

**Nietzsche On “Life”: An Examination of the
Metaphors and their Significance**

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Abstract

In this thesis Didiòdato addresses a central theme in Nietzsche's thought: namely, "life". Nietzsche uses this term in a number of ways throughout his writings in many metaphorical, aphoristic, and often seemingly contradictory ways. This thesis attempts to flesh out what Nietzsche means by "life" by examining each of the particular ways Nietzsche uses the term in isolation. Ultimately, Didiòdato argues that "life" is used in several fundamentally different ways which demonstrates Nietzsche's criticism of metaphysical descriptions, while at the same time speaking to his emphasis on perspectivism. The thesis closes with a reflection on Nietzsche's notion of the "affirmation of life" wherein this thesis argues that the diversity of accounts of life Nietzsche provides can find something of a unity.

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Thank you to my mother and father without whose love and support this thesis (and degree) would not have been possible. I dedicate this thesis to you.

*

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*

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Preface

Opening Statement Presented at Thesis Defense

During these first few minutes allotted to my opening statement I would like to touch on two themes: the first will address why I initially chose Nietzsche as the topic of my thesis and how my understanding of Nietzsche's conception of life, and his philosophy as a whole, changed over the course of preparing this thesis. Secondly, once this has been completed, I will then close with a reflection on the nature of my thesis, and the ramifications this discussion has for this thesis defense itself.

First, then, and to continue the discussion with which I opened at my proposal defense last September, my selection of Nietzsche as the topic of my thesis was a foregone conclusion following the completion of my undergraduate degree. I consider the discovery of Nietzsche to be one of the most significant moments in my philosophy undergrad, as I immediately found a philosopher whose style, passion, and intimacy with philosophy seemed to raise him to a level unmatched others who came before him. I saturated myself in Nietzsche's works, and the more I read, the more enamored I became. I felt that through Nietzsche a true genius was speaking, and despite the difficulty I often had (and, truth be told, sometimes still have) trying to understand the underlying significance of what he is saying through the complex style with which he describes it, I nevertheless felt that if there was something profound and unique to be found in the study of Nietzsche.

Over the course of researching and writing this thesis, and the amount of time it has allowed me to immerse myself in Nietzsche's texts, however, my outright admiration has undergone a transformation. I am still of the opinion that Nietzsche is certainly the most

enjoyable philosopher to read, and that I feel a genuine reciprocity when I read his texts which I do not feel when reading other philosophers. Nevertheless, over these past 18 months I have come to better appreciate the significance of Nietzsche the man - *rather* than Nietzsche the philosopher. For while I had previously admired Nietzsche for his wit, confidence (or, perhaps, over-confidence), insight, and passion, I have now come to in many ways feel sorry for and, indeed, pity him. For as much as his philosophy speaks to the excess of power, domination, and mastery, there is perhaps no specimen of human life whose constitution was more fragile and tormented.

This new perspective of viewing Nietzsche has had an important ramification for my understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole, and in particular with his conception of 'life'. For while I had previously understood Nietzsche's approach to life as being about truly understanding something of philosophy, value theory, and morality which had previously been unaddressed, I am now of the opinion that his philosophy was intended to be primarily a self-medication; a manner by which and through which he hoped to bring some sort of meaning into his own life. This is certainly not an utterly original thought in itself, as it has been previously raised by a number of Nietzsche commentators: Hollingdale, Kauffmann, and Lietzer, to name a few. Indeed, Nietzsche himself seems to make this same point: "philosophy," he tells us in *The Gay Science*, "cannot teach us anything about the world, but, rather, will teach us only about the *philosopher* who wrote it." A philosophy, therefore, which seeks to its very end a manner to affirm life seems to speak to a philosopher who himself found life intolerable.

This is perhaps the most important insight I have attained from the composition of this thesis, for it allowed me to see not just Nietzsche, but all philosophers in a different light. As students we are constantly exposed to the great minds of philosophy whose books appear as self-

help guides for all us ‘lesser’ minds to help us come to understand the world and satiate our desire to learn and understand. Yet it is helpful to remember, as my inquiry into Nietzsche has revealed, that philosophers are as much students, and as much driven by their desire to learn and understand, as are we students ‘proper’. Dionysus, it seems, has united us once again.

* * *

I would now like to spend a few minutes speaking to this thesis defense itself. In the spring of 2004 I was working on a degree in astrophysics at the University of Calgary when I was persuaded by a friend to take a philosophy elective in my final semester. I had always been inquisitive and strove to understand how and why things were the way they were, and what made that the way they are. Physics had for as long as I can remember been the avenue through which I thought this drive could be satiated. This was about to change, however, when I became introduced to philosophy.

Here I found a field which seemed to regress even further back the epistemological path than physics, which clung to its assertion of the absolute validity of empiricism. Philosophy, following physics, was to be the new love of my life. Yet what has stuck me the longest from this first introduction to philosophy was a comment made by my professor when he was discussing our final term paper. To paraphrase he suggested that “in philosophy papers are never really finished. Philosophy is about thought, arguments, and opinions, and these change over time in direct relation to our exposure to new ideas, and the time we are allotted to reflect on them. In one sense a paper is ‘finished’ in that there are time lines, due dates, etc. which necessitate that one have something completed and finished to show for. Yet even after a paper is written, edited, and handed in, the opinion of the author writing the paper will continue to change long after the paper is submitted.”

This is an idea which has stuck with me over the now 6 years of my philosophy degree, and it is one which I have been struggling with particularly over the past 4 months since the submission of my thesis. For there was a time line. There was a due date. And something was required to be printed off and handed in. Yet my reflection on Nietzsche's account of life, and my thesis in general, did not stop at that point. The brain, quite annoyingly, does not come with an off switch. I found myself wanting to add a sentence here, or paragraph there, to either refine an argument, add in a new idea which occurred to me, or correct a possible misconception regarding my phrasing of a particular point.

This desire was only compounded, however, over the past 2 months since I received the reports from my committee. The comments and criticisms outlined in these reports, in addition to providing me with many nervous, sleepless nights, also provided me an opportunity to reflect even further on a number of the arguments I had made forcing me to re-think and re-approach a number of the themes discussed in my thesis.

I mention all this because I find myself now in the awkward position of being at a thesis defense for a thesis which I do not, in every aspect, and every detail, feel can be defended. As a result, in preparing for this defense I have been forced, in addition to reflecting on my thesis proper, to also reflect on the nature of a thesis defense itself. What is a thesis defense? What is it that I am defending? And perhaps most importantly, is it possible to have changed one's mind regarding particular aspects of a thesis, while still defending the thesis itself.

It was during this reflection that I came to remember what my first philosophy professors had mentioned regarding the never-fully-finished nature of a paper. It occurred to me that what is most essential to a thesis is not the concrete finished product that is submitted, but the question or problem the thesis was aimed at answering, and the manner by which that thesis sought to

achieve it. A thesis is *defined* by its problem, and proceeds through its methodology. The answer to this problem will invariably be a product of the experiences we have had, the opinions we have been exposed to, and the ability of our minds to dialogue the two, and move forward. It seems, therefore, that any insight, comment, addition, or modification which further clarifies the thesis' answer to the problem cannot be regarded as damaging to the thesis itself. Rather, these are precisely the types of transformations which do, and indeed *must*, accompany all thought.

It is on this point which I would like to close. For although some of the comments highlighted by Professors Gonzalez and Sikka were potent to some of my arguments, I do not believe any of them are fatal to the general purpose, method, or conclusions of this thesis itself. As such, I believe this thesis as a whole is still a project which is capable of defense, and it is to this defense which I am now happy to engage.

Thank you.

David Ray Didiopato, April 16th, 2011.

Introduction

i) General

That Nietzsche is among the most influential philosophers to ever have lived is a statement implicitly attested to by the reception, reaction, and adoption of his ideas within the western philosophical tradition. Yet despite the plurality of commentaries which have been written on him (and, indeed perhaps precisely on account of them) his philosophy remains, nevertheless, one whose content is fiercely debated. What must remain beyond all doubt, however, is that Nietzsche is seeking via his philosophy, to present something new to the schools of western philosophy; a new approach, a new method, a new starting point. In all these aspects and more, Nietzsche's philosophy is not attempting to dialogue with one particular idea, proposition or thesis; rather, it is positioning itself to dialogue with the very methods, goals, and presuppositions of Western philosophy itself.

All philosophy, Nietzsche states, is merely an expression of the evaluations of particular individuals.¹ Simply debating between divergent philosophical positions, therefore, is a task redundantly absurd in itself, for all such divergencies are in fact simply the products of fundamentally different evaluative presuppositions.

As such, Nietzsche sought a new method by which to carry out his philosophical project: rather than weigh, measure, or value philosophical systems in reference to each other, what was instead required was a new metric - one removed from the evaluative presuppositions of philosophy and, therefore, one capable of providing a neutral criterion from which to deduce the

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, edited by Keith Ansell-Pearson, translated by Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 10-11; also, "virtue must be our own invention; our own most personal need and self-defence... it is... will to power." Friedrich Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ, in The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings, edited by Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, translated by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 9.

correlative value of philosophies themselves. This neutral standard Nietzsche termed ‘life’, and it is with the elucidation of this term that this thesis is concerned.

It could perhaps be put forward tentatively that the quintessential imperative driving Nietzsche’s thought was be the ability to ‘say Yes to Life’, to *affirm* life.² But what exactly does that mean? What precisely are we being asked to affirm? If life is the metric to evaluate values, then it follows immediately that an articulation of its content is required if it is to be applied coherently. It is in precisely this task where the problem of this thesis emerges: for if there is an answer to the question of ‘what precisely Nietzsche means by life’ it is not immediately evident given both the plurality of descriptions Nietzsche offers for the term ‘life’ throughout his writings, as well as their seemingly unconnected, or contradictory nature. This thesis is principally motivated, therefore, with coming to better understand Nietzsche’s philosophy as a whole by undertaking a specific inquiry into the meaning (or *meanings*) of one of its most central themes.

a) The Imperative of this Thesis (The Inadequacy of Contemporary Approaches)

That being said, Nietzsche, quite clearly, is not a contemporary, living philosopher. He wrote primarily in the 1870’s and 80’s, died in 1900, and has been the topic of much philosophical debate and discussion ever since. Given the centrality of the theme it is not

² The notion of ‘life’ appears throughout Nietzsche’s writings, and it occurs in a plurality of ways - yet almost always in a manner where the ability to *affirm* it is paramount. This is particularly true of his later (post-1882) writings, wherein the ‘affirmation of life’ is a dominant theme mentioned both explicitly and regularly. Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, 7, 50, 87, 112; Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, edited by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, translated by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 26, 53, 152-3, to list a few. This emphasis on life as central to Nietzsche’s thought is also expressed by Reginster and Braezeale. Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, 14-15; Daniel Braezeale, “Introduction,” in Friedrich Nietzsche, Untimely Meditations, edited by Daniel Braezeale, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xxviii.

surprising, therefore, that the topics of life and its affirmation have been addressed numerous times in the literature, a fact that immediately calls into question the relevance of this thesis which seeks, ultimately, to provide one further account; redundancy, after all, is a vice philosophy should not permit of itself, and this potential accusation provides the initial challenge that this thesis must respond to.

The answer, then, that warrants the imperative that this inquiry be undertaken is grounded on *three* principal inadequacies contained within the contemporary appropriations and commentaries on Nietzsche's notion of life that have thus far been produced. The *first* inadequacy is best described as a simple 'passing over'. The notion of life is recognized, and its centrality often noted, yet little or no effort is given to actually articulating to what this notion might be referring.³ Simply reiterating Nietzsche's idea that one is, for example, to "affirm... life unconditionally;"⁴ or, conversely, offering an ambiguous explanation that, for example, by "'life [Nietzsche] means something like 'health'"⁵ may be helpful in that they paraphrase Nietzsche's position, yet they ultimately do little to elucidate or bring a deeper understanding to what the true importance, relevance, and indeed content of that position is. Life appears, at first sight, to be a

³ In many instances this first inadequacy is to no fault of the authors, nor their works, as this 'passing over' of the question of 'what life means' is not necessary for all inquiries into Nietzsche's thought. Nevertheless, from the perspective of this thesis such an overlooking is, while perhaps admissible, still an inadequacy in that it leaves the question of 'life' unanswered. Examples of such a 'passing over' of the question of life can be found in the following works: Julian Young, Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 175; Yi-Ping Ong, "A View of Life: Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and the Novel," *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol. 33 (2009), 169, 171; Wendy Brown, "Nietzsche for Politics," Why Nietzsche Still?: Reflections on Drama, Culture, and Politics, edited by Alan D. Schrift (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 216; Henry Staten, Nietzsche's Voice (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), 171-6.

⁴ Brian Leiter, Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Nietzsche On Morality (New York: Routledge, 2002), 119.

⁵ Young, Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography, 175.

strange metric by which to evaluate, judge, or orient oneself, so an explanation of its content seems merited from the start.

This imperative is only compounded, however, when one recognizes the complexity and plurality of the descriptions that Nietzsche uses to evoke life, which leads to the *second* inadequacy of commentators' handling of the notion: namely, its *reduction to a single concept or essence*. This occurs in a number of ways and, I believe, for a number of reasons. The most common reduction occurs by rendering the notion of life synonymous with 'will to power', and then carrying on with providing a description of the latter.⁶ This is, I believe, problematic for two reasons: *first*, such a reading is only defensible (if at all) by giving an unwarranted emphasis to the *Nachlass* (Nietzsche's unpublished notebooks and journals). A detailed analysis of my criticism of this use of Nietzsche's unpublished works alongside those he did publish will be outlined below in the **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY** section of this Introduction, but for now it is simply important to note this emphasis. The *second* problem with this reductionist reading is that it unfairly, and often without any explanation, overlooks the plurality of other descriptions, aphorisms, and metaphors wherein Nietzsche describes the notion of life: as the

⁶ David Owen and Aaron Ridley, "Dramatis Personae: Nietzsche, Culture, and Human Types," Why Nietzsche Still?: Reflections on Drama, Culture, and Politics, edited by Alan D. Schrift (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 137-8; Alphonso Lingis, "The Will to Power," The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation, edited and Introduced by David B. Allison (New York: Dell Publishing, 1977), 145; Daniel W. Conway, "Life and Self-Overcoming," A Companion to Nietzsche, edited by Keith Ansell Pearson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 532-4; John Richardson, Nietzsche's New Darwinism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 6-7; Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist, Fourth Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 207; Ciano Aydin, "Nietzsche on Reality as Will to Power: Toward an "Organization-Struggle" Model," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 33 (Spring 2007), 33-4; Walter Herbert Sokel, "On the Dionysian in Nietzsche," *New Literary History*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (Autumn 2005), 503-4.

“vita femina” or a “woman”,⁷ as a “type”,⁸ as a returning to the “instinct of nature”,⁹ as “Dionysian”,¹⁰ etc., *as well as* “will to power.”¹¹ The diversity of these accounts renders the reduction of the notion of life simply to ‘will to power’, without an examination of the other descriptions Nietzsche provides, an inadequate over simplification.

The *third* type of inadequacy found in the contemporary accounts of Nietzsche’s notion of life succeeds where the second group fails (in that they *recognize the plurality of descriptions* Nietzsche provides for life), yet they get bogged down with *examining the inconsistencies* which often arise between them, or with the other parts of his philosophy at large. This position generally regards inconsistencies as a methodological problem and something which must, therefore, be overcome. This is achieved in one of two ways: either (a) criticizing and rejecting Nietzsche’s account as erroneous as a result of its inconsistencies;¹² or (b) presupposing his account must, ultimately, be consistent and adopting *one* account or description of life as being

⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs, edited by Bernard Williams, translated by Josefine Nauckhoff, poems translated by Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 193.

⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings, 174-6.

⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” Untimely Meditations, edited by Daniel Breazeale, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 177, 221.

¹⁰ Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings, 145.

¹¹ Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality 52; Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, 15, 152.

¹² Christopher Hamilton, “Nietzsche on Nobility and the Affirmation of Life,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (June 2000), 169, 192.

primary and explaining all others in terms of it.¹³ The emphasis laid by this method of examination is, in the opinion of this thesis, a mistake insofar as it wrongly presupposes Nietzsche's writings to be following the traditional style of philosophical discourse roughly defined as an argument containing clearly defined logically connected premises which progress to defend a conclusion. In this traditional philosophical method, consistency is indeed to be upheld as paramount to the success of the argument itself. However, it is unclear from both the style and content of Nietzsche's writings that he ever intended his writings to be evaluated in such a manner.¹⁴ If this is the case, as indeed this thesis will maintain, then inconsistencies are not to be immediately held as a discredit to the argument as a whole, but can be regarded as a strategy to reveal a deeper underlying position not immediately evident or, indeed, definable through the logic of traditional conceptual language.¹⁵

This thesis, therefore, seeks to provide an examination of Nietzsche's notion of 'life' in a manner which shall overcome these three general inadequacies found within the contemporary accounts. More specifically, it will examine the plurality of descriptions and aphorisms in which Nietzsche mentions life and will seek to achieve a general understanding of this notion through

¹³ While this may sound similar to the *second* problem of appropriation discussed above (namely, reducing 'life' to the will to power and describing 'life' thereafter in terms of the later) this is not necessarily the case. Other commentators have emphasized other aphorisms as being the central descriptor of 'life' and have used this as a means to overcome or account for the inconsistencies in the various descriptions. Jane Bennett and William E. Connolly, "Contesting Nature/Culture: The Creative Character of Thinking," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 24 (Fall 2002), 149-50; Peter R. Sedgwick, *Nietzsche: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 88-9; Arnaud Francois, "Life and Will in Nietzsche and Bergson," in *SubStance*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (2007), 108-9. Peter Poellner, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 16-17.

¹⁴ For more on this see Eric Blondel, *Nietzsche: The Body and Culture: Philosophy as a Philological Genealogy*, translated by Sean Hand (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 19-22; Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, translated by Duncan Large (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 2-5.

¹⁵ Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 2, 101-3.

this diversity of descriptions. It will not seek to simply reduce all the descriptions Nietzsche provides to one single definitive position, as it is the opinion of this thesis that Nietzsche had no such intention - indeed, he sought precisely the *opposite*. That diversity exists within Nietzsche's writings is a subject beyond dispute, and this thesis will attempt to explore this diversity, rather than reduce or dismiss it.

ii) A (Brief) Discourse On the Method

In this section of the introduction there are two general themes I would like to address: the first, *Research Methodology*, will highlight the basic method of my research, as well as various considerations pertaining to the sources my research will draw upon; and the second, *Structural Methodology*, will address the basic structure of this thesis, which has been devised to be the most proficient means to answer the question of the thesis, which has just been outlined above.

a) Research Methodology

1) Systematic vs. Thematic Approach

Traditionally there are two principal methods of producing a commentary on Nietzsche: a *systematic approach* (which centralizes a systematization of Nietzsche's thought around a single doctrine or insight regarded as central to it); and a *thematic approach* which rejects the existence of a 'Nietzschean system' and instead brings together a plurality of texts on a common *theme* in an attempt to discern Nietzsche's general position regarding the topic in question. Both methods have strengths, and both have weaknesses. The systematic approach has the obvious advantage

of producing a system which is coherent and structured and can therefore be easily explored, compared, and critiqued in dialogued with other philosophical systems. That being said, the systematic approach is limited by its necessary manipulation of diverse texts under the guise of a principle not explicitly rendered within the texts themselves. If Nietzsche has a central driving principle, it is to be the *object* of an inquiry, not the presupposition which grounds one.

The thematic approach, conversely, has the advantage of taking seriously the diversity of Nietzsche's styles and aphorisms and is able, thereby, to explore the interplay between Nietzsche's various ideas and descriptions as they appear throughout his writings. This is at the expense, however, of being able to argue definitively for any one single defining 'Nietzschean' position or central doctrine. By employing this method one may explore themes, but must abstain from suggesting that any one particular theme is principal to Nietzsche's thought.

This thesis will adopt a *thematic* method of inquiry. It shall proceed, therefore, by observing the occurrence of the notion of life throughout Nietzsche's writings and seek to explore this diversity of expressions without attempting to express them as the 'foundation' or 'grounding principle' of Nietzsche's thought. It will moreover, as mentioned above, not reduce this complexity to any single principle or 'final position' as being the definitive articulation of Nietzsche's view, but rather, will attempt to explore the diverse insights contained in each aphorism, as well the manner in which they come together through the action of 'affirmation'. The question of style, which will be addressed in greater detail later in this **Introduction**, is also best appropriated via a thematic examination, and adopting this method will allow this thesis the ability to take seriously the style by which Nietzsche presented his arguments. In short, the thematic method will allow this paper the greatest potential to achieve its goal of exploring

Nietzsche's notion of life in a manner that will avoid the three general problems of traditional interpretations, as outlined above.

However, this method will also limit this paper in several substantial ways: *first*, this thesis will be incapable of ranking the centrality of the notion of life within Nietzsche's thought. Such an approximation may be warranted granted the frequency with which this term appears throughout his writings, yet no definitive position can be reached on this point. *Second*, this thesis will be unable to comment generally on the 'final insight' or 'ultimate conclusion' of Nietzsche's philosophy - precisely because it presupposes methodologically that no such insight exists. This is not to suggest that there *is* no ultimate conclusion that Nietzsche reached, but only that it cannot be demonstrated via the thematic reading here being employed.

