is situated in the

valley, far from both the depths of the sea and the heights of the mountains. Therefore, it seeks the middle road, mediating the relationship between the Dionysus and Apollo. We are integrated, but do not surrender ourselves to the forces of integration, since there is always a distance between ourselves and the social whole that encompasses us. At the same time, our ability to differentiate ourselves must occur within certain boundaries, not deviating too far from the norms of culture which hold the community together. Yet, if we do not distance ourselves from these norms at all, the community stagnates since we make no effort to reconstitute it. We no longer feel any responsibility for making the social whole if we do not experience a degree of antipathy towards it. Nevertheless, our opposition to the community cannot be so great that it undermines the efforts to make ourselves part of it. Thus, it seems to depend upon the kind of balance advocated by Rousseau.

However, Nietzsche also argues that the community depends on drastic imbalances in order to force it to reconstitute itself. If it does not flirt with the kinds of extremes that Zarathustra covets, it would lack the stimulus that is needed to renew itself. Some of the strongest political orders emerge out of a sense of crisis. Thus, the community depends on figures like Zarathustra, who can reinvigorate it because they are not trapped within its frontiers and are able to challenge all its boundaries. Change within the community is often ignited from outside of the community. Paradoxically, in order to assume his public responsibility, Zarathustra must overstep the boundaries of the community. Zarathustra's

message is not intended for the stable citizen, but for people like Rousseau, or his Legislator, who can try to breathe new life into the community because they are outcasts to it.

The *Übermensch* is Nietzsche's metaphor for the potential outcast who can resuscitate a phlegmatic community. Like Rousseau's *Emile*, Nietzsche's symbol celebrates the limitless potential of childhood. However, to return to childhood, he insists that we must undergo several other metamorphoses of spirit. At first, one must take the form of the camel, who forces himself to carry the weight of cultural norms and traditions. His behaviour is always in accordance with external standards which weigh heavily upon his soul. Thus, he is cognizant of the sacrifices he must make in order to endure his load. The next stage is that of the lion, who in an act of rebellion tries to affirm himself by denying these "external" norms. However, he is soon subjected to the same emptiness of spirit that had plagued the camel. It is neither the raging and domineering lion, nor the submissive and obedient camel, that provides the metaphor for Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. Rather it is in the child, who is receptive to the forces of life and at the same time is not afraid of creating something new out of them. The child is not weighed down by her past, nor does she tremble before the future. She does not ascribe to a teleological worldview, nor has she succumbed to a debilitating nihilism. Instead, her engagement with the world is that of play, and in the process she transforms the world that has given birth to her. She is open to the novelty of all experiences, because she has not yet imposed a uniform vision

on them nor is she constrained by the norms that the community imposes. By using the child to illustrate the nature of the *Übermensch*, Nietzsche makes it clear that his model is not exclusively one of domination and control. Thus, Nietzsche is advocating a kind of interplay between "outside" and "inside" which is similar to that conceived by Rousseau in the general will.

Nietzsche's child, like the artist, must interpret what she sees, but she does not insist upon the eternal validity of her interpretations and changes them in order to adapt to novel experiences. Despite the very different approaches adopted by Nietzsche and Rousseau, the kind of character that is being developed in their stories is very similar. Emile is taught to adapt himself to nature and to establish relationships with others that are predicated on equality. By retaining a balance between individuation and integration, Rousseau tries to ensure that we are receptive to others and can develop through our interaction with them. Nietzsche too praises the gift-giving virtue which celebrates the ability to give as well as receive, and recognizes that it is the interaction between us, and between ourselves and nature that engenders life. The *Übermensch* is someone with the courage to periodically discard his or her own convictions, taking from others, in order to make himself.