The last note I shall add on the thematic methodology of this paper is a necessary *caution* that must be taken on the part of the researcher as a result of its being employed: namely, that *careful attention must be made to not read anachronistically or selectively, in a manner which serves the resolution of contemporary problems that Nietzsche was not addressing*. Certainly historic philosophers may still hold *relevance* for contemporary problems, and we value and have interest in them for precisely this reason. Yet one must always remember and acknowledge the context that the author was originally writing from, and the problems they were responding to. The thematic approach is particularly susceptible to this problem as it fails to recognize a central doctrine that the philosophy is ordered around and, thus, is unable to comment explicitly on what themes are central to the philosophy itself, nor those that are most pertinent to its author. The author of a thematic reading must therefore remain cautious of this fact and refrain from

reading into the texts ideas or views that are not explicitly rendered therein. This thesis will exercise said caution.

2) Nachlass

I would next like to address a methodological question that is of principal importance for any examination of Nietzsche's thought: namely, the role and emphasis placed on the *Nachlass* - a collection of journals, notes, letters, and unpublished drafts of various works that were, after Nietzsche's death, collected and organized in the approximate chronological order of their writing. This is a question of principal importance, as the *Nachlass* is vast and its content is often in opposition to positions that Nietzsche outlined in his published works.

The most widely held position among Nietzsche scholars has been to consider the *Nachlass* as an acceptable source - either outright and on par with his published works, or at least in a qualified sense where the former may be appealed to to help clarify ambiguities in his published works.¹⁶ Most important for the project of this thesis is the posthumously-published *Nachlass* composition The Will to Power.¹⁷ According to some, this book contains a draft of what would have been Nietzsche's final philosophy - the culmination and completion of all his previous books which he was unable to finish before falling victim to his syphilitic madness.¹⁸ According to others, it was an attempt, on Nietzsche's part, to achieve such a final philosophy

¹⁶ Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist, 77-8; Staten, Nietzsche's Voice, 2;

¹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, edited by Walter Kaufmann, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1967).

¹⁸ Young, Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography, 535.

but, recognizing the impossibility of this task, he abandoned it, leaving it relegated to the pages of his journal, where he intended it to stay.¹⁹

Ultimately this thesis will side with the latter position and will not, as such, make reference to the *Nachlass* as a primary source. This decision has been reached from two considerations: the *first* is the widest in scope and applies to the *Nachlass* in its totality. Simply put, it is unfair to an author to accommodate their rough, unrefined notes alongside their polished, published ideas. Whether we, as scholars, can make a qualitative difference between what Nietzsche chose to publish and what he chose to remain unpublished is of little consequence; for ultimately what we are searching for is not what *we* think relevant, but what *Nietzsche* thought relevant. The reason *why* Nietzsche thought that any particular idea was inadequate is, while interesting, again ultimately of no concern; for *that* Nietzsche thought them inadequate to publish is the only relevant fact when deciding which texts we can attribute to him.

The *second* consideration is far more potent, but is narrower in its scope, as it is in reference to the The Will to Power explicitly. The Will to Power, as mentioned, was the working title for a book Nietzsche intended to begin writing in 1885 as an “attempt at a new Explanation of all events.”²⁰ Its outline went through various revisions over the following three years, but by February 1888 Nietzsche writes explicitly that he “has abandoned all thought of publishing the work”.²¹ There is debate surrounding exactly what happened following this dismissal of the project, as well as the reasons for it. Some (though not all) of the original notes prepared for the

¹⁹ Ibid., 535-543.

²⁰ Young, Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography, 536.

²¹ Ibid., 541.

Will to Power were eventually published as The Twilight of the Idols.²² What is unclear is whether The Antichrist, a second book published in 1888, is the totality of the new project of a 'Revaluation of All Values' which Nietzsche mentions in his notebooks from November 1888, or whether it was the first of four intended volumes under that general title. Those who reject the *Nachlass* generally favour the former position, while those who like to emphasize the importance of the *Nachlass* lean towards the latter, arguing, therefore, that the notebooks now published as The Will to Power contain the notes that would have gone into writing the remaining three volumes. As such, they conclude, The Will to Power contains a preliminary form of the position Nietzsche ultimately supported, right up until collapse into insanity.

This thesis will accept the former position: namely that Nietzsche abandoned the project of the Will to Power and that his later Revaluation is contained in The Antichrist. Based on the ambiguity on this matter, as found in Nietzsche's letters and notebooks, it may ultimately be impossible to discern with certitude why the work remained unfinished. Nevertheless, it seems ultimately a moot point; for whether the work remained unfinished as a result of his falling into madness before he was unable to refine it or, conversely, whether it remained unfinished on account of his having abandoned the project altogether, the fact remains unchanged - the work was *unfinished*. Following from the argument above, therefore, we need not quibble over how best to account for its being unfinished - we need simply remark that it was not.²³

²² Ibid., 541

²³ It may further be noted that the very fact that there is so much ambiguity and debate surrounding Nietzsche's final position regarding the Will to Power and the Revaluation of All Values speaks directly against the inclusion of *Nachlass* material: for if Nietzsche's position on this account is left so unrefined and ambiguously articulated, it follows that his other notes should contain an equal level of ambiguity. Recognizing the former to be ambiguous while appealing to the latter as a clear articulation of Nietzsche's 'final philosophy' is to commit oneself to the charge of methodological equivocation.

b) Structural Methodology

I will now address the structure of this thesis. The structure has been devised so as to enable, to the greatest degree possible, the successful resolution of the aim of the thesis. To achieve this, the inquiry shall be conducted in two phases: one that explores the *diversity of Nietzsche's accounts of life itself* and a second, that explores the metaphors by which Nietzsche suggests we are to *affirm life*.

Part II: The Metaphors of Life will constitute the first of these tasks: namely, it will examine the plurality of the descriptions and aphorisms in which Nietzsche mentions 'life' and explore them individually and in isolation from one another. It will *not* seek to simply reduce all the descriptions Nietzsche provides to one single definitive position, as it is the opinion of this thesis that Nietzsche had no such intention - indeed, he sought precisely the opposite. Moreover, it will not reject Nietzsche's account immediately on the grounds of 'inconsistency' between divergent accounts. Rather, it will seek to explore the diversity of accounts that Nietzsche provides, and reflect on the significance and implications of this diversity.

To achieve this, each metaphor for 'life' will be addressed individually. The metaphors focused on are: (a) life as a returning to nature/instincts; (b) life as a woman (c) life as a type; and, lastly, (d) life as will to power. Each examination will draw upon both Nietzsche's primary texts, as well as previous authors' appropriations and commentaries. The goal of this section is to achieve an understanding of each metaphor in itself as a unique expression of the notion of life and to understand how this particular understanding functions within Nietzsche's philosophy. The section will ultimately show that the term "life" has a diversity of meanings in Nietzsche's philosophy: it is in some instances an unknowable, undefinable abyss, yet is, at the same time, a

concept that we create and fill with our own meaning. It can be separated into diverse types, which can be explored and examined in isolation from one another, yet, at the same time, these types may be unified in their will to power.

However, the term “life” functions within Nietzsche’s philosophy primarily within the context of *affirmation* - and an examination of the notion of life cannot be complete, therefore, without further reflecting on how it is to be affirmed. This inquiry shall constitute the task of the third section of this paper, **Part III: The Affirmation of Life**. For, as it turns out, just as Nietzsche provides a plurality of accounts of the notion of life, so too does he provide a number of metaphors describing what it means to affirm life. These metaphors are (a) Dionysus; (b) *amor fati*; and (c) Eternal Recurrence. Ultimately this section will discover that Nietzsche’s notion of affirmation demands the affirmation - not of any one particular perspective or interpretation of life (the diversity of which will have just been articulated in **Part II**), but rather, that we affirm life in its *totality*, accepting all its forms and interpretations.

However, before either of these discussions can be undertaken in an academically honest manner, there is an initial problem that also must be discussed - namely, the role and use of the term ‘metaphor’ as it appears in Nietzsche’s writings. This is an essential preliminary and shall therefore constitute **Part I** of this paper, to which we now turn.

PART I: The Problem of Reading Nietzsche: A Preliminary Consideration

i) The Problem of Reading Nietzsche

Before one can begin the inquiry into life itself, there is a preliminary step that must be undertaken by any examination of Nietzsche's thought, which this thesis will refer to as *The Problem of Reading Nietzsche*. Although this problem may not be unique to Nietzsche, it has traditionally been a topic of immanent concern within the Prefaces and Introductions of commentaries on Nietzsche, far more regularly than it has been of other philosophers. This problem has emerged largely as a result of the style of Nietzsche's writings and, moreover, the subsequent questionability of whether or how they are to fit within the 'traditional' realm of philosophical discourse. There can be no question that Nietzsche *intended* his writings to be of a different variety altogether from that produced by earlier philosophers:²⁴ indeed, when Nietzsche claims to be reacting against the laboriously dense tomes of Kant and Hegel, it is as much against the *style by which they present it*, as it is the *content* of the philosophies themselves.²⁵ Although one can debate the extent to which Nietzsche succeeded in producing an entirely original style of philosophical discourse, two fundamental insights regarding his style must nonetheless be conceded: *first*, that Nietzsche *sought* a new method, and, *secondly*, that at least some of his writings take on a form which leaves obvious confusion when attempting to understand or analyze its arguments (at least when comparison to a more traditional philosophical text).²⁶

²⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ, 9.

²⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, 105-6; Hans Seigfried, "Nietzsche's Radical Experimentalism," *Man and World*, Vol. 22 (1989), 485; Alan D. Schrift, "Nietzsche's French Legacy," The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche, edited by Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 330.

²⁶ Peter Poellner, Nietzsche and Metaphysics, 1-2; Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, AntiChrist, 72.

Each of these points is important to consider in itself, yet both are also interconnected as it is precisely on account of the former that the latter has gained prominence. Consequently, to remedy any potential ambiguity, this thesis will examine each of these positions in turn. *First*, then, is the simple admission that Nietzsche *sought* a new style in his writings. This is more a matter of fact than of academic speculation, since Nietzsche articulates this goal frequently in unequivocal terms: for “Good style *in itself*... is *pure stupidity*.”²⁷ Rather, “every style that really communicates an inner state is *good*”.²⁸ However, not all philosophers are capable of writing - or, indeed, understanding - such style. Of this only Nietzsche is capable: he was the “first to discover the art of *great* rhythm, the *great style* of the period,”²⁹ such that through him and his works “a philologist without equal is speaking.”³⁰ To those versed in Nietzsche it will be admitted that the self-attribution of a certain grandiosity, exemplified above, prevails quite consistently throughout his writings. Confidence in his ability to say something entirely new in a manner which is itself new (or, at least, a recourse to the pre-Socratics) is perhaps Nietzsche’s most self-proclaimed ambition and success. Referring to the genre of Nietzsche’s texts Pippin suggests, “it is clear that Nietzsche wanted to resist incorporation into traditional philosophy, to escape traditional assumptions about the writing of philosophy.”³¹ Whether we agree that

²⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, edited by Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, translated by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 104.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 104.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 104-5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

³¹ Robert Pippin, “Introduction,” in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, edited by Adrian Del Caro and Robert B. Pippin, translated by Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), xii. This point is also stated by Kofman, suggesting that Nietzsche sought “a new and original type of writing - one which is irreducible to any other.” Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 1.

Nietzsche indeed succeeded in this task or not, therefore, it must nevertheless be admitted that he at least sought such an original style.

It will not be surprising, therefore, when we discover that at least some of his writings employ literary styles which are less than common among the more traditional mainstream philosophers - and, indeed, “styles” is the key word. For Nietzsche’s works cover a remarkably diverse range of styles and genres: some appear as relatively ‘standard’ philosophical essays,³² while others are collections of short aphorisms;³³ some appear to be quite systematic inquiries,³⁴ while others are highly aphoristic novels.³⁵ Even the autobiography is not spared from Nietzsche’s literary arsenal.³⁶ The first question which Nietzsche’s writings demand one to answer, therefore, is what, precisely, are we to make of them? How are we to categorize them? This question, while it may seem redundant or trivial, is in fact (from an academic perspective)

³² See, for example, Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life”.

³³ See Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs; and, Friedrich Nietzsche, Human, All Too Human, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Interestingly, some commentators, such as Richard Schacht, suggest that Nietzsche’s use of aphorisms, rather than longer and more systematic texts, are a result of his ill-health and subsequent inability to spend extended periods of time working on a particular idea. Insofar as he was only able to concentrate for short periods before become debilitated by headaches, he was only capable of producing short sections of text, which he would then compile to create a larger books. Richard Schacht, “Introduction” in Friedrich Nietzsche, Human, All Too Human, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), xi. This argument is problematic, however, as there seems to be no correlation between the continuous amount of time one is able to work, and the length of the subsequent argument created. An obvious counter example to this thesis would be the example of Karl Jaspers who, despite suffering from frequent ill health, was nonetheless capable of producing longer systematic inquiries - indeed, one of them on Nietzsche himself.

³⁴ See Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality.

³⁵ See Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, edited by Adrian Del Caro and Robert B. Pippin, translated by Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³⁶ See Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo.

of paramount significance as the genre dictates the academic ‘scale’ or ‘metric’ by which it is to be weighed, criticized, and engaged.

In short, the inability to categorize Nietzsche’s writings neatly within the traditional discourse of philosophy has left open the question of how, precisely, one is to read him. To fill this void Nietzsche scholars have put forward and defended a plurality of positions: Some suggest he is to be read as a ‘traditional’ philosopher who is making a systematic and structured argument such that we must search for a deeper logical consistency underlying a semblance of inconsistencies.³⁷ Against this position, however, others argue that his texts are necessarily complex and are thus incapable of being paraphrased without their essence being lost.³⁸ Some scholars seek to define the ‘key notions’ of Nietzsche’s thought such as ‘life’, ‘eternal recurrence’, and ‘Dionysus’ and discuss them in isolation,³⁹ whereas others reject this possibility on the grounds that these notions only have a meaning within the larger context of a text itself.⁴⁰ Regarding Nietzsche’s thought in its totality some believe they can locate one idea, principle, or insight that is central to Nietzsche’s thought and use it as the lens by which the remainder of his thought can be interpreted,⁴¹ while others demand that the multiplicity of the descriptions he provides for any one idea render any such reduction impossible.⁴²

³⁷ Poellner, Nietzsche and Metaphysics, 16.

³⁸ David B. Allison, “Introduction,” The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation, edited and Introduced by David B. Allison (New York: Dell Publishing, 1977), xii-xiii.

³⁹ See Sedgwick, Nietzsche: The Key Concepts (New York: Routledge, 2009).

⁴⁰ Staten, Nietzsche’s Voice, 3-4.

⁴¹ Bernard Reginster, The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 2-4.; Hans Seigfried, “Nietzsche’s Radical Experimentalism,” 495.

⁴² Kofman, Nietzsche and Metaphor, 2-5; Alan D. Schrift, “Nietzsche’s French Legacy,” 332-3.

These positions, and many others like them, are perhaps the most viciously debated arguments within Nietzsche scholarship - and rightly so, granted the direct and significant influence that their answers have on the structure, method, and conclusions of any inquiry into Nietzsche's thought - irrespective of its object. We must begin, then, by refining our position regarding these issues, as it is only by so doing that our inquiry can proceed. This thesis shall find its answer to these questions within the context of Nietzsche's discussion of 'language' and 'metaphor'. As such an examination of both these terms is required:

ii) Kofman's Solution: Nietzsche on Language and the Role of Metaphor

If there is to be a common denominator intrinsic to all of Nietzsche's writings which holds across the plurality of genres and styles he employs, it is that they are all, in the end, a product of human *language*. This may seem insignificant, as it would hold equally true for any and all philosophers (and authors in general). However, this simple truth is, I believe, of paramount importance in the context of reading Nietzsche: for, rather than taking language for granted as the tool by which premises, arguments, and truths must be articulated, Nietzsche instead asks the preliminary question of *what is language*, and, moreover, *why has it been granted a monopoly on the articulation of 'truth'?* If one can render Nietzsche's answer to these questions then it will serve as a benchmark by which to navigate and interpret the significance and meaning of the totality of his writings - insofar as they all employ language as the primary method of articulation.

Most commentators on Nietzsche fail to give this weight to his discourse on language: they will either ignore it altogether; or, conversely, they will read it in isolation as a text

discussing language in and among other texts discussing morality, justice, nobility, etc. - *rather* than as a *interpretive tool* whose significance is only fully achieved when it is *applied* to his other writings as well. If Nietzsche explains what his view of language is, then we are reading him improperly if we fail to hold that knowledge at the fore any time we read one of his works.

One author who emphasizes his reading of language, however, is Sarah Kofman - to whom much of the methodology and presuppositions of this thesis must be credited. The discussion of Nietzsche's conception of language and metaphor will be presented in dialogue with her works: *particularly* Nietzsche and Metaphor wherein she emphasizes Nietzsche's insistence that *language is necessarily metaphorical*.⁴³ However, Nietzsche employs the word 'metaphor' in a very particular sense, and, therefore, to understand better what precisely this means, we must explore in some detail his description of this term.

All language, Nietzsche tells us, is a product of a series of 'translations' which begin, invariably, with a *stimulus of a nerve*. This stimulus may occur in any of the sensual faculties, yet the result is always the same: the stimulus is "translated into an image"⁴⁴ - namely, the *sensation* or *conscious experience* of that stimulus. Whether it be the sensation of 'seeing' an object or colour; the sensation of 'feeling' a prick; the sensation of 'hearing' a bird chirp; or the sensation of 'tasting' something bitter, in each case it is the conscious *representation* of a stimulus to a nerve - and what is a representation if not a *translation* or *metaphor*. The sensation is not an exact duplicate of the stimulus, yet neither is it entirely independent. It is simply the representation of the stimulus into a "new sphere" - in this case, one accessible only to the

⁴³ Sarah Kofman, Nietzsche and Metaphor, 7-9.

⁴⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense" in The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings, edited by Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, translated by Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 144.

consciousness. This transition, from stimulus to conscious image, is what Nietzsche terms the *First Metaphor*.

We have not yet arrived at language, however. For that we require a second further transition: namely, from the conscious image to a *sound*. Here again, we have a transition from one sphere (consciousness) to another sphere that is entirely independent (sound). As a result we cannot, again, say that the sound is either an exact duplicate *or* completely unrelated to the conscious image; rather, it is a *representation* of the conscious image: a *metaphor* of the conscious image which is now twice removed from the nerve stimulus at its origin.

Although in his earlier work, On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense, Nietzsche stops here,⁴⁵ he later goes on to describe a *third metaphor*: namely, the transition from spoken sound to *written language*.⁴⁶ This transition is again incapable of providing anything more than a *representation* of the sound and is thus, out of the three metaphors, that which is least capable of expressing the ‘truth’. It is for this reason that Nietzsche considers music to be the most proficient means by which to carry out or express philosophical views (insofar as it is one metaphor closer to the ‘truth’ and therefore better able to represent it than is written language).⁴⁷

Yet whether the ‘word’ remains as a sound or, conversely, is further translated into a written language remains, for our present purposes, of secondary concern. What is essential to recognize, however, is the creation of the *concept* which results, principally, from the generalization from *similar* nerve stimuli (and, thereby, similar conscious images) to the *same*

⁴⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense,” 144.

⁴⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings, edited by Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, translated by Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 35-6; Kofman, Nietzsche and Metaphor, 6-7.

⁴⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings, 36; Kofman, Nietzsche and Metaphor, 11-12.

sound or word. As Nietzsche puts it, a “concept... is formed by dropping these individual differences arbitrarily, by forgetting those features which differentiate one thing from another.”⁴⁸ The concept, in other words, is the generalization from that which is *similar* to that which is the *same*.

It is important to point out that Nietzsche does not consider this metaphorical transition from stimulus to image to sound to concept to be something undesirable. On the contrary, in fact, Nietzsche considers it *fundamental* to being a human being.⁴⁹ As Nietzsche puts it, the “drive to form metaphors [is the] fundamental human drive which cannot be left out of consideration for even a second without also leaving out human beings themselves.”⁵⁰ It is so fundamental that it is in fact the metric by which humanity is to be differentiated from other animals: it is not ‘reason’ (contra Aristotle) which defines the human being, but rather “this ability to sublimate sensuous metaphors into a schema, in other words, to dissolve an image into a concept.”⁵¹

Yet while Nietzsche considers this ability fundamental to human nature, it must nonetheless be approached with caution. For it is essential that humanity remember that language is, in the end, always nothing more than metaphors - that is, representations of representations - and *not* a description of a ‘thing-in-itself.’ The concept originated, we will remember, by generalizing from that which was *similar* to that which is the *same*. When the

⁴⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense,” 145.

⁴⁹ Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 25; 82.

⁵⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense,” 150-151.

⁵¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense,” 146; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 16; Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 25.

metaphorical nature of language is *forgotten*, however, this process is thought to reverse and it seems that it is the *similarity* which came first and gave rise to the *diversity*: the ‘concept’, in other words, comes to be thought of as what is ‘real’, insofar as it is ‘original’, and our sensations, which come afterwards, are therefore simply incomplete and imperfect approximations, which are thus ‘unreal.’⁵² As it turns out, in fact, it is precisely this *forgetting* of the metaphorical nature of language and the reversal of the origin of the concept which Nietzsche sees as the root problem of the traditional philosophers, and that which he charges as being their primary fault.⁵³

This understanding of ‘language’ has important implications which bear themselves out throughout the remainder of Nietzsche’s philosophy. Perhaps the most easily recognized manifestation can be seen in the perspectivism he continually endorses throughout his writings.⁵⁴ Indeed, given the description of language that he has just provided, it seems that a defense of any particular use or application of language as ‘absolutely’ correct would be fundamentally absurd in itself: for if all language is simply a further translation derived from a conscious image (itself translated from a nerve stimulus) then an evaluation of different languages would require an

⁵² This reversal of cause and effect in language would later be applied by Nietzsche to the realm of Morality as well as he discusses in what he calls “The Four Great Errors” in *Twilight of the Idols*. Here he states that “In my mouth, this formula changes into its opposite - *first* example of my ‘revaluation of all values’ - someone who has turned out well, a ‘happy one’, *has to* perform certain acts and will instinctively avoid others.... In a word: his virtue is the *effect* of his happiness.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, edited by Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, translated by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 176-7.