In making himself, the *Übermensch* also makes the whole of which he is a part, accepting his responsibility to the "external world." Although Nietzsche launches fervent attacks on all totalizing systems, he nevertheless hints at the existence of a "whole" that

we are a part of, albeit one whose contours are constantly undergoing change and therefore cannot be grasped or defined. It is in the theory of the eternal return, that this notion receives its most poetic expression. The claim that all of our actions have already occurred and will occur in the future serves as a reminder that we are part of a natural cycle of creation and destruction. No single interpretation can survive the test of time indefinitely. Yet, at the same time, we attempt to escape the apparent aimlessness of natural cycles through interpretations that are not only cyclical but historical. It is in reacting to the past, that we shape the present and the future. At each moment, I reappropriate the past and also lunge towards the future. In doing so, I also interact with others who receive my "gift" and reinterpret it, changing it in the process. Thus, I participate in eternity because of my finitude. Each action sparks a series of "reactions" that cannot be foreseen. My action is both destroyed and transformed into something new. Thus, rather than focusing on an overarching truth, according to Nietzsche, we must focus on the act of creation itself. For Nietzsche, as for Rousseau, the whole is a process rather than an overarching system. By moving between moments and interpretations, I connect them and form the whole that also forms me. There is a subtle spiritualism in Nietzsche that is all too often ignored by interpreters who concentrate on those aspects of his thought which focus on the clash of wills and the dynamics of power relationships.

At the same time, Nietzsche would maintain against Rousseau, that power struggles are unavoidable among beings who continuously try to grow and overstep their own

boundaries, for they inevitably will challenge the frontiers of others whom they encounter along their path. For Nietzsche, this is especially true in the political realm where a common purpose and identity of interests is necessary to consolidate the social order. Politics for Nietzsche is not born out of the affection between citizens, but is necessary because of the need to create a union between people who do not necessarily have an affinity for each other. Eventually this "external order" is internalized, and less brutality is required to sustain it. Yet, Nietzsche's Zarathustra also hints at the need for more egalitarian relationships. The kind of community Zarathustra is seeking for himself would be very similar to that desired by Rousseau. It is a community of friends rather than one of mere cohabitants. Zarathustra does not seek companions who simply subscribe to his dogma, but who would engage with him, and who would stimulate each other, facilitating each other's growth. However, perhaps the fundamental difference between Rousseau and Nietzsche is that Nietzsche believes that such an exchange cannot occur within the sharply circumscribed boundaries of politics, but rather occurs within communities that exist within or at the fringes of modern political orders. Modern political communities are too big to allow people to develop affection for each other. Without such affection, they are not willing to take the kinds of risks that Zarathustra exhorts them to take, since their relationships with each other are predicated on mistrust. It is because they do not trust each other, that they are comforted by the fact that they are all alike. Zarathustra is continuously frustrated because his message is not well received in the marketplace. Most

people are reluctant to continuously venture into the unknown. They cannot grapple with relations that would force them to engage in a process of constant transformation and compel them to surrender their own boundaries. They want to be either leaders or followers because this offers them more stability.

Despite their significant political differences, Rousseau and Nietzsche both support dynamic relationships between inside and outside, individuation and integration which fuel the process of self creation. However, while Nietzsche thinks such a process is stifled within the boundaries of a democratic community, Rousseau aims to democratize this relationship by avoiding the kinds of extremes that Nietzsche cherishes. For Nietzsche, we must toy with extremes in order to recognize their interrelationship. According to Rousseau, the movement from one extreme to another could threaten the community and therefore a balance must be retained between them. Nietzsche insists that the community depends on the people who overstep its boundaries, for they are the only ones who can revitalize when it seems to be taking its dying breath.

Relations to the Feminine

Attempts by Rousseau and Nietzsche to resuscitate a stagnant community by reviving our relationship with nature also open up the possibility for a reevaluation of the role of women, who were traditionally considered wedded to an "inferior" natural realm.

Although both thinkers recognize that the position of women can no longer be completely ignored, their engagement with the "feminine" proves to be very reluctant and they are unwilling to follow through on some of the implications of their own philosophy. Once again, they end up excluding woman, but their misogyny stems from an overestimation of her role and an exaggerated sense of women's power over men. Rousseau, for example, recognizing the political importance of the sexual relationship, makes woman the pillar of the private sphere which in turn is to become the foundation for a more democratic public sphere. However, she is not allowed to overstep the boundaries which divide the two realms and by excluding women from the public realm, Rousseau recreates the schism between public and private that he was trying to transcend. Nietzsche asserts that women are less likely to engage in the kind of identitarian thinking which has become characteristic of Western philosophy, because they realize that culture can never grasp nature. Thus, they are more receptive to the idea that the process of self creation is a neverending one. However, after praising her for her insights, he redoubles his efforts to exclude her, by assuming the role of the "masculine mother".

In Rousseau's fictitious state of nature, the fact that woman gave birth in no way disadvantaged her nor did it produce a psychological make-up which was fundamentally different from that of men. Independence and self sufficiency characterized the behaviour of proto-women as well as proto-men. Since there was no connection between men and women after copulation, there was no reason for proto-men to assist in the rearing of

children. Because sexual encounters were infrequent, each woman only had a few offspring whom she was capable of both nourishing and protecting from dangerous beasts of prey. However, the development of property relations marked the end of women's independence. Once permanent dwelling places were constructed, human beings were protected from the vicissitudes of nature and began to see nature as something that could be mastered. The sedentary existence also led to the development of more structured sexual relationships. Love was thus an extension of the concept of ownership. Emotional bonds developed within the family's bosom, but those outside the family were considered relative strangers. A division of labour occurred where women shouldered the responsibility for domestic affairs, while the men hunted and gathered food.

While agricultural means of production remained predominant, women still enjoyed a public role since public festivals and meetings provided them with a forum for integration beyond the confines of the family. With the onset of industrialization, the community was splintered even further, and women lost all access to the public arena, being confined exclusively to the private realm. The sharp distinction between the two spheres impelled men to extend the concept of ownership not only to their houses and their belongings but to their wives as well. The contrast between the intimacy of the private world and the more abstract bonds prevalent in the public world magnifies these feelings of ownership. Rousseau's analysis suggests that women's subordination intensified when the schism between public and private spheres widened. The weakness of such an analysis

inheres in the fact that it does not account for the unequal status endured by women not only in bourgeois society, but also in agricultural and "primitive" communities. While Rousseau goes to great length to discuss the harmful consequences of the division of labour between men, he does not engage in such an analysis when it comes to the sexual division of labour.

Rousseau turns to the private sphere when he tries to rebuild the shattered political community, for this is the only place within bourgeois society where relationships are not predicated entirely on self interest. Furthermore, he argues that future citizens are to build upon the affective bonds within the family in order to establish more abstract communal ties. Since the woman plays the predominant role within the private realm, Rousseau imputes to her much of the responsibility for reestablishing the connection between the two spheres. Rousseau recognizes that women have less of a tendency to make a sharp distinction between self and other. Her role as mother makes her aware of the complexity of the relationship between human beings, viewing them in less dichotomous terms. The other is not only a separate individual that resembles her, but is also part of her. Furthermore, she is aware of the entanglement between nature and culture, since she must impose cultural norms and limit her desires in order to avert unwanted pregnancies.

Ironically, Rousseau has woman, who recognizes the complexity of intersubjective relationships, sacrifice her own subjectivity in order to serve the other. Her role as mother should make her aware of the fact that the child is both part of her and

separate from her, and therefore suggests that here, as in other social relations, a balance should be maintained between individuation and integration. Yet, Rousseau denies Sophie, his ideal woman, the benefits of such a balance. While she is to use her psychological acumen to foster in Emile a sense of duty towards the public world, this is a world which she is denied direct access to. She does not enter this world by reconciling it with her own natural needs. Instead she receives a training in dependence, learning to imbibe cultural and social norms without reflecting upon them. She has no control whatsoever over the training she undergoes, and unlike Emile, has culture imposed upon her, rather than being given the chance to reflect on it and shape herself. She, who is allegedly so vital in achieving a reconciliation between nature and culture is herself deprived of the opportunity to develop her own understanding of their interrelationship.

Instead, culture and nature become intertwined through Emile's passion for her. She makes her willingness to submit to him dependent upon his ability to perform public duties. Thus, she becomes the medium through which Emile can become a citizen, rather than another subject through whom Emile can learn to extend the boundaries of the self. Instead of establishing within the family the basis for intersubjectivity, Rousseau constructs an inegalitarian foundation for a democratic regime. Thus, Sophie assumes responsibility for producing upright citizens but is to abstain from a direct political role. Her love is to be bestowed upon a virtuous mate who is seduced into exercising his virtue. It is through Sophie, that Rousseau allows the public sphere to permeate the private realm.