⁵³ Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 25.

⁵⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, 149-50; also, Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense,” 148; also, Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, 213, to list a few. It is also acknowledged by Bergoffen: Debra B. Bergoffen, “Oedipal Dramas,” in *Why Nietzsche Still?: Reflections on Drama, Culture, and Politics*, edited by Alan D. Schrift (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 15.

‘objective’ language removed from such experiences and, therefore, capable of providing a standardized metric.⁵⁵ It is precisely this objective standard which Nietzsche maintains is an impossibility:⁵⁶ for, insofar as all experiences are felt by a subject, an ‘objective’ experience is by definition an absurdity. The ability, therefore, to hierarchize the correctness of different uses of language - and, indeed, the superior allocation of a particular perspective over and above all others - is equally impossible.⁵⁷

Metaphors, therefore, become almost synonymous with perspectives insofar as each metaphorical description is the product of a particular perspective.⁵⁸ Kofman takes this as being the most essential premise of any commentary on the style of Nietzsche’s writings and suggests, ultimately, that Nietzsche’s writings are in fact precisely an exercise in this task: the plurality of styles, accounts, and descriptions that he provides for any given idea or notion are often inconsistent - and *intentionally so*.⁵⁹ For it is only by highlighting this incompatibility of differing descriptions and accounts that Nietzsche is able to tug at the traditional understanding of ‘truth’ as being a proper relation between subject and object. It is precisely this relation which Nietzsche claims is mistaken - indeed, absurd: for insofar as there is no ‘correct’ measure of the

⁵⁵ Kofman suggests that by using a plurality of styles to present his philosophy Nietzsche is acknowledging that no one particular style is in itself ‘the best’ or ‘most apt’ for the philosophical project. Thus, as she also remarks elsewhere of Nietzsche’s philosophy, what are his most important insights are contained within the *method* by which he presents his philosophy as much (if not more so) than by the particular ‘content’ of the text itself. Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 5-6.

⁵⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense,” 148; He also states in Zarathustra that “words and sounds.... [are] illusory bridges between things eternally separated.” Thus there is an intimate subjectivity to all language which renders what might be called an ‘authentic’ communication impossible. Words lack the nature requisite for such a transfer. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, edited by Adrian Del Caro and Robert B. Pippin, translated by Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 175.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 82-4.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 101-2

translation from each sphere of experience to the next, so too is it impossible to defend the correctness of a particular translation.⁶⁰ All that can be defended are perspectives - each *based* on its own interpretation, and each *capable of providing* its own interpretation.⁶¹

The result, then, is that the language of ‘correctness’ when speaking of particular perspectives is replaced with the language of ‘fullness’: for if each perspective is ‘correct’ insofar as it holds a metaphorical representation of a nerve stimulus, then what is to be sought is not one ‘single’ perspective, but, rather, a *plurality of individual and unique perspectives*. The more perspectives one possesses, therefore, the less likely is one to believe a description is conceptual (read *metaphysical*), and the fuller and more vibrant their understanding would become.⁶²

iii) Conclusion: Relevance for the Task of this Thesis

What, then, does this say to our task of reading Nietzsche? For we were initially seeking to explore a preliminary question of how best to read Nietzsche’s writings: to discover a common basis by which and from which to interpret his texts. Paralleling Kofman, therefore, this thesis will highlight Nietzsche’s description of language and metaphor as being the fundamental premise upon which any inquiry into Nietzsche’s thought must begin. At the methodological

⁶⁰ Bernard Williams presents a good discussion of the necessity of interpretation and the subsequent inability of Nietzsche to hierarchize one particular interpretation as ‘better’ than another. Importantly, he emphasizes that the various interpretations are of “the same reality” which removes the possibility of charging Nietzsche with a metaphysical dualism and, moreover, provides an alternative explanation, not made explicit by Nietzsche himself, as to why no one particular interpretation can be argued to be ‘best.’ Bernard Williams, “Introduction,” in Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs, edited by Bernard Williams, translated by Josefine Nauckhoff, poems translated by Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xxi.

⁶¹ Kofman, Nietzsche and Metaphor, 82.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 102.

level, this will have a number of important implications for this thesis, which, for the sake of clarity, shall now be addressed in turn.

First, and perhaps most importantly, it will resolve the common criticism of *inconsistency* (namely, that Nietzsche's position(s) should be rejected - either in part, or in their totality, on the grounds that they contradict or are logically incompatible with other positions he has claimed to uphold elsewhere).⁶³ It is not difficult to see the appeal of such a line of criticism, particularly to one experienced in the task of argument analysis. After all, there is perhaps no presupposition more central to the construction of any argument than the consistency and compatibility of its premises: snow, quite simply, cannot be both 'black' and 'white'. However, based on Nietzsche's account of language, of which we are now versed, we can appreciate that the question of consistency is itself naive insofar as it presupposes a 'proper' perspective to which one can appeal. The point is not, therefore, whether the snow is 'really' black or white but, rather, what each description is capable of relaying to us about the nerve stimulus at its origin. The analysis to be undertaken in this thesis, therefore, will not burden itself with simply addressing whether the various accounts of life are 'consistent' or 'inconsistent' with one another, as it is the opinion of this thesis that such lines of questioning miss the point of Nietzsche's texts altogether. It is not their consistency with one another that is relevant but, rather, the unique perspective each description articulates, and the 'fuller' view of the notion of life we are able to arrive at when we put the plurality of these descriptions together in life's affirmation.

⁶³ Jane Bennett and William E. Connolly, "Contesting Nature/Culture: The Creative Character of Thinking," 149-50; Peter R. Sedgwick, *Nietzsche: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 88-9; Arnaud Francois, "Life and Will in Nietzsche and Bergson," 108-9; Peter Poellner, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*, 16-17.

Second, the emphasis on Nietzsche's understanding of language and metaphor will also have a significance to bear on the manner by which each description of life is analyzed. As mentioned in the **Introduction** to this thesis, the examination of life will first engage the metaphors for *life itself* and then, later, will use this as a window to examine the metaphors for *affirmation*. It should now be evident why this method is necessary: for to simply assert or assume that life has a single description would be to presuppose: *first*, that Nietzsche intended all the descriptions of life to be in fact one long single description (a position we have just rejected); and *second*, that one could deduce the single 'most important' or 'central' description of life, which would be required as an interpretive tool to iron out the various inconsistencies such a reading would necessitate (again, a misreading of Nietzsche's intent). Rather, to apply our interpretive presupposition consistently, what is required is that we examine each of Nietzsche's descriptions of life in isolation, insofar as each description is the product of a unique perspective and, therefore, not intended to be read or measured in relation to any other.

A *third*, and final consideration, which our preliminary emphasis on Nietzsche's understanding of language and metaphor will have on the method of this thesis, relates to the *selection* of those descriptions and metaphors that have been selected for examination. When one reads the 'metaphors for life' one would expect, it seems, to find a list of metaphorical descriptions or objects relating something 'known' with something 'unknown,' so as to increase our knowledge of the latter by paralleling it in some relevant fashion to the former. 'Metaphors' such as 'life as a *woman*'⁶⁴ or 'life as an *abyss*'⁶⁵ seem relatively straightforward in their

⁶⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs, 193.

⁶⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 181-3.

application of this principle. Other descriptions, however, such as ‘life as a *return to nature and the instincts*,’⁶⁶ for example, seem somewhat more problematic, insofar as they appear to be more of a *description* than they are a metaphorical analogy. This apparent problem dissolves, however, when we remember that Nietzsche uses metaphor in a very particular sense, as applied to all language equally, where all language is a metaphorical representation of a conscious image.⁶⁷ Those descriptions which have been selected for this thesis have been chosen precisely insofar as they provide a basis by which to understand something of what Nietzsche refers to as life, and are ‘metaphorical’ precisely insofar as they are a product of language. While it is true, therefore, that some of the descriptions to be addressed are also metaphorical in the ‘normal’ or ‘standard’ sense of the word, this does not either grant them special status, nor does it serve to discredit those which are not: on the contrary, in fact, we shall see that precisely as a result of the inclusion of both those that we would consider to be ‘standard’ metaphors, as well as those which appear metaphorical only in the broader Nietzschean sense of the word, *all* the descriptions are made richer as a result.

Having emphasized as central Nietzsche’s discourse on language, we have now acquired a framework by which and through which to approach Nietzsche’s writings. However, while conducting this inquiry we have also been able to narrow both the scope and method by which this thesis must proceed. We are now prepared, therefore, to begin the task ‘proper’ of this thesis: namely, an examination of Nietzsche’s metaphors for life. This shall be conducted in two phases: *First*, in **Part II**, we shall undertake an examination into each particular metaphor

⁶⁶ Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality 52; Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, 15, 152.

⁶⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense,” 144.

provides to describe life itself; and *second*, once this has been achieved, we shall then reflect on what it means to affirm life, when we describe the metaphors by which Nietzsche articulates this in **Part III**.

Part II: An Examination of Nietzsche's Metaphors for Life

i) General Introduction to Part II

Having addressed the preliminary methodological and philological questions, we shall now begin to undertake the proper task of this thesis: providing an account of Nietzsche's metaphors for life. We shall begin by examining the metaphors for life individually and in isolation from one another. This section, as such, will read something like a collection of short individual inquiries that begin and end in themselves, rather than as a progressive logical argument with each section building on and adding to the previous. Each examination shall refrain, wherever possible, from making reference to any other metaphor, as it is precisely the task of this section to make explicit the significance each metaphor holds in itself. This is to set the stage, ultimately, for the examination of the metaphors for the *affirmation* of life, which shall be undertaken in **Part III**.

However, while the metaphors will be considered in isolation from one another as unique unrelated inquiries, the methodology employed in each case will not necessarily be the same. This is a result, largely, of the manner by which the different metaphors have been previously referenced and mentioned by scholars writing on the Nietzsche and the notion of life. Some of the metaphors have been heavily referenced by Nietzschean scholars and, thus, the examination undertaken here will consist, in part, of a dialogue with those authors. Other metaphors, however, have been left unexamined traditionally by previous scholars. As such, their examination here will in large part be expository and shall focus more explicitly on Nietzsche's primary texts themselves in isolation from the secondary literature.

What is perhaps most important to keep in mind when undertaking the examination to follow, however, is the *goal* to which this section aspires. What this section aims to do is provide a series of descriptions of life as diverse, isolated, and un-related entities. It is *essential*, therefore, that we do not concern ourselves here or allow our minds to slip into the question of which metaphor Nietzsche intended to be ‘central’ or ‘primary’; nor, moreover, should we feel uncomfortable if we are to discover that one particular metaphor presents life in a manner which is fundamentally inconsistent with an account we examine later. Rather, we must remain adamant in our resolve to examine these metaphors as Nietzsche presented them: as *unique*.

ii) The Metaphors for Life

a) *Life as a Return to Nature/Instincts*

There is perhaps no description or metaphor used for life that is more prevalent and consistent throughout Nietzsche’s writings than nature and the instincts. Originally, in an essay written in 1873,⁶⁸ nature is used as a standard by which to evaluate the use and disuse of the study of history. In later writings, however, the notions of the instincts and nature continue to be important terms for Nietzsche as he frequently appeals to them in similar contexts.⁶⁹ Consistent throughout is the position that to affirm life, we must “return to nature”⁷⁰ for, we are told, when “life is ascending, happiness is equal to instincts.”⁷¹ The pressing question for our present

⁶⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” *Untimely Meditations*, edited by Daniel Breazeale, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁶⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 390; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 106-8; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 163, to list a few.

⁷⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 221.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 166.

investigation, therefore, is *what are nature and the instincts*, and, moreover, *by what method or means are we to return to them*.

The answers to these questions, as it turns out, are interrelated - and, I believe, intentionally so. As to the former, the question relating to the content or description of nature and the instincts, Nietzsche proceeds by employing a *via negativa*,⁷² in other words, rather than define nature and the instincts using positive descriptive terms, he chooses, instead, to define it by *negation*, by stating what nature and the instincts are *not*.⁷³ Nietzsche suggests that nature and the instincts cannot be articulated by those who have been educated but, rather, can only manifest in the '*youth*': those who "still possess that instinct of nature which remains intact until artificially and forcibly shattered by this education."⁷⁴

It is perhaps interesting to note a fundamental divergence Nietzsche's account of nature makes from a more traditional account, as it is, in many senses, quite antithetical to what one might expect. More traditional definitions of nature, particularly those employed by the natural sciences, suggest nature is something to be *discovered* and *explored*; in short, it is an entity of which a body of knowledge can be produced and which, indeed, one lacking such knowledge

⁷² Eric Blondel, *Nietzsche: The Body and Culture: Philosophy as a Philological Genealogy*, 133. Blondel, in reference to Nietzsche's reading of language, makes the further observation that the *body* is itself a text which is interpreted necessarily through the transition from nerve stimulus to a conscious image that we experience. *Ibid.*, 70.

⁷³ Elsewhere, Blondel suggests that the project of defining the 'instincts' or 'body' is a "necessary but impossible task." *Ibid.*, 80. It is impossible insofar as the body is a text - which is to say, we can only access the body (read, instincts) as interpretations or metaphors, which we see as conscious images. Thus the instincts, just like the body, can only be presented as interpretations and cannot, therefore, be articulated by traditional conceptual language.

⁷⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life", 116-7. Later, Nietzsche describes the goal of "high reasoning" in *The Anti-Christ*, as returning people to their instincts but "also to prevent them from becoming conscious of it: to achieve a perfect automatism of the instinct - this is the presupposition of every type of mastery, of every type of perfection in the art of life." Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, 58.

could not be said to fully understand.⁷⁵ Nietzsche's definition, however, seems to be suggesting the precise opposite: nature is *not* the body of some knowledge but, rather, is that which exists before any knowledge is acquired.⁷⁶ As Nietzsche puts it "knowledge does not perfect nature, it only destroys your own nature.... Your [19th century Europeans'] manner of moving, that of climbing upon knowledge, is your fatality; the ground sinks away from you into the unknown; there is no longer any support for your life, only spider's threads which every new grasp of knowledge tears apart."⁷⁷

This seems to raise a pressing concern regarding the possibility of such a nature existing. If one abstracts, as Nietzsche suggests, to a state before all education, what is left? An individual in such a state would still, it seems, undergo experiences and events through which their 'instincts' and 'natural inclinations' would change or develop. If we require such 'youth' to be a

⁷⁵ Christoph Cox, Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 133.

⁷⁶ Christoph Cox, Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation, 5-6. Moreover, as Deleuze points out, life and knowledge are in fact perfect antitheses. As he tells us, "knowledge *is* opposed to life, but because it expresses a life which contradicts life, a reactive life which finds in knowledge a means of preserving and glorifying its type." Gilles Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 100. It should also be noted that this particular point in Nietzsche's thought should not be read as suggesting natural scientists would be naive enough to suggest something like 'nature' does not exist prior to their coming to discover it. Nature, in a rather ordinary sense of the word does, of course, exist prior to our knowledge of it. Rather, the point here being made is that for the natural sciences the 'nature' of an object is something which can be discovered; indeed, it is through discovering its nature that we come to understand how this particular object operates, etc. This is the point which is to be held in dialogue with Nietzsche's view: for as it has been outlined above, for Nietzsche it is precisely this definition and articulation of a nature which is destructive of an objects 'true' nature itself.

⁷⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," 108. This is a theme which will come up again in Ecce Homo when Nietzsche discusses how to become "what you are." He suggests, ultimately, that culture, by instilling values, gives an individual a "second nature" which must be carefully approached if one is to succeed in becoming what they are. Friedrich Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings, edited by Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, translated by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), xii-xiii. The most dangerous of this second nature is that which Nietzsche terms 'morality' insofar as it is particularly damaging to the instincts. The emergence of this theme of "becoming what you are" will be brought up again in **Part III** of this paper in the context of Dionysus. He also states in Twilight of the Idols, that "degeneration of instinct is the cause of all stupidity today." Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, 215.

pure manifestation of its instincts, however, then it seems it can only be so prior to any experience or event; in other words, the youth can exist only as an hypothetical extraction in the mind, and not in reality. For if they do enter reality, it seems their instincts will change and be lost on account of the experiences they undergo and knowledge they acquire, much the same way an education, supposedly, modifies (and thereby removes) one's instincts.⁷⁸

I believe this potential criticism is, however, based upon a misreading of Nietzsche that misses the main emphasis of his hostility toward education. Contrary to this criticism, Nietzsche's central concern regarding education is *not* that it simply presents knowledge which requires one's instincts to be modified. Rather, what is detrimental is that education *unifies, standardizes, and reduces* the diversity of instincts and natures to *conform to a single standard*. Education presents a benchmark or rulebook to which one's instincts are told they must conform.

In other words, it is not the modification or development of one's instincts that is to be avoided, but the reduction of all instincts to conform to a single standard. We who are educated, and precisely *because* of our education, "have forgotten that we are nature."⁷⁹ What a return to nature calls for, therefore, is a *return to individuality*, a return to *diversity*. It is a call to *become that which we are before we are told what we are*.

⁷⁸ Arnaud Francois, "Life and Will in Nietzsche and Bergson," in *SubStance*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (2007), 101.

⁷⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 390.

It is precisely on account of this insight that Nietzsche praises Schopenhauer.⁸⁰ Schopenhauer, we are told, recognized that he was being “cheated out of himself”⁸¹ and, to remedy this, sought to “interpret life in his own way.”⁸² Schopenhauer’s attempt to reclaim himself by redefining and reinterpreting life in his own way ultimately, however, failed to satisfy the standard of ‘returning to nature’ in the sense being employed by Nietzsche.

Schopenhauer failed, importantly, in two principal ways: *first*, it will not surprise one, he was *educated* (which we now know refers, not to simply having attended a formal institution of education but, rather, to being exposed to the cultural standards and norms of a society and undergoing the necessary modification of his instincts in conformity thereto).⁸³ In other texts Nietzsche refers to the ability to ‘forget’ as being integral to one’s ability to affirm life.⁸⁴ Although Nietzsche is ambiguous as to whether one can forget their education, in the strict sense here being employed, it remains nonetheless evident that Schopenhauer, at least, failed in this task. This is perhaps most easily recognizable in the *second* fault of Schopenhauer’s account: namely, its articulation using *language*.

⁸⁰ It should perhaps be noted that at this point in Nietzsche’s academic career (approximately 1874) he had overcome his former ‘allegiance’ to Schopenhauer and his philosophy. Nevertheless, while coming to widely reject the major tenets of Schopenhauer’s thought Nietzsche in some instances, however, continued to speak favourably about Schopenhauer’s character and insights. It is to one of these ‘praises’ to which I am here referring.

⁸¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, “Schopenhauer as Educator,” *Untimely Meditations*, edited by Daniel Breazeale, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 155.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ It should be noted that from this point forward when this thesis refers to Nietzsche’s criticisms of education, the term “education” is intended in this particular sense of the word, and should not be misread as intending “any an all forms of education.”

⁸⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” 120.

For Nietzsche language is, we will remember from **Part I** of this thesis, the metaphorical or representative expression of a conscious image. Only via the generalization and sharing of a common series of sounds, however, is a language able to serve a purpose within a society. It is precisely on the basis of this agreed-to standard usage that the origin of ‘truth’ lies and, as it turns out, the point where Schopenhauer’s failure to remove himself from his education fully becomes evident. It is evident in the fact that Schopenhauer wrote his philosophy in the German language. Such a language is incapable of articulating the ‘truth’ of nature or the instincts precisely because it is, at best, a metaphorical expression of them. A return to nature requires that one remove their education and, also, therefore, the illusion of truth that conceptual language provides.⁸⁵ On this note Nietzsche remarks that “music is a turn to nature”;⁸⁶ music is the actuality of *pure sound*, prior to being injected with a particular social meaning. Schopenhauer thus failed when articulating his own account of life precisely insofar as the language by which he aimed to describe it was inept from the start.

This seems to raise an immediate and obvious concern regarding Nietzsche’s own account of nature: for Nietzsche also wrote in German and, thus, it seems his account of nature and the instincts must also fail. To this challenge, however, I believe, there are two possible replies: *first*, while it is true that Nietzsche wrote in German, his articulation of nature was, we will remember, attained via *negation*: it was not presented in a fixed or rigid manner appealing to a standard conceptual language. Rather, Nietzsche was using the negation of language to make

⁸⁵ As Nietzsche later puts it, “we cannot communicate via language” as it is “merely empty concepts which lack mutual understanding and feeling.” Friedrich Nietzsche, “Richard Wagner in Bayreuth,” *Untimely Meditations*, edited by Daniel Breazeale, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 215.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 215.

the point that language needs to be negated. This seems quite consistent with (and indeed a very clever representation of) the notion that nature cannot be articulated through language and, it seems, saves him from the charge that his own account appeals to language. A *second*, and perhaps more sweeping rebuttal, appeals to Nietzsche's conception of language in general. For insofar as Nietzsche makes explicit the limitations of language, it would be, at best, a grave oversight and at worst an outright falsity to accuse Nietzsche of providing an 'account' of nature by appealing to the standard terms employed by the German language; rather, he can only be thought to be providing a metaphor for nature. Such an observation also, it seems, saves his description from the same charge he presses against Schopenhauer.