Perhaps Rousseau does not offer Sophie the same kind of education that Emile receives because he overestimates the impact that the role of her future motherhood will have on her psyche. Her biological role as a mother forces her to transcend her own interest when she satisfies her sexual desires. She must not be taught in the same way as Emile that her interests are compatible with others, and that others are not only separate from her, but also part of her. Emile on the other hand, needs to be more actively involved in the public sphere in order to redress this imbalance. He must learn to integrate himself, while for Sophie, such integration with others comes "naturally." However, this is a weak argument for justifying her exclusion from the larger community. Even if one can argue that the integration with her own child comes naturally, this does not mean that she will intuitively understand the necessity for public integration. Secondly, as a young girl, the demands of motherhood are not yet etched into her psyche, and thus she too must learn to integrate herself with other human beings. Thirdly, by depriving Sophie of an active public role, he excludes her from the process of historical development. She simply mimics the cultural norms that are in place without questioning them and thus her support for the community as a whole can only be very tenuous. She is ill prepared for the continuous process of adaptation and transformation that for Rousseau is vital if the community is to survive. She is not permitted to make herself who she is. One could even argue that Emile's interaction with his future spouse leaves him ill prepared to treat others as his equals. He does not learn the skills of reciprocity that he is supposed to apply in the

public sphere. Instead of engaging in a process of cultural creation with his beloved, he simply imbibes social rituals through her because they are linked to his sexual desires.

Nietzsche, like Rousseau inveighs against the human propensity to sever the links between body and mind, nature and culture, and therefore is forced to reassess the role of women who are denigrated by virtue of their connection to the natural realm. Although he paints a much more complex portrait of woman than does Rousseau, his fixation on her maternal role also prevents him from engaging in an intersubjective relationship with her. As a mother figure, she becomes for Nietzsche the symbol for the primordial life force from which we all emanate and which eventually destroys us. We are both part of her body, and yet are expelled from her. She embodies the tension between individuation and integration that fuels the process of life itself. It is in relation to her that we first experience this tension, and thus she becomes the object of both our love and contempt. We rebel against her in order to assert our selfhood, but cannot resist the temptation to become part of her.

Because woman embodies this tension, she realizes that she will never be able to capture the essence of life. She represents for Nietzsche both the depths of the Dionysian ocean and the figure that flits across it, realizing that she can never reveal its underlying "essence" or penetrate its depth. As a mother, she is subject to natural forces that are beyond her control, while at the same time, actively shaping the life of another human being. Nietzsche reveals this "feminine" insight by using women to personify life and

wisdom who are embroiled in a playful dance. Woman recognizes that wisdom cannot grasp life, but can only play with it. Nevertheless she also affirms that wisdom emerges from life and cannot be divorced from it. Thus, men's love of wisdom is always also a love of life. There is no metaphysical mystery that is waiting to be unearthed since life itself emerges out of the dance between the two. Thus, Nietzsche credits woman with a deeper understanding of the relationship between nature and culture for she recognizes that while the two never coincide, neither can they be disentangled from another. Wisdom does not merely mirror life, it transforms it, thereby becoming part of its activity. Nietzsche accredits woman with the knowledge that life is not essence, but rather process.

Nietzsche realizes that just as culture cannot capture nature, man can never capture woman. He desires to possess her, because she is not him but this very fact also ensures that his efforts will always result in failure. His appetite is forever unsatisfied, and thus he will never cease his pursuit of her. Both man and woman are continuously forced to reevaluate their own boundaries by engaging in this relationship with the opposite sex. It is this difference that sustains their interest. At the same time, the sexual divisions between them also make them aware of the internal divisions, enabling them to recognize the woman in man and the man in woman. Therefore, Nietzsche is tacitly aware of the enormous potential for self creation that comes out of their relationship.