I would like to return now to an earlier point regarding the uneducated or removal of education pertaining to nature, as it has important ramifications for morality. The implication of the stripping away of education is, as discussed above, the removal of the indoctrination or the reduction of a diversity into a unity. Regarding *actions* (the subject matter of morality), it seems the application of the removal of education would amount to the rejection of a single overarching or absolute moral standard or system. If we are to return to the instincts, as Nietzsche suggests, then it seems we must appeal to our natural inclinations when attempting to discern proper action. Moral values and standards, therefore, are either the *same as our instincts* or, rather, *learned through personal experience*. It seems implicit that different individuals would arrive at different moral standards and this is, it seems, precisely what Nietzsche intends. Sweeping moral standards, therefore, are *anti-nature* and, thus, *anti-life*.⁸⁷ The conception that a particular 'set' of instincts are to be cherished and cultivated to drive 'good' action, while, conversely, others are

⁸⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 106.

‘bad’ or ‘evil’ and must be ascetically subdued is therefore the antithesis to the conception of nature Nietzsche is here defining.

1) Christianity and Morality

Christianity is, for Nietzsche, the primary manifestation of the antithesis to this position.⁸⁸ Nietzsche’s discussion of Christianity could (and has) filled innumerable volumes, so it would not be possible - nor does this thesis aspire - to discuss, in detail, this topic at present. Nevertheless, it may still be worthwhile to at least highlight a few points in this discussion, which will, given the context above, resonate as particularly relevant. Perhaps at the fore of such a discussion would be Christianity’s doctrines regarding the ‘virtue’ of chastity and the correlative ‘sin’ of sex.⁸⁹ There is inarguably no act more fundamental to the survival of a species and the continued existence of life than procreation, so it seems to Nietzsche immediately evident that the instinct toward sex is permanent.⁹⁰ It is easy for him to conclude, therefore, that “every contempt for sex is a crime against life itself”.⁹¹ Christianity, by

⁸⁸ Although Nietzsche states this sentiment very frequently, it is well summed up in a passage from The Anti-Christ, “All church concepts that exist are malicious counterfeits that exist to devalue *nature* and *natural values*.” Thus the church is defined by Nietzsche to be in perfect opposition to what he terms ‘natural.’ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ, 34.

⁸⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ, 8; he also charges the “Preachers of Death” (i.e. Christianity) with upholding this problematic doctrine in Zarathustra, Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 32.

⁹⁰ This is, incidentally, an important point to make insofar as Nietzsche does not, as one might prefer, explain exactly how the instincts are to be defined. For if he is himself educated, as is no doubt the case, then it seems unclear how, precisely, he would turn around to articulate what instincts would exist in an uneducated individual. Perhaps his silence on this point is a testament to the fact that he thinks all such articulations would be in vain. It could also be a sign that he wishes, instead, to affirm all instincts, whatever they may be, and an articulation of those which *should* exist would be a detrimental limitation to his account. Nevertheless, he seems at least confident enough to suggest the instinct to procreate is necessary to nature/life.

⁹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, 106.

supporting such a position (and others like it), is thus declaring unequivocally that it “hates the first instincts of life”⁹² rendering it, ultimately, the very manifestation of ‘anti-life:’ “Christianity is a state of affairs where anti-nature [anti-life] has been given the highest honour as morality.”⁹³

Any moral system, therefore, that is in accordance with nature and the instincts must *embrace* those instincts and drives. Indeed, if such a system in any way adds, subtracts, modifies, or places those instincts into a hierarchy it immediately ceases to be in accordance with those instincts and, thus, becomes *anti-natural*. The moral ‘system’, therefore, prescribed by this account of nature and the instincts is precisely that *there can be no system whatsoever*: instincts *alone* are to be the foundation of action if a morality seeks to be in accordance with nature and, therefore, life.⁹⁴

2) Darwinism, Spencer, and Strauss

One final discussion that is relevant in the context of Nietzsche’s discussion of nature and the instincts is *Darwinism*. Darwin’s two most influential books, The Origin of Species and The Descent of Man, were both published during Nietzsche’s life - in fact, prior to Nietzsche’s *first*

⁹² Ibid., 149.

⁹³ Ibid.; Also, “Christianity has taken the side of everything weak, base, failed, it has made an ideal out of whatever *contradicts* the preservation instincts of a strong life” Friedrich Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ, 5.

⁹⁴ Although there is not sufficient space to discuss it adequately here, it should perhaps be noted, at least, that Nietzsche further considers the propagation of the “enormous lie of personal immortality” by Christianity to be additionally harmful to life insofar as it “destroys all reason, everything beneficial and life enhancing in the instincts.” Friedrich Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ, 39. As Zarathustra reiterates a similar sentiment, “do not believe those who speak of “extraterrestrial hopes” - they are despisers of life, dying off, self-poisoned.” Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 6.

publication in 1872.⁹⁵ The social, cultural, and scientific ripples which dissipated from these publications spread across Europe where a diverse field of scholars quickly wrote commentaries appropriating Darwin's scientific discoveries to other various schools of thought.⁹⁶ Philosophy and, particularly, morality were also subjected to a Darwinian revision and, while there is debate as to the *extent* to which Nietzsche studied Darwin's works,⁹⁷ it is nevertheless undeniable that he was at least familiar with both their existence and their basic arguments.⁹⁸ The relevant question to ask at present, however, is whether, and in which ways, Darwin's conception of 'nature' or 'natural life' compare with those put forward by Nietzsche.

At least on the surface, it seems that there are, in fact, a number of similarities between the two thinkers on this point: this is perhaps most explicit in the fact that Nietzsche, like Darwin, sought to appeal to the 'natural' as a means by which to orient oneself or derive an

⁹⁵ Darwin's *The Origin of Species* was originally published in 1859, and *The Descent of Man* followed 12 years later, in 1871. Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (Dutton, New York: Everyman's Library, 1963); Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (New York: AMS Press, 1896).

⁹⁶ Gregory Moore, "Nietzsche, Spencer, and the Evolution of Ethics," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 23 (Spring 2002), 1; Mark Ridley, ed., *The Darwin Reader* (Cambridge, UK: Norton & Company, 1987), 15-7.

⁹⁷ A common criticism posed against Nietzsche regarding several of the positions he attacks or references in his writings is that he did not himself fully understand the original arguments/authors themselves and, moreover, that he only knew them through secondary sources or authors. This is a criticism which is also charged against Nietzsche in his relation to Darwinism. Some authors, such as Francois and Conway, suggest that Nietzsche's understanding of Darwin probably limited, but nevertheless proficient to allow him to draw his criticism coherently; others, however, such as Richardson, suggest Nietzsche's entire philosophy was a development on Darwinism and, thus, Nietzsche's philosophy itself could not have been constructed without him having a thorough knowledge of Darwin's theories before hand. Arnaud Francois, "Life and Will in Nietzsche and Bergson," in *SubStance*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (2007); Daniel W. Conway, "Life and Self-Overcoming," *A Companion to Nietzsche*, edited by Keith Ansell Pearson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006); John Richardson, *Nietzsche's New Darwinism*, 17.

⁹⁸ This can be attested, if not by the reference to Darwin's works in Nietzsche's writings, but also the possession of *The Origin of Species* in Nietzsche's personal library. Thomas H. Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 112.

evaluation. Nature is that which is *original* and which comes *before* the various other meanings or explanations that we give to the world.

However, there are several explicit differences between Darwin's and Nietzsche's accounts of nature that reveal, ultimately, that they have little in common. In fact, according to Nietzsche Darwin's account of nature might even appear horribly *un-natural*. The *first* of these differences is explicit in the *method* or *means* by which Darwin proposes that nature advances. Nature, for Darwin, is a continual stream of events, experiences, and circumstances in which a living being exists. The life of this being is determined by its *reaction* to these external stimuli, over which it has no control.⁹⁹ It lives by responding to events, and its success (ability to thrive, live, procreate, continue its species) depends precisely on its ability to respond successfully to them.¹⁰⁰ This understanding of development, nature, and life is, however, the exact *antithesis* to what Nietzsche prescribes. Life is to be *active* - not reactive.¹⁰¹ It is defined by the *embodiment* and *acting out* of *internal instincts and drives*, the "foundation of affects," and *not* the reaction to external stimuli.¹⁰² Nietzsche and Darwin are thus in disagreement over the method by which life flourishes.

They are further in disagreement, however, over the *value* of life - the *value* of living existence. In immediate consequence to the 'randomness' of mutation and external stimulants he

⁹⁹ Darwin, The Origin of Species, 55-6.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 112-3.

¹⁰¹ Nietzsche makes this point as a confusion of cause and effect in On the Genealogy of Morality, where he states, in reference to the 'adaptation' of Darwinism, that overlooks "the prime importance that the spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, re-interpreting, re-directing and formative forces have, which 'adaptation' follows only when they have had their effect." Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, 52.

¹⁰² Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, 152.

posits as the factor governing evolution,¹⁰³ Darwin is generally placed in the camp of nihilism:¹⁰⁴ the view, namely, that life lacks any inherent meaning. It is impossible, according to this position, to derive value or meaning from a process which is itself fundamentally random.¹⁰⁵ Those familiar with Nietzsche's writings will recall that there is no position against which he responds with more frequency and severity than *nihilism*: it is the plague of European culture,¹⁰⁶ the foundation of Christian ethics,¹⁰⁷ and the enemy whose defeat he most fervently seeks.¹⁰⁸ It is not surprising, therefore, that Nietzsche rejects Darwin's claim of the meaningless of existence or actions based on the randomness of the process.¹⁰⁹ His rejection of Darwin's conclusion follows from his criticism of Darwin's account of evolution itself. For if life and nature are not a 'reaction' to random external stimulants but, rather, the 'active' selection of purposeful actions, then life need not be devoid of meaning at all. As Nietzsche asks, "how could you live according to this indifference [nature]?"¹¹⁰ "Living is," he tells us, precisely the very act of "assessing, preferring, being unfair, being limited, [and] wanting to be different."¹¹¹ By one's *choices* and

¹⁰³ Mark Ridley, ed., The Darwin Reader, 84-5.

¹⁰⁴ Tamler Sommers and Alex Rosenberg, "Darwin's Nihilistic Idea: Biology and the Meaninglessness of Life," *Biology and Philosophy*, Vol. 18, No. 5, pp. 1-17, (2003), 13.

¹⁰⁵ Mark Ridley, ed., The Darwin Reader, 84-5.

¹⁰⁶ Raymond Geuss, "Introduction" in Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings, x.

¹⁰⁷ "Nihilist and Christian: this rhymes, but it does more than just rhyme..." Friedrich Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ, 62.

¹⁰⁸ Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist, 101.

¹⁰⁹ Nietzsche criticizes this position by demanding that nature is always *given* a meaning by the humans that it concerns. In The Gay Science, he notes "nature is always value-less - but has rather been given, granted value, and we were the givers and granters!" Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs, 171.

¹¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, 10.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

actions, therefore, the individual gives life meaning - a meaning which is re-expressed with each conscious choice.

This last point, in fact, is where Nietzsche most explicitly takes exception to Darwinism as it applied to human life - particularly as it was appropriated by other scholars:¹¹² notably, David Strauss, and Herbert Spencer. Both authors sought to devise a new ethic based on Darwinism, yet they undertook slightly different methods to achieve this. Strauss, rejecting Christianity on account of Darwin's alternative explanation for life, nonetheless appealed to Christian values when constructing his new morality.¹¹³ This, Nietzsche replied, was an absurdity; for if Christianity has been rejected then its moral baggage must be dismissed along with it. Christian values were, according to Nietzsche, enforceable precisely insofar as they were the product of divine revelation. Rejecting the fact of such a revelation requires that one reject the content of it as well.¹¹⁴

Spencer, it seems, was able to succeed where Strauss failed in that he was able to provide an account of morality which appealed directly to the process of sociological evolution. Moral values, sentiments, and inclinations, Spencer argued, are the products of evolution as much as any other characteristic: "the human race... needed one moral constitution to fit him for his original state [living as individuals or small groups]; he needs another to fit him for his present state [living in larger societies]; and that he has been, is, and will long continue to be, in process of moral adaptation."¹¹⁵ According to Spencer they developed via natural processes and have

¹¹² Gregory Moore, "Nietzsche, Spencer, and the Evolution of Ethics," 1-3.

¹¹³ Friedrich Nietzsche, "David Struass, the Confessor and the Writer," 14-15.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹⁵ Herbert Spencer, On Social Evolution: Selected Writings, edited by J. D. Y. Peel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 10-11.

survived precisely insofar as they increase the favourability of a species' propagation. We should adhere to our moral values, therefore, because they have proven themselves a proficient means to continue the existence and survival of the human species. Nietzsche, however, rejects the existence of such a species-oriented morality. Nature is, we will remember, that which is left after all else is removed - *including morality itself*. Nature is not, therefore, the development toward a species-based morality, but the development toward the individual.¹¹⁶ If there is anything like a natural ethic for Nietzsche, therefore, it is best described as a simple *self-regulation*.¹¹⁷

* * *

What, then, has this discussion about nature and instincts revealed about Nietzsche's notion of life. *First*, we will recall that it is *not a body of knowledge*. In other words, life is not something which needs to be learned, taught, or explored. It exists more purely in the negation of knowledge altogether, where instincts themselves determine action. *Second*, it has become apparent that life is *amoral*. This is not to say, as we have just read, that existence is meaningless. Rather, it implies that life cannot be used to derive a universal moral system. Instincts are possessed by individuals, and moral valuations, therefore, are a strictly individual matter. *Third*, and perhaps most importantly, however, examining life as nature and the instincts carries a prescriptive calling: to *become what you are before you were told what you are*. Life, as returning to nature, therefore, presents the paradox of aspiring to become precisely that which we cannot become. Although this paradox presents no solution at present, its importance will be

¹¹⁶ Gregory Moore, "Nietzsche, Spencer, and the Evolution of Ethics," 9.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

brought up in dialogue with the other metaphors for life, which shall be discussed together in **Part III** of this thesis.

b) Life as a Woman or the Vita Femina

The metaphor of *woman* or the *vita femina* for life is the one most rarely used by Nietzsche compared to the other descriptions examined in this thesis. Nevertheless, it is also the one that is most frequently and thoroughly referenced and discussed by commentators when providing an account of Nietzsche's notion of life. The reason for the emphasis placed on this description, despite its infrequent use, is the context of the passages in which the woman metaphor exists: namely, *as an individual* - a woman, named Life - *with whom Nietzsche is having a conversation*. If Nietzsche is anywhere going to provide a relatively straightforward account of what he means by life, it seems that it would occur in just such an occasion. As the majority of the commentators who examine this metaphor have noted, however, Nietzsche is not attempting to produce such a straightforward account in his conversation with Life but is, rather, attempting to describe something deeper lying beneath the surface of the conversation itself.¹¹⁸ To understand the significance for the metaphor of life as a woman we must, therefore, explore the symbolism the conversations employ:

The two conversations, entitled "The Dance Song" and "The Other Dance Song," occur in the form of songs sung by Zarathustra during the middle of Part II and the end of Part III of

¹¹⁸ Jacques Derrida, "The Question of Style," translated by Ruben Berezdivin in The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation, edited and Introduced by David B. Allison (New York: Dell Publishing, 1977), 187; Eric Blondel, "Nietzsche: Life as Metaphor," translated by Mairi Macrae in The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation, edited and Introduced by David B. Allison (New York: Dell Publishing, 1977), 156-8.

Thus Spoke Zarathustra. For the sake of clarity I shall begin by quoting from each of these at some length:

From “The Dance Song”:

“Into your eye I gazed recently, oh life! And then into the unfathomable I seemed to sink.

But you pulled me out with your golden fishing rod; you laughed mockingly when I called you unfathomable.

“Thus sounds the speech of all fish,” you said. “What *they* do not fathom, is unfathomable.

But I am merely fickle and wild and in all things a woman, and no virtuous one:

Whether to you men I am called ‘profundity’ or ‘fidelity,’ ‘eternity’ or ‘secrecy.’

But you men always bestow on us your own virtues - oh, you virtuous men!”

Thus she laughed, the incredible one, but I never believed her and her laughing when she speaks ill of herself.

And when I spoke in confidence with my wild wisdom, she said to me angrily: “you will, you covet, you love, and only therefore do you *praise* life!”

Then I almost answered maliciously and told the angry woman the truth; and one can not answer more maliciously than when one “tells the truth” to one’s wisdom.

Thus matters stand between the three of us. At bottom I love only life - and verily, most when I hate it!”¹¹⁹

And, from “The Other Dance Song”:

“Oh Zarathustra... we are both a couple of real do-no-goods and do-no-evils. Beyond good and evil we found our island and our green meadow - we two alone! Therefore we at least have to like each other!

And just because we do not love each other from the heart - must we grudge one another for not loving each other from the heart?

That I like you, and often too much, this you know; the reason is that I am jealous of your wisdom. Ah, this crazy old fool of a wisdom!

If your wisdom ever ran away from you, oh! Then my love would also quickly run away from you too.” -

¹¹⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 84.

Then life looked pensively behind her and around her and said softly: “Oh Zarathustra, you are not faithful enough for me!

You do not love me nearly as much as you say; I know you are thinking of leaving me soon.

There is an old heavy, heavy growling bell: it growls at night all the way up to your cave -

- when you hear this bell toll the hour at midnight, then you think between one and twelve about -

- you think, oh Zarathustra, I know it, about how you will soon leave me!” -

“Yes,” I answered, hesitating. “But you also know -” And I said something in her ear, right in it between her tangled yellow, foolish shaggy locks.

“You *know* that, oh Zarathustra? No one knows that.”

And we looked at each other and gazed at the green meadow, over which the cool evening had just spread, and we wept together. - But at that moment I loved life more than I ever loved all my wisdom. -”¹²⁰

These two texts represent the core of Nietzsche’s conversations with Life and will therefore constitute the basis from which our metaphorical exegesis shall proceed. This shall be achieved by investigating three principal themes: woman as an appearance/abyss; as a sexual symbol; and as love. Each of these themes shall be addressed in dialogue with a particular author who has regarded them as central to Nietzsche’s account of life.

1) First Theme: Appearance or Abyss

First, then, we shall examine the theme of woman as an appearance or abyss. Eric Blondel is a Nietzsche scholar who, in parallel with both Kofman and this thesis, recognizes that “up until now too much or too little attention has been given to metaphors, images, and forms in Nietzsche’s discourse.”¹²¹ He recognizes that Nietzsche’s texts are, at bottom, “intrinsically metaphorical” and are designed as such to represent the “separation between body and

¹²⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 182-3.

¹²¹ Eric Blondel, “Nietzsche: Life as Metaphor,” 150.

thought”¹²² or, (to bring his vocabulary in dialogue with **Part I** of this thesis), between ‘nerve stimuli’ and a ‘conscious image.’

As it turns out it is on precisely this basis that Blondel sees the primary appropriation of the metaphor of woman: namely, as one who is *deceptive*; as one whose appearance strategically and deliberately deceives about her underlying essence, as a means to hide it from those who are searching. Nietzsche remarks in The Gay Science that “life.. is covered by a veil of beautiful possibilities... - promising, resisting, bashful, mocking, compassionate, and seductive. Yes, life is a woman!”¹²³ The interesting thing about the deception of life, however, is that she does not deceive us about the content of her true essence; rather, she deceives us into believing she, in fact, *has* a true essence to begin with.¹²⁴ After all, for Nietzsche, there is no dichotomy to be found between ‘appearance’ and ‘reality’. They are, quite simply, the same thing; they *coincide*.¹²⁵ Likewise, therefore, we should not be searching for the essence of life as something which hides beneath the semblance or appearances of life as we see them: life *is* the appearances. “Into your eye I gazed recently, oh life! And then into the unfathomable I seemed to sink.”¹²⁶ This line both opens and closes the first conversation between Nietzsche and life and

¹²² Eric Blondel, “Nietzsche: Life as Metaphor,” 151.

¹²³ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs, 193.

¹²⁴ Eric Blondel, “Nietzsche: Life as Metaphor,” 157.

¹²⁵ Ibid. Seigfried tries to reject this position by introducing the language of a priori knowledge into Nietzsche’s account of life. Seigfried argues that this first interpretation of life as an ‘abyss’ exists ‘a priori’ as “something that precedes in us the discovery and perception of any given objects.” Hans Seigfried, “Nietzsche’s Radical Experimentalism,” 494. The inclusion of such language, however, seems problematic for two reasons: first, Nietzsche never uses the term a priori in reference to his conception of life; and, secondly, Nietzsche’s account of the metaphorical nature of language makes it immediately problematic to describe one of his accounts via the language of traditional philosophy. That being said, the general position regarding the “incomprehensible” nature of life put forward by Seigfried is largely in parallel with the metaphor of life as an abyss, as just described.

¹²⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 84.

its significance can now be better understood. Life is, in itself, an utterly empty and meaningless concept: it is an abyss whose essence is “captivating yet inaccessible”¹²⁷ precisely because it has no essence. In this sense, life is a prime example of the concept that was originally a metaphorical expression of a conscious image but whose metaphorical nature has been forgotten, leaving its conceptual residue behind. Blondel concludes, therefore, that the idea of life is itself only possible after one has forgotten its metaphorical origin.¹²⁸ The creation of the idea of life is itself only possible as an antithesis to our instincts or natural drives (themselves metaphors for that which comes before education, as discussed above in **Part II, ii, a**).