Nevertheless, Nietzsche denies woman the opportunity to participate in this process, because he uses her as a symbol for life as a whole. She who *is* life, does not

need to participate in it by continuously remaking her boundaries. While man can establish boundaries in order to exclude woman, she cannot exclude him and must merely comply with his demands. She is subjected to his individuation, but is not permitted to engage in individuating acts of her own. Zarathustra even goes so far as to become the masculine mother that no longer requires intercourse with a woman in order to propagate himself. Of course, he recognizes that he can only ever be pregnant with culture, and therefore reserves this realm for himself, depriving woman of access to it. The eternal return is the metaphor which best depicts this paradoxical relationship to woman. Nietzsche insists that it is by understanding and mimicking the process of birth, that we enter into the realm of culture. Because woman plays a predominant role in achieving natural continuity, man endeavours to retain exclusive control over the cultural realm. Thus, Nietzsche excludes woman not because of her weakness but due to her power. Giving birth is a process through which each woman repeats an act performed by many others before her. Yet, in doing so, she brings a unique being into the world. Our cultural achievements mimic the act of giving birth. Each object or idea we create, contains residues of a past which it both includes and transcends.

In separating the process of cultural birth from natural birth, Nietzsche drives another wedge between nature and culture. By doing so, he forgets the role that culture plays both in the process of giving birth and in childrearing. The bonds of affection between a mother and child are not purely natural; they are also cultural. A woman not

only is the child's mother, she must also make herself its mother and cultural norms in part determine what kind of mother she will become. Even the act of giving birth is not only a natural act but is also a cultural ritual. Rousseau also simply assumes that woman can maintain her own identity while complying with the wishes of others, even though her childhood education has denied her the opportunity to develop an identity of her own. He may simply take for granted that her future role as a mother endows her with the instinctive awareness that she is both independent of others and integrated with them. This repudiates his own insight that it is only as a cultural being that she is able to develop the bonds of motherhood. Like Nietzsche, he ends up driving a wedge between nature and culture by making the world of cultural creation the exclusive preserve of men, while at the same time insisting that it is woman who is to lure him into the cultural realm. As a result, rather than strengthening the connection between nature and culture, he ends up attenuating it.

A moral aesthetics and an aesthetic morality?

My comparison of Rousseau and Nietzsche has insisted upon the importance of recognizing the morality of art and the artistry of morality. Rousseau teaches us that ethical norms inhere neither in nature, nor in the order of the cosmos but are actively *made* by human beings in an effort to recreate an equilibrium that they had lost when they

left the state of nature behind. Instead of prescribing moral rules, Rousseau describes moral processes. In the state of nature, proto-humans were completely integrated into their natural world but were separated from their kin. Natural calamities marked the end of their isolation and forced human beings to pool their resources in order to survive. Social homes arose to replace the "natural home" that they had been forced to abandon. However, once within the walls of the community, individuals began to notice their own boundaries by comparing themselves to others, and therefore could no longer take their own identity or their place within the social order for granted. This sentiment of alienation would force them to reintegrate themselves into the community on a continual basis. In the process of doing so, they would create new divisions that would once again have to be reconciled.

Despite the ongoing tension between individuation and integration, Rousseau insists that a balance needs to be maintained between them so that my separation from the social whole would always at the same time enable me to reintegrate myself into it. Moral responsibility does not stem from the fact that we must subscribe to universal laws, but rather from the fact that we must always make ourselves part of the world to which we already belong. However, the process of integration requires that I not only shape the community but allow myself to be shaped by it. My impact on others must be equivalent to the impact of others on me. If either one of us dominates the other, the equilibrium is automatically destroyed.

Nietzsche also recognizes that we are at once both integrated into the world and separated from it, and that the tension between the two fuels a continuous process of self creation. Like Rousseau he affirms that we do not create our world in isolation, but rather do so by interacting with others. Reciprocity between individuals forces them to continuously reevaluate their own boundaries. Despite these similarities, he insists that his approach, unlike Rousseau's is an artistic rather than a moral one. In part, Nietzsche distances himself from morality, because he assumes that it involves abiding by an inflexible series of laws that masquerade as absolute truths and prevent us from continuously reintegrating ourselves into the world. Yet, by examining concepts such as the eternal return, it becomes clear that Nietzsche's aesthetic philosophy has very powerful moral undertones. The eternal return suggests that we are part of a whole whose pulse we feel reverberating within us and at the same time we create this whole through interactions with others.