It seems, therefore, that the central point discovered via this interpretation of the metaphor of woman is the abyss and unfathomableness of life, in tension with the fact that life appears, above all else, to represent precisely the opposite. Woman as a metaphor for life thus represents life *as the concept* - that which we know, that of which we speak, that which deceives us - as a metaphor for life *as the essential*: namely, the unfathomable, unknowable, abyss.¹²⁹ What we are to take out of this metaphor, therefore, is that life is, in itself, unknowable precisely because life in itself does not exist. It exists only as *interpretations*, only as *appearances*, only as *empty concepts* filled with whatever meanings we attach to them.¹³⁰

What, then, are these interpretations, appearances, or content by which life is to be defined? The metaphor of woman speaks to this aspect of life as well:

¹²⁷ Jacques Derrida, “The Question of Style,” 183.

¹²⁸ Eric Blondel, “Nietzsche: Life as Metaphor,” 163.

¹²⁹ Eric Blondel, Nietzsche: The Body and Culture: Philosophy as a Philological Genealogy, 78-9.

¹³⁰ Julian Young, Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography, 474.

2) Second Theme: Fertility Symbol

The second interpretation of the metaphor of life as a woman is the antithesis of the first. Whereas the first interpretation focused on the appearance and deception of life, deconstructing the essential nature of life to prove it is ultimately an unfathomable abyss, the second, which interprets woman as a *fertility symbol*, explains the very act of *creation* and *projection* which fills the abyss with content. This fertility is a growth or development by which individuals project their own values onto life and, at the same time, declare that these projections are in fact discoveries of an essence itself.¹³¹ As life tells Nietzsche, it makes no difference “whether to you men I am called ‘profundity’ or ‘fidelity,’ ‘eternity’ or ‘secrecy,’”¹³² for each is, ultimately, the application of the same fact: that everywhere and always “you men... bestow on us your own virtues - oh, you virtuous men!”¹³³

The philosopher, for Nietzsche, is the one capable of applying his own valuations onto the world and interpreting it in a new way.¹³⁴ Each interpretation gives a new account of life and the diversity of the former is reflected in the diversity of the latter.¹³⁵ This is why, Nietzsche

¹³¹ Eric Blondel, “Nietzsche: Life as Metaphor,” 159.

¹³² Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 84.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 42, 84.

¹³⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality, edited by Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 82-3; 114-5; Keith Ansell-Pearson, An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 36.

¹³⁵ Nietzsche states this point well in Zarathustra, Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 178.

tells us, there have been such a plurality of conceptions of life throughout history.¹³⁶ Philosophies are, in the end, only projections of an individuals' valuations onto the world. Each philosopher, therefore, is capable of producing his/her own valuation, a fact attested to by the diversity of accounts produced throughout history. Indeed, life has been argued to be, among other things, "an irreparably evil, yet temporary, existence",¹³⁷ a "world devoid of meaning, aim, or purpose",¹³⁸ and a "kind of error".¹³⁹ The fertility of life represents the creation of the diversity of these accounts, yet also accounts for them as being products of the same fundamental process: namely, *creative interpretation*. Life is thus a unity which creates a diversity.

Combining these two interpretations of the metaphor of woman which we have now examined, a tension seems to emerge within the notion of life: by holding a conception of his life himself, Nietzsche 'is' life; yet insofar as life is not in itself correlative with his conception

¹³⁶ It is perhaps important to note that the fertility of life can also be seen to represent the *action* of life as well: namely, life as the active process of evaluation. This would be a secondary interpretation of life found within the same metaphor of the fertility symbol of woman. However, this theme will be examined in detail in a follow section wherein the metaphor of the Will to Power will be examined. As such, I have opted to focus only on the single interpretation of life at present: namely, as being the content created to fill the abyss of life.

It is also important to note here that Nietzsche regards the evaluative action of philosophers to be universal. The difference, he suggests, between the old philosophies and his own is that his philosophy *recognizes itself* as being a creation. As he says in The Gay Science, for the lower human beings "a *delusion* remains his constant companion: he thinks himself as *spectator* and *listener* before the great visual acoustic play that is life; he calls his nature *contemplative* and thereby overlooks the fact that he is also the actual poet and ongoing author of life..." Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs, 171.

¹³⁷ Saint Augustine, Basic Writings of Saint Augustine, edited and translated by Whitney J. Oates (New York: Random House, 1948), 113.

¹³⁸ Kieth Ansell-Pearson, An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist, 36.

¹³⁹ Arthur Schopenhauer, "On the Suffering of the World," in Studies in Pessimism: A Series of Essays, selected and translated by T. Bailey Saunders (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1893), 11.

alone, he 'is not' life. As Stanton puts it, Nietzsche "is identical with life, but life is not identical with him."¹⁴⁰

While I agree with this conclusion, I nonetheless reject it as a source of criticism towards Nietzsche's position. This is a result of the fact that Stanton overlooks an equivocation undertaken by Nietzsche through this text. To understand why this is we must reflect on the manner in which Nietzsche is using the term life in each instance. In the first interpretation, which emphasized deception and abyss, Nietzsche was referring to life 'as such' - as something *external* - that was, in this sense, an unknowable unfathomable abyss. When emphasizing its fertility, however, life is used to refer to the *conception of life* as described *by an individual*. It is therefore necessarily subjective, individual, and unique. The paradox does not exist, therefore, between whether Nietzsche both *is* and *is not* life¹⁴¹ but, rather, in the realization that *life itself has multiple meanings and can be appropriated in multiple ways*. This is precisely the realization that grounds the imperative of this thesis.

3) Third Theme: Love for Life

The third and final interpretation of the metaphor of life as women to be examined is woman as the *object of love or desire*, as exemplified in the *relationship* between Nietzsche and Life in the dialogues. Throughout Nietzsche's writings he consistently claims his love for life and seeks a philosophy, ultimately, that is able to affirm life unconditionally.¹⁴² Yet in his

¹⁴⁰ Henry Staten, Nietzsche's Voice, 176

¹⁴¹ Henry Staten, Nietzsche's Voice, 176.

¹⁴² Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, 7, 50, 87, 112; Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, 26, 53, 152-3, to list a few.

dialogue with Life we see Life accusing Nietzsche of being insincere: “You do not love me nearly as much as you say; I know you are thinking of leaving me soon,”¹⁴³ she accuses him. Yes, Nietzsche admits, before replying, “But... you also know -”¹⁴⁴ ...and we are left with a *blank*.

There is much speculation as to what precisely Nietzsche whispers into life’s ear. Staten sees this as pivotal, regarding it as the central defining paradox of Nietzsche’s entire philosophy, wherein Nietzsche expresses the inexpressible by leaving it blank: Nietzsche whispers to life what only Nietzsche knows, precisely because it is *Nietzsche’s* life, and no one else’s.¹⁴⁵ Lampert, by contrast, suggests the ‘secret’ is the “doctrine of Eternal Recurrence,”¹⁴⁶ wherein Nietzsche admits ‘yes, I’m leaving you, but I shall return.’

It seems naive, however, given the metaphorical nature of Nietzsche’s writings, to suppose that there should, in fact, be just *one single phrase* Nietzsche spoke to life. Perhaps Nietzsche left it blank for precisely this reason: to allow us to read this text in multiple ways, revealing multiple - yet equally valid - meanings. As such, it seems we are justified to suppose Nietzsche did not say just *one* thing to life, but, *several*.

This simple dialogue becomes exceptionally interesting, therefore, as it is open to at least two divergent interpretations, each of which seems viable given the context of the conversation, as well as the remainder of the dialogue that follows. Interestingly, moreover, each

¹⁴³ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 182-3.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Henry Staten, Nietzsche’s Voice, 177.

¹⁴⁶ Laurence Lampert, Nietzsche’s Teaching: An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 238.

interpretation provides a different account of what life is and what a love for life entails. We shall examine both of these possible interpretations in turn:

The *first* interpretation would view life, in these dialogues, as being Nietzsche's physical existence - his actual physical life that will terminate upon his death. Yes, Nietzsche will die at some point, "But," Nietzsche replies, "you also know..."¹⁴⁷ and here we would parallel Lampert in expressing the doctrine of Eternal Return.¹⁴⁸ Stanton suggests this interpretation is untenable given that it would not explain why Nietzsche and life "weep" following the exchange: for if Nietzsche is to return to life, one would expect they would be happy.¹⁴⁹ The problem with this criticism, however, is that Nietzsche does not express whether they wept from sorrow, as Staten assumes, or, conversely, *wept with joy*, which would render the reading of the eternal return entirely plausible. The ambiguity regarding the sentiment of their weeping plays perfectly with the ambiguity of the 'blank' when Nietzsche spoke to life. Nietzsche thus "loves life more than all his wisdom"¹⁵⁰ as it is life that will bring Nietzsche back again and again, and not his wisdom. His wisdom will die with his body, but life will go on and, eventually, life will bring him back.

According to this interpretation of the exchange, therefore, life has a physical attribute. Nietzsche's physical death will constitute his leaving, Nietzsche's physical return will constitute his return, and life is the universe as a whole: the totality of physical matter whose infinite exchanges constitute the processes of existence.

¹⁴⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 182-3.

¹⁴⁸ Laurence Lampert, Nietzsche's Teaching: An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, 238.

¹⁴⁹ Henry Staten, Nietzsche's Voice, 177.

¹⁵⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 182-3.

The *second* interpretation of the exchange between Nietzsche and life, however, takes a different form altogether. Nietzsche is not leaving life in the *physical* sense, as above, but, rather, in the *interpretive* and *creative* sense. In this reading, life is being employed in the conceptual sense (discussed previously), as that which is created by an individual to fill the abyss. This reading, which emphasizes the fertility of life, however, implies the additional ideal of artistic and creative development. Life must overcome life;¹⁵¹ life must redefine life; and it is precisely this phenomenon which Nietzsche is here describing. He is leaving his present conception of life in order to move on to, and try, ‘another.’ The fertility of life itself demands this experimental plurality - Nietzsche’s *gay science* - to continually overcome and overcome again, all that it creates.¹⁵² The secret Nietzsche whispers, therefore, is that ‘you did not exist to begin with;’ ‘you are an expression of my valuations, and nothing more.’ This represents Nietzsche’s *discovery* of the abyss of life, which was unknown to previous philosophers: “No one knows that,”¹⁵³ life replies. Nietzsche thus loves life as his *creation*, as the *product of his valuations*. Yet he also *weeps for joy*, as it is precisely this *gay science* - this perpetual experimentation with values and re-evaluation of life - that Nietzsche loves. Nietzsche thus loves not just what life *is to him at present*, but also *all that it is capable of being in the future* as well.

* * *

¹⁵¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 88-90.

¹⁵² Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs, x.

¹⁵³ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 182-3.

This examination of the metaphor of woman has revealed a plurality of insights and perspectives into Nietzsche's account of life. It has emphasized the abyss and the unknowability of life, which are deceptively hidden by the plurality of appearances that life holds up in front of us. The examination also revealed the origin of life as being the product of a creative evaluation; and it presented life as a purely physical existence (as the antithesis to death). The metaphor of woman is thus a particularly rich metaphor for life, providing a plurality of new insights. We shall now turn to another metaphor for life, that of *typology*, which will further multiply our perspectives.

c) Life as a Type

The notion of a typology of life - the attempt to allocate life into various standards or divisions - is, it seems, an idea which came to Nietzsche in the mid- to late period of his published writings (spanning 1872-1888). Although a thorough account of the origins of this notion are beyond the scope of this thesis, we can remark, nonetheless, that the first sign of the notion's development is found in a published writing from the winter of 1886¹⁵⁴ in the Preface Nietzsche added to his earlier work, The Birth of Tragedy. Nietzsche refers to the "meaning of science" as being viewed, not as a value in itself, but as being a "symptom of life."¹⁵⁵ Although On the Genealogy of Morality, another book Nietzsche wrote and published in 1886, does not mention life in reference to various types, he does, in the following year, return to the theme and

¹⁵⁴ While some of the themes which become central in Nietzsche's notion of 'typology' were obviously known to Nietzsche as they appeared in earlier works (for example, in his discussion of the 'necessity of the rabble' in Thus Spoke Zarathustra) he does not, however, use the language of typology and symptoms until 1886. (Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 75.)

¹⁵⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings, 4.

develops it more thoroughly in Beyond Good and Evil. From this point on the notion of types of life continues to be a common theme throughout Nietzsche's writings, appearing in The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, and The Twilight of the Idols.

While this thesis will not attempt to account for the reasoning behind this sudden inclusion of the notion of a typology, it is, nonetheless, important to reflect on its existence as it is both a common and unique metaphor that Nietzsche uses. It is clear that Nietzsche is attempting to distinguish different types of life: "a condemnation of life on the part of the living is only the symptom of a certain type of life," he tells us in *Twilight*.¹⁵⁶ Later, he adds that "it is naive to say 'this is the way people should be'" as there are "an abundance of types."¹⁵⁷ The vocabulary he chooses to use to differentiate these types is very important: the two general types of life are defined as "ascending" and "declining" (the significance of this choice of terms will be examined in detail below). What is less clear in his account of types of life, however, is the standard by which this distinction is being made, or, moreover, what this distinction can itself tell us about Nietzsche's conception of life. We shall attempt to answer both of these questions in turn:

1) Distinguishing Different Types of Life

The task of distinguishing different types of life seems problematic from the start. For, as we will recall from the discussion above, the notion of life itself was first established as a metric by which to evaluate values. How, therefore, could we introduce a *new* standard that is even more removed, which would be capable of evaluating different types of life?

¹⁵⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, 174.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 175.

Commentators have accounted for this problem in various ways, by producing various accounts of what the ‘standard’ to measure types of life may be. These accounts usually differ over the definition of the word ‘type’ and how it is to be interpreted. David Owen and Aaron Ridley, for example, suggest that the typology relates directly to Nietzsche’s self-proclaimed role as a “cultural physician”¹⁵⁸ and, therefore, different types of life are distinguished on the basis of “psychological health”:¹⁵⁹ namely, as the “capacity to conduct one’s own psychological conduct without the desire to be free of the limitations of one’s self”¹⁶⁰ - limitations which are instilled, according to Owen and Ridley, by one’s cultural upbringing. Thus each culture produces individuals of a particular ‘type,’ according to the psychological constraints on the individual that each culture enforces.

However, this reading seems problematic. Life is, we will remember, a valuation or account of our existence. As Nietzsche tells us, however, it is these evaluations, and the agreement to them by a group, which form the basis of a culture. Thus, it seems that Owen and Ridley have it backwards: for it is not different cultures which create various types of life but, rather, various types of life which form various cultures.

A second account of the standard by which to differentiate types of life is expressed by Daniel Conway. Drawing upon quotes from Zarathustra he argues that although Nietzsche “wish [ed] and hope[d]” that all “life overcomes itself in its unrelenting pursuit of ever greater amplifications of power” he nonetheless, based on his “experience, especially of declining forms

¹⁵⁸ David Owen and Aaron Ridley, “Dramatis Personae: Nietzsche, Culture, and Human Types,” 140.

¹⁵⁹ David Owen and Aaron Ridley, “Dramatis Personae: Nietzsche, Culture, and Human Types,” 142.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 142.

of life, suggests otherwise.”¹⁶¹ Although the notion of power and the metaphor of the will to power have not yet been examined (they constitute the topic of the next section of this thesis), it is nonetheless possible to address Conway’s position at present, since the criticism that is here employed draws entirely upon Nietzsche’s texts and does not require an examination of the will to power itself. In short, Conway’s account can be reduced to the position that there are certain ‘ascending’ types of life that are defined by their will to power (to use her definition, life that relentlessly overcomes itself for “ever greater amplifications of power”)¹⁶² and there are other ‘declining’ types of life that, in short, do not.

While there are some passages that would, in fact, seem to support such a position (such as, for example, Nietzsche’s referring to Christians as being ‘hostile to life’),¹⁶³ a more careful examination of Nietzsche’s texts makes it evident that Conway’s interpretation is problematic. Ultimately, Conway draws upon Nietzsche’s statement in On the Genealogy of Morality that “the essence of life [is] its *will to power*”¹⁶⁴ and uses it to imply that if a particular evaluation, such as those posed by Christianity, is “hostile” to life, it must also, therefore, constitute a lack or absence of the will to power.

This position, however, is quite simply false, since it ignores several texts wherein Nietzsche addresses precisely this problem. The longest account of Nietzsche’s position occurs in the Third Essay in On The Genealogy of Morality, entitled “*What Do Ascetic Ideals Mean?*”

¹⁶¹ Daniel W. Conway, “Life and Self-Overcoming,” 543-4.

¹⁶² Ibid., 543-4.

¹⁶³ Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, 148.

¹⁶⁴ Daniel W. Conway, “Life and Self-Overcoming,” 535; Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, 52.

In this text, Nietzsche addresses the apparent contradiction of “life against life”¹⁶⁵ and concludes, ultimately, that this contradiction must only be *apparent*. Thus, even “*the ascetic ideal springs from the protective and healing instincts of a degenerating life*,”¹⁶⁶ which aims, ultimately, to make them “appear superior in *any way*”.¹⁶⁷ It is for this reason, therefore, that the apparent contradiction of ‘life against life’ is removed: for the ascetic ideal is still an expression “of the will to power... [albeit] of the weakest.”¹⁶⁸ Consequently the will to power, contra Conway, cannot be the standard to differentiate different types of life.

It seems the best way to proceed in discerning the standard Nietzsche used to differentiate types of life is to initially ask if there is, in fact, *one* standard or, conversely, if there are *multiple* standards that are held and evaluated against one another. It is the opinion of this thesis that Nietzsche does hold a single standard, and that he articulates it most clearly in The Twilight of the Idols: “to divide the world into a ‘true’ half and an ‘illusory’ one (Kant, Christianity), is just a sign of decadence - it is a symptom of life in decline.”¹⁶⁹ Thus, it is the inability to accept the world as it is, the need to create a secondary, nonexistent world in place of the world one is in and to accept this non-existent world as the ‘true’ world, which for Nietzsche constitutes ‘decline’.

This will no doubt sound familiar, as it was a prominent theme discussed above in the metaphor of life as woman. We will remember that through our examination of that particular

¹⁶⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, 87. (For the full passage of this discussion see pages 85-91 of On the Genealogy of Morality.)

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 88.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 90.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, 170.

metaphor, life was seen as an appearance that was itself devoid of any underlying content but which, nonetheless, tried to deceive us into viewing it as something having an underlying essence, and which was not, therefore, simply our creative evaluation of the world.¹⁷⁰ Interestingly, it seems this is precisely the standard Nietzsche is using to evaluate types of life. Declining life is defined as clinging to the assertion that a particular part of our existence is ‘true’ and another part ‘illusion’. According to Nietzsche, of course, life is entirely real *and* entirely of our creation. Types of life refer to those evaluations that are capable of recognizing this fact, and those that are not: in other words, those types of life that are capable of recognizing the ‘truth’ of life, and those types of life which, for whatever reason, are not.

This conclusion, however, is utterly absurd if we do not recognize, as we of course must, that Nietzsche is using the term life here in two different ways. Life in *one* sense (that which is being differentiated into different types) is life as a *creation, evaluation, or projection*. This life is being differentiated, however, in reference to the *content* of that creation, evaluation or projection: namely, whether or not it conforms to the ‘truth’ that life is a creation, evaluation, or projection. If it does, then it is *ascending life*; if it does not, however, but insists instead that it is ‘conceptual’, ‘real in-itself’, or ‘objective’, then it is *declining life*. Nietzsche uses these two senses of the term life beside one another on numerous occasions and it is essential, therefore, that we keep this distinction in mind when reading these passages. Thus, when Nietzsche tells us that “a condemnation of life on the part of the living is only the symptom of a certain type of

¹⁷⁰ See **Part II, ii, b** of this thesis.

life,”¹⁷¹ we can make sense of what he means, rather than passing it off as tautological nonsense.¹⁷²

2) A “Symptom” of a Certain Type of Life

We shall next reflect on the significance of the term ‘symptom’ in reference to Nietzsche’s typology. We are never told, after all, that such-and-such is the *effect* of a particular type of life. Nietzsche always uses the vocabulary of *symptoms*. We cannot adequately account for his notion of typology of life, therefore, without including a reflection on the significance of this choice.

The use of the term ‘symptom’ can be seen as adding depth to the notions of typology and of life in three principal ways. The *first* largely parallels Nietzsche’s notion of metaphor described above in **Part I** of this thesis: for just as the ‘conscious image’ was a metaphorical translation of the ‘nerve stimulus’, so too is the ‘evaluation’ of the world, which we term ‘life,’ a metaphorical translation of the underlying ‘instincts’ that define it. Both of these transitions represent a differentiation in *kind*. We are aware of the evaluation but are unable to learn of the instincts that lead to it, precisely because these instincts, as discussed above, are incapable of being defined. We are incapable, therefore, of expressing the content of the instincts through an

¹⁷¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 174.

¹⁷² It seems a possible criticism of this point is that Nietzsche frequently uses other descriptions of ‘ascending’ and ‘declining’ which do not seem to necessitate that they recognize the always interpreted nature of reality. For example, in the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche suggests that Master Morality is a symptom of ascending life on account of its active, rather than reactive, positing of the good. Conversely, he also suggests that Buddhism is a symptom of declining life on account of its pessimistic evaluation of the world and existence as such. What is important to remember, however, is that both of these (that is, Master Morality and Buddhism) are both “symptoms” of ascending and declining; they are not synonymous with these terms themselves.

examination of their evaluations, just as we are incapable of expressing the content of a conscious image through an examination of the nerve stimulus.

This is an important point since it highlights the metaphorical nature of the entire notion of typology. This rejects, therefore, any metaphysical¹⁷³ or biological¹⁷⁴ significance being attached to Nietzsche's types of life. As it has just been shown, no such reduction to biology is possible and no metaphysical structure can be supported, given the metaphorical nature of his texts.

A *second* significance of the term 'symptom' can be derived from reflecting on its common usage, which refers, primarily, to a *disease* and its *diagnosis*. It seems significant that in every instance where Nietzsche refers to a *symptom* of life, it is *always* in reference to life which is in *decline*. Ascending life is spoken of frequently but never with the vocabulary of symptoms. Whether or not Nietzsche is being as neutral as he claims in his differentiation of life into different types will be discussed below, but for now we can make the preliminary point that there is, on at least one level, an association of 'disease' with 'decline' and 'health' with 'ascension.' This is quite clearly a loaded terminology that seems to refer to Nietzsche's desire to remedy the former by turning it, primarily, into the latter.

The *third* point I would like to make in reference to the term 'symptom' draws upon the second: if a symptom reveals a disease which needs to be healed, so too does it refer to the manner by which this is to be achieved. For just as one does not cure a cold by taking a cough suppressant, so too does one fail to remedy the sickness of life by simply forcing such a life to adopt a new set of evaluations. As we have seen, evaluations are just symptoms of a type of life.

¹⁷³ Daniel W. Conway, "Life and Self-Overcoming," 535.

¹⁷⁴ David Owen and Aaron Ridley, "Dramatis Personae: Nietzsche, Culture, and Human Types," 136.

What is required to *heal* this sickness, therefore, is to *address the underlying life itself*. The question of whether such a remedy is actually possible will be taken up in **Part III** of this thesis, so for now the reader will be left in suspense. What is essential to take out of this discussion, however, is the object of Nietzsche's prescription for health: *life first*, and the *symptomatic evaluations second*.

Thus, we have seen that Nietzsche's choice of the word 'symptom' is itself significant in drawing more clearly the distinction of life into different types. It allows us to immediately reject any metaphysical or biological reductions in his typology; it introduces a seemingly evaluative framework to distinguish the different types; and, lastly, if we accept the significance of this evaluative framework, it further provides insight into the manner by which Nietzsche believes the sickness of life can be cured.

3) Reflecting on the Terms *Ascending* and *Declining*

To bring this discussion on the typology of life to a close, I would lastly like to reflect, if only briefly, on the choice of terms Nietzsche uses to distinguish the two types of life. This distinction is, on the surface, supposed to be neutral in its evaluation. As Nietzsche says, "the value of life cannot be established."¹⁷⁵ Indeed, "in themselves these judgments are stupidities."¹⁷⁶ However, while he claims to be making an objective distinction between two types of life, the terms he uses to distinguish them might be seen as problematic, insofar as they appear to be loaded with hidden meaning and value. 'Ascending' brings to mind 'soaring,' 'climbing,' and 'progressing,' which, if not seen as evaluatively positive terms in themselves,

¹⁷⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 162.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

will certainly appear so to anyone who has read Nietzsche's texts.¹⁷⁷ 'Declining,' by contrast, seems to speak of 'shrinking,' 'reversing,' and 'diminishing' - terms which seem to hold a more negative evaluation. Indeed, Nietzsche provides his own coloured vocabulary, calling "declining [life] a weakened, exhausted, condemned life."¹⁷⁸ On the surface, therefore, it seems Nietzsche is indeed being evaluative in differentiating the types of life, suggesting one type is 'better' than the other.

This criticism, however, seems to presuppose that Nietzsche uses the terms ascending and declining in a *qualitative* rather than a *quantitative* sense. For if ascent and decline are qualitative, then there does seem to be a positive evaluation attached to the former. If, however, they are appropriated in a *quantitative* sense, then this evaluative consequence does not seem to follow. The question, therefore, is whether there is any quantitative unit that can be attached to these two terms, as Nietzsche uses them.

It turns out, in fact, that there is, and it draws upon the discussion of the 'standard' for differentiating types of life carried out above.¹⁷⁹ In that discussion, we discovered that a type of life was 'ascending' if it recognized the 'truth' of life: namely, that the evaluation is, in the end, always a creative one and that it lacks any truth or essence in itself. As we saw, declining life, conversely, lacks the ability to recognize this distinction. From a quantitative position, therefore, ascending life can be accurately viewed as a life whose number of available perspectives is 'ascending,' precisely because it is willing to play and experiment with life's evaluations.

¹⁷⁷ This symbolism will be recognized as expressed in a positive manner in Thus Spoke Zarathustra - particularly, in reference to his eagle, and Zarathustra's climbing of the mountain (thought to be symbolic of his ascending 'beyond' or 'above' humanity). Some examples of this can be found in Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 3, 15.

¹⁷⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, 175.

¹⁷⁹ See **Part II, c, ii**

‘Declining’ life, on the contrary, can be viewed as a life that is quantitatively decreasing its number of available perspectives, until it reaches, ultimately, just one single perspective and raises it to the sphere of absolute truth. If we interpret ascending and declining in these quantitative terms, then Nietzsche can be seen as remaining neutral when describing the two types of life.

* * *

Perhaps the key insight to be gained regarding Nietzsche’s notion of life from the discussion of its typology is the multiple *perspectives* Nietzsche attaches to the term and the multiple ways he uses it throughout his writings. The metaphor of life as a type is itself a manifestation of this fact: for life, in *one* sense, is divided into different types by referencing it to life in *another* sense. There is perhaps no better example of Nietzsche’s perspectivism as it pertains to the notion of life in those texts where it is addressed than that via the metaphor of typology. On these grounds alone it is an important metaphor to remember.

d) Life as the Will to Power

Of all the metaphors for life examined in this thesis, the will to power is the one to be approached with greatest caution, diligence, and precision. This is a result of the fact that it is, of all of the metaphors for life discussed in the literature, the one most frequently referred to, elaborated upon, and discussed. That being said, it is also the term over which there is more disagreement and debate among Nietzschean scholars than any other. As a result, the literature is saturated with a plethora of diverse accounts of what the will to power means, what role it

plays in Nietzsche's philosophy, and what it tells us about life.¹⁸⁰ Our present inquiry shall be somewhat simpler than most, however, in that it will be concerned principally with the latter of these questions: namely, what the metaphor of the will to power can tell us about what Nietzsche means by life. To achieve this goal, however, we must at least touch upon the other two considerations insofar as the issues are all, to some degree, interrelated.

What is perhaps most pressing initially, however, is to explain why the metaphor of will to power is included at all. After all, in the Introduction to this thesis, the will to power was presented as the dubious element at the centre of one of the general criticisms of the previous commentaries on life that have been produced.¹⁸¹ Why, if the will to power was excluded above, should it be examined now?

In fact, it is this question itself that is, as it stands, inaccurate. The will to power was *not* excluded, in the methodology section of this paper, because it is an invalid or unacceptable metaphor for life. Rather, what was rejected was the *reduction of all discourse on life simply to the will to power*, at the *exclusion of all else*. This is a common practice among commentators on Nietzsche, and one that this thesis takes exception to (for reasons discussed above). The will to power is, as we shall see, an important metaphor to understand Nietzsche's notion of life, and we can proceed in recognizing it as such provided we remain vigilant in holding it in dialogue with the other metaphors.

¹⁸⁰ For a discussion of the diverse accounts of the will to power, see Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist, 163-185.

¹⁸¹ For more on this see **Introduction, a, ii** section of this thesis (page 2).

1) Interpreting Life as Will to Power

As just mentioned, the will to power is appropriated by commentators in a number of ways, with the result of it being assigned various roles and various levels of significance within Nietzsche's philosophy. The reason for the high level of attention that is given to these passages is the apparent force and certainty in Nietzsche descriptions of the relationship between life and will to power in them: as he writes in Beyond Good and Evil, "life itself is will to power,"¹⁸² and "life itself is *essentially* a process of appropriating, injuring, overpowering the alien and the weaker, oppressing, being harsh, imposing your own form, incorporating, and at least, the very least, exploiting... life *is* precisely will to power."¹⁸³ In On the Genealogy of Morality, he again states that "the essence of life [is] its will to power."¹⁸⁴ The will to power is discussed in numerous other contexts by Nietzsche and the diversity of interpretations increases exponentially with each sphere that one encounters.

Even just within the present scope of the will to power in reference to life, however, there still exists a plurality of interpretations. Owen and Ridley, for example, suggest that the will to power is the standard by which Nietzsche "distinguishes life from matter" - that is, animate living matter from dead inanimate matter.¹⁸⁵ Thus life, for them is, in this sense, the status of being a 'living thing,' and the will to power is the essential characteristic of this status. This position is contested, however, by Ciano Aydin who suggests the will to power can be applied as much to living matter as dead matter: "all reality has the same character... one intrinsic quality:

¹⁸² Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, 15.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁸⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, 52.

¹⁸⁵ David Owen and Aaron Ridley, "Dramatis Personae: Nietzsche, Culture, and Human Types," 137; Julian Young, Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography, 414.

the will to power.”¹⁸⁶ Life is interpreted here as being “all reality” - the universe in its totality, and therefore the will to power must function as much to explain the interaction between atoms and molecules as it does to explain the actions of animals or plants.

Others, however, such as Poellner, suggest that the discussion between living and dead matter misses the point altogether. Rather, what the will to power refers to is the “essence” of life: the will to power is the “epistemological starting-point from which Nietzsche proceeds to develop a ‘metaphysics’... similar to Schopenhauer’s.”¹⁸⁷ Poellner thus suggests that the reference to life’s ‘essence’ should be read literally, in its classic ontological sense, representing the underlying unity for all life, irrespective of the particular ‘substance’ in which it is manifested. Alphonso Lingis, however, argues that Nietzsche does not want to introduce a metaphysical distinction but, rather, wants to emphasize that the will to power is “the last instance which we could go back to.”¹⁸⁸ In other words, the will to power is as far back epistemologically as we can go, but this does not require that we make the next “leap of faith” to conclude that it is also, therefore, the thing-in-itself; the *essence*.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Ciano Aydin, “Nietzsche on Reality as Will to Power: Toward an “Organization-Struggle” Model,” 25.

¹⁸⁷ Peter Poellner, Nietzsche and Metaphysics, 268. This point is further argued for by Peter Horstmann. He suggests that “it seems.. that one cannot avoid the unsettling conclusion that the doctrine of the “will to power” shares all the vices which Nietzsche attributes to metaphysical thinking in general.” Peter Horstmann, “Introduction,” in Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, edited by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, translated by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xxvi.

¹⁸⁸ Alphonso Lingis, “The Will to Power,” 37. Kofman also parallels this idea: Sarah Kofman, Nietzsche and Metaphor, 94.

¹⁸⁹ This position is also paralleled by Keith Ansell-Pearson who argues that Nietzsche’s account of the will to power is not to be interpreted metaphysically. As he suggests, “it is clear from his [Nietzsche’s] published presentations of the theory of the will to power that Nietzsche did not intend it to be [metaphysical].” Keith Ansell-Pearson, “Introduction,” in Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, edited by Keith Ansell-Pearson, translated by Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xix.

The task of evaluating interpretations seems intrinsically circular insofar as it requires an evaluative perspective that is presupposed to be correct, according to which other interpretations are then rejected or affirmed. This, however, is an inescapable necessity for all interpretations and we need not dismiss the potency of our critique because we continually reference it to our underlying interpretive presuppositions. As outlined in the **Introduction** to this thesis, the interpretive presupposition being employed by this thesis is that of Nietzsche's discourse on language, and its intrinsically metaphorical nature.

From this interpretive perspective, we are immediately able, inspired by Lingis, Kofman, and Blondel, to reject any metaphysical appropriation of the will to power. Nietzsche's continuous criticism of conceptual and metaphysical language,¹⁹⁰ coupled with his discussion of the intrinsically metaphorical nature of all language,¹⁹¹ makes it impossible to seriously entertain the possibility that he would be attempting to create a metaphysical system. As we have seen, life 'in-itself' is an abyss - it is utterly unfathomable and inconceivable. What exists are only *interpretations* of life. Thus, it seems immediately evident that the will to power is fundamentally an *interpretation* and not, therefore, an essence. Consequently, the metaphysical reading of the will to power must be rejected.

Building on this understanding, Kofman offers further clarification of the status of the will to power. In Nietzsche and Metaphor, Kofman suggests that "metaphorical activity

¹⁹⁰ For example, in Twilight of the Idols, Nietzsche suggests "Our true experiences are completely taciturn. They could not be communicated even if they wanted to be. This is because the right words for them do not exist. The things we have words for are almost the things we have already left behind. There is a grain of contempt in all speech. Language, it seems, was invented only for average, mediocre, communicable things. People *vulgarize* themselves when they speak a language," Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, 205; There is also a lengthy discussion of the limitations of language in his essay "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense," as was discussed in **Part I** of this thesis. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense", 141-50.

¹⁹¹ For a discussion of this, see **Part I** of this thesis.

coincides with the will to power.”¹⁹² Life, we will remember, is in one sense an evaluation of one’s world and, although it makes itself appear to be precisely the opposite, it is always in the end a *creation*. Even ‘life’ itself, as a term - indeed, all language, and the naming of all objects - speaks to the evaluative choices of a particular life. But why, then, does one particular life choose one set of evaluations and names? The will to power, Kofman suggests, is precisely the explanation for the content of this creation. Thus every set of evaluations “constitutes a specific, provisional meaning symptomatic of a certain type of life’s mastery over the world and over other types of life.”¹⁹³ Life seeks to ‘master’ the world and it is precisely in this process of creating metaphors that one does so. As Kofman tells us, “to ‘name’ something is to make one master over it,”¹⁹⁴ and thus the process of naming (creating metaphors) is the process of gaining mastery. “Every purpose and use is just a *sign* that the will to power has achieved mastery over something less powerful, and has impressed upon it its own idea of a use function.”¹⁹⁵ Every ‘purpose,’ ‘goal,’ or ‘use,’ after all, is a principle around which one organizes and structures his/her life. Creating an evaluation to fill the abyss of life is precisely this task of creating a ‘goal’ or ‘purpose’ of one’s life, by which one’s progress, success, goodness, etc, can be measured. Yet we must not, Nietzsche reminds us, view these “superfluous teleological principles” as being true in any absolute sense.¹⁹⁶ They are always *created* and they are *chosen* for creation precisely insofar as they allow “a living thing to *discharge* its strength;”¹⁹⁷ they are chosen such that one

¹⁹² Sarah Kofman, Nietzsche and Metaphor, 82.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 83.

¹⁹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, 51.

¹⁹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, 15.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

can “create the world before which [one] could kneel.”¹⁹⁸ Kofman thus suggests that the will to power is the most important metaphor Nietzsche describes, because it is an “interpretation, but one which presents itself as such.”¹⁹⁹ It is an interpretation of the reasoning behind all other interpretations.

However, while this account of the will to power seems to be correct, there is, nonetheless, one further distinction that needs to be drawn, which Kofman fails to outline. This distinction lies within the *method* Nietzsche uses to arrive at the idea of life as a creation and interpretation and, secondly, the will to power as being a creation and interpretation. The former of these was necessitated based on the metaphorical nature of language. As we will remember, for Nietzsche language is always just a ‘representation’ of a conscious image - the conscious image itself being nothing more than a ‘representation’ of a nerve stimulus. Thus life, being a term or concept, is devoid of content itself and gains one only when it is filled with a particular meaning. Thus life is an interpretation *by necessity*; that is, it is shown to be an interpretation based on the metaphorical nature of language itself and therefore requires appeal to no further fact.

The will to power, however, seems to be an interpretation in a slightly different sense. It does not, for example, claim its existence by appeal to a genealogical analysis of language. Rather, Nietzsche defends it by appeal to *experience*.²⁰⁰ He tells us the will to power “is the law

¹⁹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 88.

¹⁹⁹ Sarah Kofman, Nietzsche and Metaphor, 94.

²⁰⁰ It is quite interesting that Kaufmann seems to have realized this empirical truth of the will to power as well, as he hints toward it in Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist, 207. However, he seems to have failed to draw from this the fact that the will to power must itself be an interpretation - namely, Nietzsche's - and thus not subject to a criticism on the grounds of its empirical untruth (a fault he charges of Nietzsche, as we shall see below).

- show me an example where it does not apply!”²⁰¹ Later he suggests that “it is the *primal fact* of all history;”²⁰² suggesting that it can be seen to account for all actions and events throughout history. Zarathustra remarks that “wherever I found the living, there I found the will to power.”²⁰³ Thus Nietzsche does not seem to be suggesting that the will to power is an ‘essential’ (in the metaphysical sense of the word) part of life. Rather, he is suggesting that everywhere *he looked* the will to power appeared to be the driving principle of evaluation. Kaufmann agrees with this conclusion: by referencing the statement that life “teaches” Nietzsche the will to power, Kaufmann suggests that it must have come “from experience.”²⁰⁴ Kofman parallels this positing to a degree when she (rightly) points out that the will to power is not to be understood as a truth that is absolute in itself, but only an interpretation. However, what it seems she *failed* to recognize, as is the case with other commentators, is that it was *Nietzsche’s* interpretation.

Nietzsche’s insistence throughout his writings that he does not seek followers but wants, ultimately, others to create their own way - to devise their own evaluations - also invokes this fact. ““This - it turns out - is *my* way - where is yours?” - That is how I answered those who asked me “the way.” *The* way after all - it does not exist!”²⁰⁵ Nietzsche wants each individual to live his/her own life, “become who he/she is,” and not simply follow Nietzsche’s values. Thus Zarathustra finally commands, “I bid you lose me and find yourself!”²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, 66.

²⁰² Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, 153.

²⁰³ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 89.

²⁰⁴ Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist, 207.

²⁰⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 156.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

2) Significance of the Will to Power in Nietzsche's Account of Life

This insight opens up an important avenue of inquiry, however, that relates the perspectivism of Nietzsche's interpretation of will to power to other aspects of his philosophy - or, at least, to the other accounts of life that have thus far been examined in this thesis. After all, Nietzsche is of the opinion that "all philosophy up to now has been the product of an individual's will to power," - his own philosophy included: "I created my philosophy out of my will to life [i.e. my will to power]." ²⁰⁷ This seems to raise the question, therefore, that if the totality of Nietzsche's philosophy is the product of his will to power, then is there any significance for others that can be taken from it? Or does this simply render the totality of his thought and his discourse on life the product of his own perspective, the function of his will to power, and, therefore, simply an irrelevant subjectivistic footnote incapable of providing any greater philosophical insight? ²⁰⁸

I think, on this note, that there is an important distinction that can be made between the earlier discussion of Nietzsche's notion of life, and the notion of the will to power, that will allow us to navigate this question more carefully. The distinction will be drawn, as it was above, by examining the *method* by which Nietzsche argues for each conception. Life as an *abyss* and life as an *interpretive creation* to fill that abyss were deduced, ultimately, from an analysis of

²⁰⁷ Insofar as a "true" will to life *is* a will to power. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 76. Expressing a similar sentiment, he also says through Zarathustra, "By many a trial and manner I came to truth... but it was only *my truth*." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, 156.

²⁰⁸ Kaufmann acknowledges this problem by suggesting that "if everything is will to power then Nietzsche's conception of will to power must be a product of his own will to power." Kaufmann regards this as a criticism of Nietzsche's conception of will to power - yet it does not seem this must necessarily be the case. After all, Nietzsche is explicit throughout his writings that his philosophy is biased by his own perspective. Kaufmann's criticism only holds, therefore, if he is demanding of Nietzsche the creation of a universal or absolute philosophy which is itself beyond the perspectival bias Nietzsche faults other philosophies of having. However, as has been demonstrated above, Nietzsche never suggested his philosophy was capable of any such feat; and, as such, Kaufmann's criticism need not worry us at present. Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 204.

language. Life as will to power, however, was defended by an appeal to experience. It seems, therefore, that the latter conception can be criticized on empirical grounds, without the former interpretations of life being fatally damaged.

This is an important point to make, as there have been a number of authors who have attempted to criticize Nietzsche's philosophy through the empirical 'untruth' of the will to power. Kaufmann argues that "the biggest criticism [of Nietzsche's philosophy] is that it seems empirically untrue when we consider phenomenon carefully that we see the will to power as the basic principle of the universe."²⁰⁹ This criticism, Kaufmann suggests, is "ultimately unanswerable."²¹⁰

However, if we hold to the methodological distinction that grounds the will to power as *Nietzsche's* interpretation of events, as *Nietzsche's* account of 'reality', as *Nietzsche's* definition of life, then it seems we can answer this, and similar criticisms, by recognizing that his genealogy of language remains unscathed. The will to power, after all, is an attempt at an *explanation* of certain evaluations. Whether we accept the empirical truth of Nietzsche's account of this explanation does not bring into doubt whether the evaluations still take place.

* * *

The will to power, as I have argued, is a unique metaphor for life within the selection of metaphors Nietzsche provides us with, and it is unique precisely because it provides us with *his* account of life. The will to power is Nietzsche's interpretation of what life 'really is'. This is not to be confused with him saying that it is what life 'really is' in an *absolute* or *metaphysical*

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 207.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

sense; but is, rather, what life *appears* to be *from his own perspective*.²¹¹ We thus are given, for the first time in this inquiry, a more concrete answer to what Nietzsche means by life. Life, while in one sense an abyss, and in another sense a creation, is in a third (and uniquely Nietzschean sense) the *will to power*.

iii) General Conclusion to Part II

With this account, we have now concluded the first task of this paper: namely, an examination of the metaphors that Nietzsche provides for life. While the methodology of this section required that we investigate each of the metaphors in isolation, we are nevertheless permitted to now make a few general comments regarding the findings of this section as a whole.