In order to keep this awareness that we are both *created* and *creative* alive, Nietzsche insists on the importance of experiencing the contradiction between individuation and integration. He would be wary of Rousseau's tendency to ensure that the two remain in relative equilibrium at all times. If I worry that my attempt to create new individual or social boundaries will prevent me from integrating with others, I would be too hesitant to transcend existing cultural norms that may in fact be suffocating the community. In addition, Nietzsche insists that we must not always be concerned about

preserving our "subjectivity" when undergoing a Dionysian experience, for we would then deprive ourselves of the opportunity to feel the pulse of life run through us, and intensify our own separation from the world. For Nietzsche, both "losing" one's self and defining one's self are pleasurable and by trying to maintain a balance between them at all times, one detracts from the intensity of both experiences. Nietzsche is not simply extolling a philosophy of domination, for if this were the case, he would not encourage us to "lose" ourselves. His "hero" Zarathustra seeks not subjects whom he can control but friends whom he can play with and who will continue to challenge his own boundaries as well as their own.

Rousseau, on the other hand, would insist that by subjecting ourselves to Nietzschean "extremes" we would too easily lose sight of their interconnection. If we forget about integration while we individuate ourselves, we might develop an appetite for dominating others. Similarly, if a community achieves integration at the expense of individuation, then individuals will lose their incentive to make themselves part of it and it will gradually wither away. Nietzsche, on the other hand, points out that without experiencing the extremes of both integration and individuation, we would not be aware of the need to engage in both. Without surrendering myself to the Dionysian whirlwind, I would not confront the possibility of my own nothingness which forces me to individuate myself. I am led to Apollo because of the excesses of Dionysus. Similarly, without experiencing the emptiness that comes from establishing rigid boundaries, we

would not be tempted to relapse into the arms of Dionysus. The extremes of both experiences draw us back toward the other and thus we are "forced" to maintain a balance by moving between them.

Nietzsche and Rousseau both would like us to recognize that we have a responsibility to create the social and natural world that we are a part of. They vehemently object to the notion that we have grasped the true nature of reality or that we can ever become the whole of which we are always merely parts. In fact, their philosophies may even be complementary because of their opposition. Each of them would be suspicious of the position of the other, because they fear that it gives rise to the illusion that we can control the world, rather than participating in it. For Nietzsche, only by moving between extremes and venturing beyond social norms will we begin to recognize that our world always eludes our grasp. The artist is a wanderer who is at home everywhere and at home nowhere. It is impossible for him to become the kind of conqueror that Nietzsche is so often accused of extolling, since he would have to deprive himself of the pleasure of having his own boundaries collapsed in order to maintain his iron grip. Rousseau, on the other hand, fears that indulging in one extreme will cause us to lose sight of the other. Yet, I would argue that these positions are not only "antithetical" but necessary to each other. Nietzsche's artist-wanderer needs Rousseau, for he will not be tempted to leave the Apollonian mountain for the Dionysian ocean, if he forgets the depths completely while he is on the heights. If Apollo did not encroach upon the territory of Dionysus, we would

never emerge out of our disindividuated frenzy. We can only travel between "extremes", if we keep the "other" extreme in mind. At the same time, Rousseau's dependable citizen requires the experience of extremes that the artist enjoys. Someone who has not experienced the agony and loneliness of individuation will not realize the need to balance it with integration. Similarly, the individual who has never surrendered her own identity will not acknowledge the necessity of maintaining it. One could argue that the people of Rousseau's Golden Age could not hold onto their equilibrium forever, precisely because they did not know what it meant to have it disrupted. We strive to reconcile opposites only if we know what it means to put too much distance between them. Zarathustra is always drawn back to the community on his way to both the heights and the depths. Rousseau leads to Nietzsche and Nietzsche leads to Rousseau, not only because of their similarities, but because of their profound differences.