The first general conclusion is that Nietzsche uses the word life in *fundamentally different ways*. The word ‘life,’ we have found, plays different roles and carries completely different definitions depending upon the context in which it is used. As we have seen, this included life as something utterly unknowable ‘in itself’ - as something lacking an ‘essential’ or ‘metaphysical’ nature; life was also the interpretative evaluation of the world that we create to fill this metaphysical void; and, as we have seen, this interpretive evaluation was, from Nietzsche’s perspective, the will to power.

²¹¹ I would also like to address a possible criticism here. It could be argued that Nietzsche is, by defining the will to power, being metaphysical insofar as he is providing an account of what reality is from his own perspective. In other words, he is qualifying the scope of metaphysics and then proceeding to extrapolate the core of his own metaphysic, which he articulates through the will to power. Despite Nietzsche suggesting that his philosophy is ‘only for himself,’ it could nevertheless be maintained that he is speaking metaphysically, if only for himself. On this position it might be charged that Nietzsche is being inconsistent with his previous criticisms of metaphysics throughout his philosophy. This criticism, however, need not concern us. For if this highly qualified sense of metaphysics is the one we choose to adopt, then it is an utterly different sort of metaphysics than that which Nietzsche is criticizing in his references to Plato, Kant, etc., if, indeed, it can be properly referred to as a metaphysics at all.

The natural question to ask, then, seems to be *why* Nietzsche would choose to use the same word for fundamentally different ideas, rather than partitioning the term or defining it as having a particular meaning in each context. The reasoning, ultimately, seems to relate to Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole - particularly, its emphasis on perspectivism. For if Nietzsche were to further differentiate different accounts of life with different terms, this would ultimately render his accounts of each more conceptual in nature. Insofar as the conceptual definition is precisely what Nietzsche is seeking to avoid, keeping the single word life while attaching different meanings to it removes the possibility of this overly conceptual reading. Rather, it makes the term life *complex* insofar as it is capable of a large number of independent interpretations.

It should perhaps also be noted at this time that the list of interpretations of life which this thesis has extracted should not be considered the 'final' or 'full' list of the interpretations Nietzsche intended. Indeed, this investigation into the notion of life seems to make explicit the fact that there *is* and *can be* no 'final' or 'complete' list: the accounts Nietzsche provides require interpretation, and interpretation is, as Nietzsche tells us, an individual practice. The account compiled here, therefore, reflects the interpretive bias of the author (myself). This should not be regarded as a criticism of this thesis, however, but only a *limitation*.

With the initial investigation into the metaphors for life complete, we are now prepared to begin the second examination: the exploration of a new set of metaphors that Nietzsche uses to describe life's *affirmation*.

Part III: The Metaphors for Affirmation: Dionysus, *Amor Fati*, and Eternal Recurrence

i) General Introduction to Part III

In the previous section, we examined the metaphors that Nietzsche uses to express the term life. We shall now examine the metaphors that he uses to represent life's *affirmation*. As we saw, the notion of life was not singular and did not take on a metaphysical or dogmatic definition. Rather, we found that interpretation was a necessary aspect of its definition. As we shall discover, this will also be the case with the metaphors of affirmation.

As was stated in the **Introduction**, it is difficult to understand what Nietzsche's imperative to affirm life could mean without first examining Nietzsche's notion of life itself. However, given the plurality of metaphors that Nietzsche employs for life it seems that even after that examination has been undertaken, simply stating that we should 'affirm' life would be ambiguous and problematic. For, if life is an abyss, then what is there to affirm? If life is an interpretation, then whose interpretation should one affirm? What if one is of a 'type' that necessitates the *denial* of life? Is there still a sense in which such a person could affirm it? Thus, the notion of affirming life remains problematic. To explore its meaning we shall, therefore, examine Nietzsche's three metaphors of affirmation: namely, Dionysus, *amor fati*, and Eternal Return.

ii) Dionysus

Next to his self-created character Zarathustra, there is perhaps no one Nietzsche speaks of more favourably than the Greek god Dionysus. He is also a character who has an interesting career in Nietzsche's writings, as he appears prominently in Nietzsche's earlier texts The Birth of

Tragedy and On the Dionysiac Worldview, but then goes relatively unmentioned for about a decade, before finally reemerging as a common theme in Nietzsche's later works from Beyond Good and Evil onwards.

The role Dionysus plays and the meaning of his character, however, varies between these two periods. In The Birth of Tragedy and The Dionysiac Worldview, Dionysus is described chiefly *in opposition to* the Greek god Apollo. Apollo is seen as the god of "sun, light, beauty, and youth."²¹² He represents the 'fixed' and 'formed' aspects of art, such as sculptures and paintings and is, as a result, used by Nietzsche to symbolize "semblance" and "representation."²¹³ Apollo brings order to the chaotic nature of a medium by giving it 'form'. Moreover, Apollo also represents individuality, because his art aims at conveying a single insight or message.

These characteristics are all contrary to the god Dionysus who, being represented by the art of music, is capable of an infinite number of interpretations. Dionysian art does not aim to create a 'semblance' or to bring an 'order' to a chaotic nature but, rather, "presents the essence of everything that appears in a way that is immediately intelligible."²¹⁴ The 'truth' of existence - its underlying *unity* - is made accessible to individuals through their participation in the Dionysian; an experience Nietzsche refers to as 'intoxication.'²¹⁵ Thus, Dionysus does not seek to create a semblance to cover up reality but, rather, represents reality, in all its 'terribleness,' as it really is.

²¹² Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Dionysiac World View," 120.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 122.

²¹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings, 17-19; Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Dionysiac World View," 119-22; Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, 195-6.

Commentators have often criticized these earlier points of Nietzsche's philosophy, suggesting it contains a metaphysical structure, which his later writings criticize so harshly.²¹⁶ These arguments need not concern us, however, as it is the *later reemergence* of Dionysus that is of principal importance for us at present. This later Dionysus, while still possessing many of the same characteristics as the earlier Dionysus, differs in one important respect: namely, in the earlier texts Nietzsche describes the relationship between Dionysus *and Apollo* as being of central importance (with some scholars suggesting Nietzsche was, ultimately, in favour of Apollo).²¹⁷ However, in the *later* texts Nietzsche describes *himself* as having an *immediate relation to Dionysus*.²¹⁸ Just as the will to power was Nietzsche's metaphor and interpretation for *life*, so too, therefore, is Dionysus Nietzsche's interpretation of *himself*; Dionysus represents

²¹⁶ Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist, 178-9; Sarah Kofman, Nietzsche and Metaphor, 16-7, to name just a few.

²¹⁷R. J. Hollingdale, Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy, revised edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 83.

²¹⁸ It is interesting, though not immediately relevant to the project of this thesis, to note that Sokel suggests the later Dionysus which emerges in Nietzsche's post-Zarathustra texts is in fact the combination of sorts of the two themes of Apollo and Dionysus as they appeared in his earlier writings (such as The Birth of Tragedy). He regards the 'unity' which Dionysus stands for as being integral to understanding the later Dionysus as holding the "glad tidings of the eventual unity of all oppositions." Walter Herbert Sokel, "On the Dionysian in Nietzsche," 501-2.

his type:²¹⁹ namely, the type of *affirmation*.²²⁰ As Nietzsche tells us in his autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, “I am a disciple of the philosopher Dionysus,”²²¹ and “I obey my Dionysian nature.”²²²

As was mentioned in the **Introduction** to this thesis, Nietzsche is perpetually concerned - perhaps above all else - with the task of *affirming life*. Dionysus, for Nietzsche, represents precisely this achievement. It is a type that in every instance “say[s] yes to life, even in its strangest and harshest problems.”²²³ However, we have just seen that life is, for Nietzsche, a complex term that carries with it a plurality of meanings and interpretations depending upon the perspective from which one approaches it. The first question that seems to be raised when dealing with the affirmation of life, therefore, is *what* perspective one is to affirm.

As it turns out Dionysus represents the affirmation of life *in all of its meanings*. We will now briefly examine the manner in which Dionysus represents this plurality of affirmations by returning to each of the metaphors for life discussed in **Part II**:

²¹⁹ Sokel argues that the concept of Dionysus is itself “too tremendous to be equated with any single (thus limited) perspective.” *Ibid.*, 514. This position, however, seems to make an epistemological leap to which Nietzsche’s philosophy is strongly opposed. After all, according to Nietzsche, there are *only* interpretations, and these interpretations are always a product of a particular perspective. Suggesting Dionysus - or anything for that matter - could exist beyond this interpretive necessity is therefore problematic. It is for precisely this reason that this thesis has argued, contra Sokel, that Dionysus represents affirmation from *Nietzsche’s* perspective. Indeed, this seems the only acceptable conclusion granted Nietzsche’s remarks on perspectivism and interpretation.

²²⁰ Reginster seems to acknowledge the role of Dionysus to represent a symbol of affirmation as well. However, whereas he views Dionysus simply as an “ideal” toward which Nietzsche is striving, this thesis suggests Dionysus is in fact more than an ideal - it is Nietzsche’s interpretation of his own type. As we have seen, however, this does not imply that Nietzsche believes, or even thinks possible, that this position should be adopted by everyone. It is simply the articulation of his *own* nature, and of his *own* type. Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*, 15.

²²¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 71.

²²² *Ibid.*, 144-5.

²²³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 228.

a) Nature and the Instincts

The first metaphor we examined was the metaphor of nature and the instincts. This metaphor is affirmed by Dionysus in two ways. The *first* affirmation of nature occurs with the fact that Dionysus is described *as* a nature; namely, he is *Nietzsche's* nature.²²⁴ Thus, being Dionysian presupposes that one accept that he has a nature and, moreover, accepts that he is acting in accordance with it. *Secondly*, Dionysus further affirms nature insofar as he seeks “destruction” and desires “change and becoming,”²²⁵ rather than the creation of a rigid moral system or the belief in a conceptual metaphysical truth. This is an important characteristic because Nietzsche tells us that the belief in any static concept will, in every case, cover up or destroy one's nature.²²⁶ Dionysus seeks to destroy all created idols and ideals until one's nature and instincts are all that remain.²²⁷

b) Woman: the Abyss and Interpretation

The *second* metaphor that we examined was the metaphor of life as a woman. This metaphor, we will remember, had two significant interpretations. The first was that of an *abyss*, where life in itself is something completely devoid of content - a bottomless void one can peer into forever without finding a thing. Secondly, the metaphor of woman also represented an interpretation or semblance; that notion of life we create to *fill* the abyss. Both of these interpretations are affirmed by Dionysus. Nietzsche remarks of Dionysus as “someone with the

²²⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 144-5.

²²⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, 235.

²²⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 71.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

hardest, the most terrible insight into reality, who has thought ‘the most abysmal thought,’ [but] can nonetheless see it *not* as an objection to existence... but instead find one more reason in it for *himself to be* the eternal yes to all things.”²²⁸ Dionysus marches into the abyss straight on and, rather than seeing it as a nihilistic void which spawns an insurmountable pessimism, he, instead, sees it as an opportunity for his abundance of power to express itself creatively. This overcoming of pessimism through the expression of oneself is the primary goal of Nietzsche’s philosophy, and it is for this reason that Nietzsche speaks of himself in direct relation to Dionysus, as being the *manifestation* of Dionysus. “The concept of Dionysus [is manifested in me, because] I [Nietzsche] still carry my blessed yes-saying into all abysses.”²²⁹ Dionysus represents the affirmation required to pass over the nihilistic abyss of meaninglessness, and, insofar as Nietzsche represents Dionysus, so too does his philosophy possess the ability to defeat nihilism by projecting a new set of values.

This yes-saying in the face of the abyss, however, also represents Dionysus’ affirmation of the second interpretation of the metaphor of woman; namely, that it is always interpreted. This is evident in the fact that Dionysus does not demand any single or definitive interpretation of life. Dionysus “is not a new idol”²³⁰ which demands universal conformity but, rather, Dionysus loves plurality because he knows that “you rob reality of its meaning, value, and truthfulness to the extent that you make up an ideal world.”²³¹ Dionysus interprets the world as ‘will to power’ but this is, as Kofman reminds us, an “interpretation that recognizes itself as

²²⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 131.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

such.”²³² Thus Dionysus, in recognizing the interpretive nature of the will to power, thereby affirms it: “I have no reason for covering my nakedness,”²³³ Dionysus suggests, because nakedness is precisely what we are.²³⁴ The only alternative is to fool ourselves into thinking otherwise; to believe in an ideal, fixed, or static world which is capable of producing a table of absolute value and meaning. Turning away from the belief in the ideal, and affirming life as an interpretation, requires strength - a strength which only Dionysus possesses: ²³⁵ Dionysus “has the strength to do this: [because Dionysus] is not alienated or removed from reality [but] is *reality itself*.”²³⁶

c) *Typology and Amor Fati*

The third metaphor we examined was the metaphor of the *typology* of life. Regarding the affirmation of this metaphor, Nietzsche writes, “my type... is affirmation”²³⁷ which “feels [itself] to be the highest type of everything that exists.”²³⁸ Thus, Dionysus affirms typology *initially* in two ways: Dionysus *affirms the distinctions of life into different types* by recognizing itself to be one type among others, while, at the same time, it *affirms its own type* by recognizing itself as

²³² Sarah Kofman, Nietzsche and Metaphor, 94.

²³³ Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, 176.

²³⁴ I make this point drawing largely on Kofman who also recognizes that the “nakedness” of Dionysus refers to its acceptance and affirmation of its perspective. It does not see this necessarily perspectivist thinking as a limitation, however, but rather as that which must be affirmed and it does this by recognizing the always-interpreted nature of life. As Kofman says, it is “beautiful enough to love itself without having to put on a mask.” Sarah Kofman, Nietzsche and Metaphor, 47.

²³⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, 148.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, 190.

²³⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, 130.

being the ‘highest’ type that there is. Thus, the Dionysian does not will that it would be a different type, yet it does not, at the same time, will that all other types be the same as itself. Rather, the Dionysian affirms its own type and its own existence, while, at the same time, affirming the diversity of types that exist.

However, there is, in addition to these first two, a third affirmation of typology which is contained in Dionysus, namely, the affirmation of the *limitations* of the other types. For just as the strength of the Dionysian type requires that he destroy, tear down, and remove all idols (‘ideals’),²³⁹ so too does it also require that he recognize the necessity of those idols for the decadent: “Knowledge, saying yes to reality, is just as necessary for the strong as cowardice and *fleeing* in the face of reality - which is to say the ‘ideal’ - is for the weak.”²⁴⁰ The “decadents *need* lies”, as it is “one of the conditions for their preservation.”²⁴¹ In this context we can now bring up what Nietzsche refers to as *amor fati*, the love of one’s fate.²⁴² This notion is closely

²³⁹ Nietzsche often uses these words interchangeably. Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, 71.

²⁴⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, 109.

²⁴¹ Ibid. It is also important to note for Nietzsche that the existence of a particular ‘lie’ or ‘belief’ is not a defense of its truth. In The Gay Science, Nietzsche remarks, on this topic, that “we have arranged for ourselves a world in which we are able to live - by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without these articles of faith no one could endure living! But that does not prove them. Life is not an argument; the conditions of life might include error.” Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs, 117. Later, in Beyond Good and Evil, he elaborates on the consequences of this, recognizing that “to acknowledge untruth as a condition of life: this clearly means resisting the usual value feelings in a dangerous manner.” In other words the *necessity* of untruth as a condition for life draws into question both the existence and value of truth as a good ‘in-itself.’ Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, 7.

²⁴² The notion of *amor fati* and Nietzsche’s belief in fatalism also have an important implication for his criticism of morality. As he describes in Daybreak, “in the same measure as the sense for causality increases, the extent of the domain of morality decreases: for each time one has understood the necessary effects and has learned how to segregate them from all the accidental effects and incidental consequences, one has destroyed a countless number of *imaginary causalities* hitherto believed in as the foundation of customs.” Friedrich Nietzsche, Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality, 12. Thus if we are to take fatalism seriously, we must disregard morality - not just for its historically de-naturalizing effects, but also because the innocence of action renders any charge of culpability problematic.

connected to both Dionysus, as well as to the doctrine of Eternal Return (which will be discussed in the following section).

In the context of Dionysus, Nietzsche writes of fate specifically in relation to one's *type*. As we will remember from the discussion of typology in **Part II** of this thesis, an individual is not able to choose his/her own type, nor will any conscious act allow him/her to change it. They are "a piece of fate, from the front and from the back,"²⁴³ and, thus, there is a certain innocence attached to one's type that Nietzsche is acutely aware of. Consequently, Nietzsche explains that to be Dionysian means that one "has become free and stands in the middle of the world with a cheerful and trusting fatalism in the belief that only the individual is reprehensible and that everything is redeemed and affirmed in the whole."²⁴⁴ In other words, although a particular type may *seem* reprehensible in and of itself, when it is considered through the wider lens of Dionysian affirmation the lowest types come to be seen as just as necessary as the highest. After all, Dionysus embodies the intoxication of unity that dissolves the semblance of Apollo's individuality. From the Dionysian perspective, life is one continuous interconnected matrix where the highest and lowest types each owe their existence to the other.²⁴⁵

Thus, ultimately the Dionysian affirmation of types is threefold: it affirms the *existence* of types, it recognizes the *highness* of its own type, and it recognizes and affirms the *necessity* and *innocence* of all types.

²⁴³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 175.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 223.

²⁴⁵ As Young remarks, for Nietzsche one's "true life is universal, [and] individual life is 'untrue.'" Julian Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*, 503. Kofman further remarks that for an artist to be Dionysian he must be "intoxicated" - which is to say, "stripped of his individuality." Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 12. The only way to achieve this, of course, is to identify oneself with life itself - that is, to view one's own individual life as a part of the grander, larger, eternal dimension of life which extends beyond one's own temporal existence.

d) The Will to Power

The fourth and final metaphor for life that we examined was the will to power. The will to power, we will remember, is Nietzsche's interpretation of life; it is life from Nietzsche's own perspective. Dionysus, therefore, is closely related to the notion of will to power insofar as he too is a function of Nietzsche's perspective: namely, of himself. Dionysus is thus chiefly defined and motivated by his will to power. As Nietzsche writes, Dionysus is motivated by a "desire for *destruction*, for change and for becoming" which is the "expression of an overflowing energy pregnant with the future."²⁴⁶ Elsewhere, Nietzsche refers to Dionysus as an "excess of strength."²⁴⁷ The question is to what end this excess of strength and overflowing energy are directed.

Nietzsche answers this question with what seems to be a paradox involving *destruction* and *constructing* in the same moment: I do "not know how to separate doing no from saying yes."²⁴⁸ The task of the Dionysian artist is not to form or carve a stone into an image, but, rather, to see humanity itself as the canvas which is to be shaped. "Oh, you humans, I see an image lying asleep in the stone, the image of images!"²⁴⁹ The goal of Dionysus is therefore twofold: he must tear down traditional idols,²⁵⁰ while at the same time carving humanity into a new shape.²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs, 235.

²⁴⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, 227.

²⁴⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, 144-5.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 134.

²⁵⁰ The main traditional idol which Nietzsche and Dionysus seeks to destroy is that of "the Crucified," - namely, the values of Christianity, which Nietzsche takes as the chief counter-ideal to Dionysus. Bernard Reginster, The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism, 1.

²⁵¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, 134.

But how can this be possible? If the first goal of Dionysus is to deconstruct ideals, then in what sense are we to understand the second task of creation? In other words, does the task of Dionysus not itself represent precisely such an ideal as it's claiming to deconstruct? Nietzsche seems to appreciate the potential for confusion on this point as he addresses it explicitly by proclaiming in Ecce Homo that he "won't be setting up any new idols."²⁵² However, if Dionysus is *not* an idol then what, exactly, is he?

The answer, which draws upon a point that has already been made earlier, is that Dionysus is *Nietzsche's* ideal; he is a product of *Nietzsche's interpretation of himself*. Thus, the apparent paradox between the destructive and creative aspects of Dionysus is resolved when we understand that Dionysus does not represent a new 'ideal,' to be universally sought after and attained, but, rather, a return to *your own nature*. Nietzsche's nature is that of affirmation, that of Dionysus. Others, however, have different natures, and are of different types. The goal, as we have seen, is to affirm life, but this will manifest itself differently for each individual based on his/her own unique, fated, unchangeable nature. Some will require lies, semblances, and concepts. Nietzsche the Dionysian, however, does not. Nevertheless, we have also seen that Dionysian affirmation requires Nietzsche to affirm the existence of those other types as well.

We should likewise not misunderstand Nietzsche's insistence that *his* type is the *highest* type. After all, Nietzsche has expressed that all philosophies are an expression of their authors' will to power.²⁵³ Although we may question empirically whether this has in fact been the case, we can nevertheless remain certain that it was true in at least one instance: namely, *Nietzsche's*.

²⁵² Ibid., 109.

²⁵³ "A tablet of goods hangs over every people. Observe, it is the tablet of their overcomings; observe, it is the voice of their will to power." Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 42.

However, just as Nietzsche's philosophy tells us that Dionysus is the highest type, so too does it tell us to follow ourselves and seek out our own natures: "becoming what you are presupposes that you do not have the slightest idea *what* you are."²⁵⁴ Dionysus is thus not a goal for humanity, but is only the expression of Nietzsche's type: the type that will break down ideals and allow others to discover and follow their own natures.