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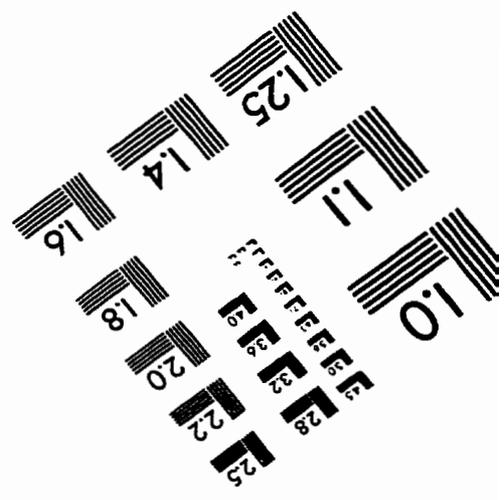
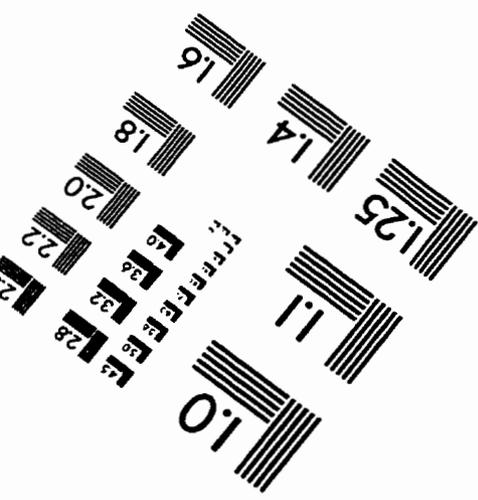
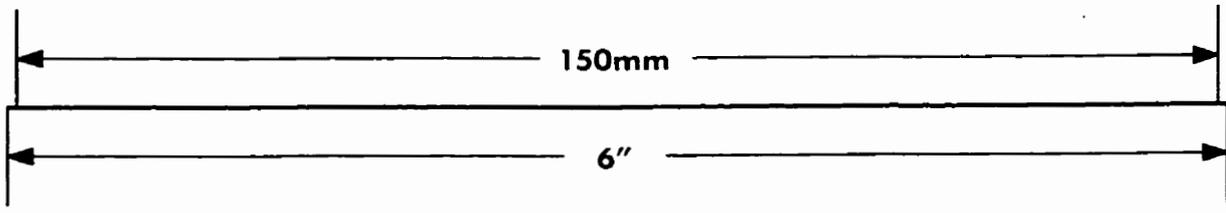
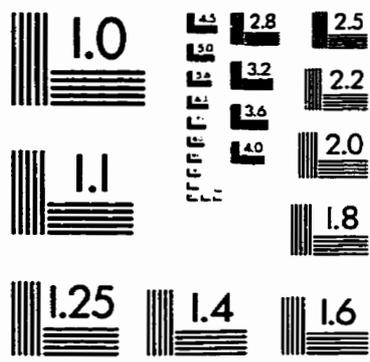
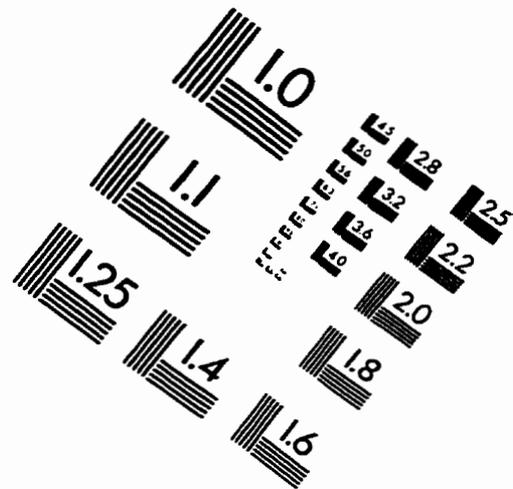
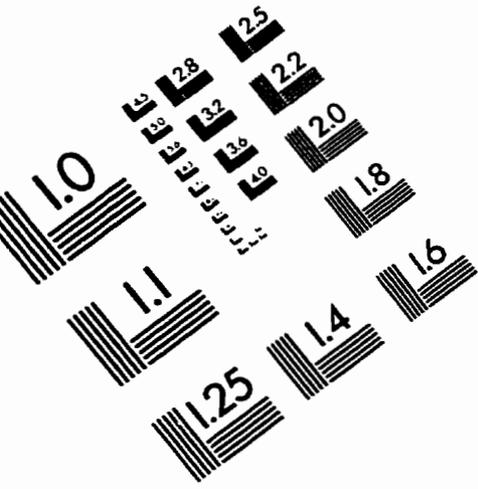
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