We have now seen the role of Dionysus in Nietzsche's philosophy and, more particularly, his position as a key metaphor for the affirmation of life. There is, however, one further metaphor that also requires being mentioned (if only briefly), and our inquiry into the affirmation of life will thus conclude with its examination.

iii) Eternal Recurrence:

The doctrine of Eternal Return is usually associated with the book Thus Spoke Zarathustra, as Nietzsche himself proclaims it to be "the basic idea of the work" that represents, ultimately, "the highest possible formula of affirmation."²⁵⁵ However, what is perhaps its most clear and concise description appears in the work he published immediately *prior* to Zarathustra, The Gay Science. Of the original four volumes published in this book, the last one concludes with an aphorism entitled *The Heaviest Weight*. I shall reproduce it here in its entirety:

"What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence - even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned

²⁵⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, 96.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 123.

over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!’ Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: ‘You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.’ If this thought gained power over you, as you are it would transform and possibly crush you; the question in each and every thing, ‘Do you want this again and innumerable times again?’ would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to long for nothing more fervently* than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?”²⁵⁶

Nietzsche regards this as the highest level of affirmation because it requires that one not just affirm a particular moment or event in one’s life, but, rather, that one affirm *all* the experiences of his/her life and, moreover, every life and every event that came before - as being *necessary* and *responsible* for bringing about the *present*. This particular present, moreover, is likewise required to bring about the *future*.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs, 194-5.

²⁵⁷ The notion of eternal return brings with it an interesting debate surrounding its status: namely, does Nietzsche consider the eternal return to be a natural and physical ‘fact’ which shall actually occur; or, conversely, is it simply a ‘thought experiment’ which one is required to affirm if they want to affirm life to the fullest extent possible. Hollingdale and Sokel argue for the former of these positions: R. J. Hollingdale, Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy, 146-7 and Walter Herbert Sokel, “On the Dionysian in Nietzsche,” 504-5. Bernard Williams and Alphonso Lingis, conversely, argue for the latter: Bernard Williams, “Introduction,” in Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs, edited by Bernard Williams, translated by Josefine Nauckhoff, poems translated by Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xvii; Alphonso Lingis, “The Will to Power,” 60. Although this debate may have relevance for other areas of Nietzsche’s thought it seems that for the goals of this thesis the question is largely irrelevant. For whether Nietzsche intended the eternal return as a thought experiment or as a physical event, the affirmation, it seems, would be the same: indeed, it seems the act of affirmation would be identical in both cases.

This is, as was mentioned earlier, closely connected with Nietzsche's belief in a fatalism and his *amor fati* - or the love of one's fate.²⁵⁸ Nietzsche's belief in fatalism is demonstrated consistently throughout his writings in unambiguous terms. The passage from The Twilight of the Idols makes this point, where Nietzsche regards the "individual [as] a piece of fate, from the front and from the back."²⁵⁹ Elsewhere, the interconnectedness and contextual construction of individuals is also made explicit, as, for example, when Nietzsche states that, "individuals are nothing in themselves, they are not atoms... each individual is the entire single line of humanity up through himself."²⁶⁰ Thus, for Nietzsche, to affirm oneself and to affirm one's life requires that an individual affirm all that came before them, as well as all that will come after. The doctrine of eternal return, therefore, represents the highest level of affirmation of life, as it allows one to affirm life in all its details. It is not enough to simply affirm the *present* or, conversely, to justify life solely by looking *forward to the future*. Rather, the *highest* affirmation of life requires that one affirm life in its *past, present, and future* as being intimately connected and mutually dependent.²⁶¹ Lastly, if all of this can be done, then one must *moreover* affirm that

²⁵⁸ It is perhaps worth pointing out (although it will no doubt strike the frequent reader of Nietzsche as painfully obvious) that Nietzsche is not here referring or appealing to the belief in a fatalism on the grounds of the existence of a supernatural deity nor, moreover, does he suggest any such being is necessary or capable of ensuring the 'success' of one's fate. This is not, therefore, a love of one's fate because this world "is the best of all worlds," etc., and that one's fate shall be protected by the divine benevolence of a supernatural creator. Aaron Ridley reminds us of this point in his Introduction to The Anti-Christ. Aaron Ridley, "Introduction" in Friedrich Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings, edited by Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, translated by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), xviii.

²⁵⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, 175.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 208.

²⁶¹ From this perspective, as Nietzsche notes, there are no 'mistakes' in life. If one affirms life in its totality in the manner he is here suggesting, then "even life's *mistakes* have their own meaning and value.... side roads, wrong turns, delays, 'modesties,' can all be seen as *clever moves*." Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, 96.

this entire sequence, in its totality, return over again; one must will one's life to eternally return.²⁶²

It should be pointed out, however, that the doctrine of eternal return is not a secondary or 'additional' type of affirmation beyond that represented by Dionysus. Indeed, it seems likely that Nietzsche would consider Dionysus to be the greatest (if not *only*) type that is capable of affirming the eternal return. After all, it was Zarathustra - the embodiment of Dionysus himself²⁶³ - that spent his life proclaiming it.²⁶⁴ Indeed, it seems that Dionysus and the eternal return may be connected in more explicit language as well, as Nietzsche expresses in Ecce Homo: "My formula for human greatness is *amor fati*: that you do not want anything to be different, not forwards, not backwards, not for all eternity."²⁶⁵

This is not to say, however, that the doctrine of Eternal Return did not cause some trouble in Nietzsche's own mind. This 'heaviest weight' seems, in fact, to have lived up to its name, as Nietzsche struggled with a number of its implications. In reference to our present inquiry into the notion of life, this 'heaviest weight' becomes most explicit when examining its implications for *typology*.

We will remember, from above, that Nietzsche associated himself with the Dionysian type which is defined, above all, by an absolute affirmation of life - in every meaning of the

²⁶² In his autobiography Ecce Homo, Nietzsche declares that he has achieved this level of self-affirmation. He states "To wish, to strive, to will anything, to have a goal, a wish in mind - I have not experienced any of this. I do not have the slightest wish for anything to be different from how it is: I do not want to become anything other than what I am." Whether or not Nietzsche *actually* achieved this level of self-affirmation can, I think, be questioned. However, as this discussion will be taken up elsewhere in this thesis it shall be left here at present. Ibid., 97.

²⁶³ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 129.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 178.

²⁶⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, 99.

word. We can now see how this may present a problem, however, when interpreted with the doctrine of eternal return. For if an individual is to 'affirm his/her life' does that then require he/she to also affirm those types of life that are denying of life or in decline? Would it require that he/she affirm the ultimate overcoming and destruction of his/her own type? The destruction of him/herself? This was a theme that Nietzsche addressed primarily in The Spoke Zarathustra, but it is also discussed in the *Third Essay* of On the Genealogy of Morality, and later in The Twilight of the Idols as well.

The problem reduces itself to this: if the highest types of life recognize themselves as being the justification of life,²⁶⁶ then how can one affirm the overcoming of the higher types for a return to the lower and more base? In other words, the doctrine of eternal return necessitates that the higher types of life will be removed, and lower types of life shall once again gain prominence: "A long twilight limped ahead of me, a tired to death and drunk to death sadness that spoke with a yawning mouth: 'Eternally he returns, the human of whom you are weary, the small human being.'"²⁶⁷ In short, if the higher types provide their own justification for life, then in what sense can their eventual demise be 'affirmed'? In what sense can the eternal return of the decadent be willed? As Nietzsche questions earlier in the work, "What? Does life also *require* the rabble?"²⁶⁸

Ultimately Nietzsche insists that the highest types must still affirm the overcoming and destruction of themselves, and the eventual return of the types which are in decline. Nietzsche's explanation for how this is to be achieved, however, is somewhat convoluted; it is possible, he

²⁶⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, 130.

²⁶⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 176.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

suggests, by having a *destiny*, and placing value in its actualization. Zarathustra, unable to escape this paradox of the eternal return by himself, is rescued by his animals who proclaim his destiny to be the proclamation of the eternal return: “behold, *you are the teacher of the eternal recurrence* - that now is *your destiny!*”²⁶⁹

In Twilight of the Idols, Nietzsche expresses the point in a different way: here he suggests the highest types of life must “rejoice in it’s own inexhaustibility through the *sacrifice* of its highest types [the Dionysian].”²⁷⁰ Willing that one not be overcome would require a negation of life insofar as “it is a law of life that all must be overcome.”²⁷¹

Affirming the eternal return, therefore, requires that one affirm both their existence and destruction. Indeed, it requires that one see these both as merely stages within a causal chain of fatalistic necessity. Therefore, whether Zarathustra (or Nietzsche) is ultimately able to affirm the eternal return of the lowest forms of life, he nonetheless resolves himself to his fate: thus Nietzsche, through his mouthpiece Zarathustra, concludes: “I will return to this same and selfsame life, in what is greatest as well as in what is smallest, to once again teach the eternal recurrence of all things.”²⁷²

iv) General Conclusion to Part III

Having undertaken an examination into the metaphors for the affirmation of life, we may now reflect on the general insights which are to be taken from this inquiry. Perhaps the most

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 177.

²⁷⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, 228.

²⁷¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, 119.

²⁷² Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, 178.

striking is the manner of affirmation Nietzsche requires of us. As we have seen, affirming life does not require affirming just one particular definition of it, but, rather, requires that we affirm life in all its meanings at the same time. Thus, the diversity of life and its various accounts, highlighted in **Part II** of this paper, are *unified* under the notion of affirmation. Dionysus is, as Nietzsche frequently tells us, the unifier of all contradictions, and this characteristic trait rings true again in unifying Nietzsche's account of life.²⁷³

This notion of affirmation seems, moreover, to carry an undertone in support of tolerance. Although this thesis began by pointing out the importance of not reading an author anachronistically, it will perhaps be permitted just this once to highlight the obvious benefits such an outlook might have in an increasingly globalizing and multicultural world. For if affirming life requires that we affirm it in all its diversity and forms, then it seems that Nietzsche's notion of affirmation requires us to respect (and even *will*) all other positions,

²⁷³ There is a further debate, however, surrounding the notion of 'affirmation' which Pippin and Salome both address as being problematic to Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole: namely, whether the affirmation required by Nietzsche is "practically possible" or, in other words, whether anyone would be capable of living up to it. Robert Pippin, "Introduction," in Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, edited by Adrian Del Caro and Robert B. Pippin, translated by Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), xxiv. Salome takes the further step of even suggesting that it was Nietzsche's attempt to live up to this standard which ultimately rendered him insane, as his psyche was incapable of sustaining the stress of attempting to live out a life of perpetual self-overcoming. Lou Salome, Nietzsche, translated and edited by Siegfried Mandel (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 160-2. While Salome's conclusion seems to require at least some measure of speculation, the question of the possibility of affirming life in the manner Nietzsche required seems nonetheless problematic - even if we do not grant it as the ultimate cause of his madness. What seems to be the deciding point in this debate, however, is the fact that Nietzsche thought it was possible - or, at least, that he thought it could be possible. The question seems to become, therefore, not whether Nietzsche succeeded in attaining this level of affirmation or, indeed, whether Salome, Pippin, or ourselves could succeed. Rather, the question seems to reduce to whether it would be possible for anyone to succeed, as it is, after all, only ever going to be capable for one particular 'type.' Suggesting such a level of affirmation is impossible, therefore, does not render Nietzsche's notion of affirmation unintelligible. On the contrary, it merely demonstrates that the individual making such an observation is invariably not of the Dionysian type.

evaluations, and perspectives including - and perhaps *especially* - those which oppose our own.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁴ Nietzsche seems to raise this point on his own in Nietzsche, Twilight, 222-3.

IV: Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to undertake an examination of Nietzsche's metaphors for life as a means to better understand his philosophy as a whole, as well discern the significance and meaning of the affirmation of life. This examination has now been completed and a number of key insights have been uncovered: in **Part II**, we discovered that, for Nietzsche, life has many fundamentally different meanings. Life in one sense is an empty abyss which is 'in itself' utterly devoid of content. Yet, in another sense, life is also the content we project into the world to give our lives meaning. In a third sense, life represents the natural underlying instincts and inclinations inherent (and unique) to each of us before they are contaminated by common 'knowledge.' Life is also presented as existing in a diversity of types, while at the same time it is regarded as being unified in its will to power.

We further came to understand, in **Part III**, that the affirmation of life requires the acceptance and adoration of all of these meanings at the same time. This requires us to affirm life even where this affirmation seems to lead to a contradiction, for it is, after all, precisely in the medium of unified contradictions that Dionysus flourishes.²⁷⁵ One must therefore not only affirm one's own existence, but the totality of other individuals, their actions, and all events that gave rise to one's life. The past, the present, and the future must all come together and be recognized as fundamentally unified - and this unity *itself* must then be willed to return for all eternity. This is the affirmation Nietzsche demands of us, and, if we are to believe his self-proclaimed Dionysian nature, this is the affirmation Nietzsche lived out.

²⁷⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings, 30; Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Dionysiac World View," in The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings, 121; Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, 110.

However, at the end of this inquiry we are still left with a number of issues that need to be addressed to ensure the methodological soundness of this project remains intact. As such, this paper will conclude with an examination of three themes that deal with this project in its totality. *First*, I will examine, and respond to, a potential criticism of this paper; *second*, I will outline a number of potential areas for future research that, I believe, this thesis has raised, but was unable to address itself. *Third*, and lastly, I will close with a personal reflection on Nietzsche's account of life and the role it plays in his larger philosophical project.

i) An Examination, and Rebuttal, to a Potential Criticism

As with most philosophers, there is a considerable amount of debate surrounding the segregation of Nietzsche's texts into the various 'eras' of his thought. Such allocations as the "metaphysical" or "Schopenhauerean"²⁷⁶ era, the "positivistic"²⁷⁷ era, the "free spirit"²⁷⁸ era, and his "mature"²⁷⁹ era are terms frequently used throughout Nietzsche scholarship as attempts to reference or highlight particular themes in Nietzsche's thought that were more prominent in one time period than another. On the surface, this may not seem surprising; after all, there are few (if any) individuals - let alone philosophers - whose ideas and opinions remain fixed throughout their life. It can be extremely useful for scholars, therefore, to compartmentalize an author's books into different eras to reduce the need to sort through apparent contradictions, or to reduce the importance and significance of older texts in favour of the new, or vice versa.

²⁷⁶ Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist, 111.

²⁷⁷ Julian Young, Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography, 242.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 296.

²⁷⁹ Peter Poellner, Nietzsche and Metaphysics, 1.

As will no doubt have been noticed by the reader, however, this thesis did not undertake any such partitioning of Nietzsche's thought (apart from the 'published' versus 'unpublished' texts, as discussed in the methodology section of the **Introduction**).²⁸⁰ It seems one could raise a formidable criticism to the methodology of this thesis, therefore, by simply remarking that some of the 'earlier' texts referenced in this thesis cannot be properly compared alongside his 'later' texts, since Nietzsche came to flatly reject and criticize many ideas contained in his earlier works, by the mid-1880's.²⁸¹ Regarding the subject of this thesis, some of the metaphors for life were more prominent than others in particular periods of his writing: Dionysus, for example, was a common theme in both the early and late writings, but not in the middle; the metaphor of life as a woman appears only in 1884 and never again; the will to power does not occur until 1885; and the notion of different types of life does not appear until 1886. This is a problem for which this thesis must account.

In response to this potential criticism there are, I believe, two rebuttals that will relieve the thesis of this challenge. The first draws upon the methodology of this thesis. At the outset, we will remember, this thesis endorsed a thematic reading that would seek to examine the term "life" throughout Nietzsche's writings. A presupposition of this method was that there was no single and defining insight through which Nietzsche's philosophy could be systematized, claiming that this method would provide the best means to examine the metaphors in isolation. If, however, there is no defining insight which is presupposed to exist prior to an inquiry into Nietzsche's thought, then there is also, consequently, no basis upon which his thought can be

²⁸⁰ See page 9 of this thesis.

²⁸¹ Nietzsche highlights a number of criticisms of his earlier work throughout *Ecce Homo*. and also in the 1886 Preface he added to *The Birth of Tragedy*. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, 5-6; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 118-9, 122-3.

segmented into an ‘early,’ ‘middle,’ or ‘late’ period. All such partitioning requires, at the outset, an assertion that some particular idea is most central to Nietzsche’s thought and, as a result, his texts can be divided up and segregated based on the “movement” of his philosophy with regard to that ultimate insight. Insofar as this thesis rejected the presupposition of such a central defining insight, however, it thereby abandoned the possibility of dividing Nietzsche’s thought into different eras, or focusing on one particular era of writing over and above all others. This does, nevertheless, highlight an important *limitation* of this thesis - but it must remain just that: a limitation, and not a criticism.

There is in addition, however, a second rebuttal that can be put forward; namely, that if we take Nietzsche’s texts seriously, it seems that the very question of an historical framework is itself ill-founded. Nietzsche is, after all, adamant in the declaration that nature is always in a state of ‘becoming’.²⁸² It is not fixed, it is not static, but it is always changing, progressing and developing. Indeed, suggesting that there is a particular point which is ‘fixed’ or ‘unchanging’ is precisely the fallacy of conceptual language that Nietzsche is at pains to reject. It would seem equally problematic, therefore, if we were to assert or assume that there is a ‘fixed’ or ‘final’ position in Nietzsche’s thought. Although we may prefer, as academics, to be able to compartmentalize an authors position to a set of fixed, rigid, clearly defined periods of development, we must not do so at the expense of the author’s intellectual intentions. It seems that on this point, therefore, Nietzsche’s intellectual progression or development regarding life is itself *integral* to his understanding of life. And in this respect, compartmentalizing his thought

²⁸² Friedrich Nietzsche, Human, All Too Human, 22, 218.

into different eras would do his philosophy a great injustice, and diminish the competence of this thesis in achieving its goal.

ii) New Areas for Research

While this thesis is modest in its proposed contributions to the wide field of Nietzsche scholarship, there are, nonetheless, a few points of interest which the method and theme of this thesis seem to bring to the fore as relevant, yet unaddressed, in the contemporary Nietzsche literature. Of these avenues the widest in scope is derived from our methodology. As was mentioned in the **Introduction**, there is a great deal of debate over the fundamental presuppositions that one should adopt prior to engaging Nietzsche, whose selection will, invariably, have a considerable impact on the manner that the interpretation is carried out. This thesis, following the lead of Kofman and Blondel, sought to take Nietzsche's emphasis on the metaphorical and interpretative nature of language as being the best starting point to engage the remainder of his writings insofar as they are all, invariably, a product of language.

This is a methodology which has, however, been underemployed in Nietzsche scholarship. The task of this thesis was to examine the term "life" as it appeared throughout Nietzsche's writings through this metaphorical lens. It seems that there are a significant number of other themes that could equally benefit from such a reading. Many terms, such as the 'overman,' for example, are often read through a biological or ontological lens, leading to both moral and philosophical criticisms of Nietzsche's philosophy. The method employed in this thesis, therefore, could be applied to such terms and a more intellectually honest understanding of Nietzsche's thought might well emerge as a result.

This is perhaps nowhere more necessary, however, than in reference to the will to power, and this is the second point for development to which this thesis hopes to contribute. The notion of the will to power is frequently argued to be the central insight of Nietzsche's philosophy and the defining principle for the understanding of his other ideas. There is much debate about what exactly the will to power means, but there is little debate about its significance.

This thesis has offered an interpretation of the will to power that makes its significance unique to Nietzsche. We have seen that the will to power can be understood as an empirical observation by Nietzsche himself, while not attempting to discern a metaphysical or underlying 'essence' of all reality. If this distinction holds, then many previous criticisms of Nietzsche's philosophy, which focus on the unpalatable or un-truth of the 'reality' of the will to power, can be challenged. This thesis, therefore, hopes to ground a new understanding of the will to power, one that may revitalize old debates surrounding its significance, meaning, and role within Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole.

iii) Personal Reflection and Conclusion

I would like to close with a personal reflection on this project, Nietzsche, and his conception of life. I consider the notion of life to be central to Nietzsche's philosophy and it is precisely on account of its centrality that I was so eager to examine it in detail.²⁸³ Perhaps one of the most interesting things the reader of Nietzsche will discover is that at the end of his books, at the end of his examination, and at the end of his experimenting with values, *he is himself* the decadent individual he is so fervently trying to overcome. For the noble, for the Dionysian, life

²⁸³ Reginster echos this sentiment as well. Bernard Reginster, The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism, 2-3.

requires no justification - they themselves *are* this justification.²⁸⁴ The very fact that Nietzsche undertook an interest in philosophy, the fact that he spent his time worrying and questioning the value of life, already necessitates, by his own reasoning, that he is of a decadent type.

The notion of life and the struggle to affirm life seem to speak, therefore, to Nietzsche's engagement with philosophy itself. Nietzsche struggled to find value and meaning in life and it was the carrying out of this struggle that was passed to us in his books, that we now possess, perfectly preserved for our examination. Nietzsche's discourse on the affirmation of life, therefore, is a transcript of Nietzsche's battle with himself to be able to affirm and justify his own life.

Dionysus, as we saw, was perhaps Nietzsche's favourite metaphor, and the one to which he related himself most closely. It represents the highest affirmation of life, as life rejoicing in its diversity and inexhaustibility. Yet it was always, we will recall, a *metaphor*. Now, we can interpret this, as this thesis has done, as being a methodological tool employed by Nietzsche to express his criticism of conceptual language. However it seems we can also, perhaps, regard it as a mask, behind which Nietzsche, despite his best efforts, can do nothing more than hide. In this sense, Dionysus would represent the affirmation Nietzsche strove after, but was ultimately unable to attain. Dionysus the self-description, or Dionysus the mask? Or, perhaps, Nietzsche intended both; Dionysus is, after all, the unifier of all contradictions.

One of my favourite of Nietzsche's texts speaks to the necessity of interpretation and, as it is relevant to our present discussion, I will reference it here: In Ecce Homo, Nietzsche suggests that "Anyone who thinks that they have understood me has made me into something after their

²⁸⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, 131.

own image.”²⁸⁵ This statement can be interpreted in a number of ways. It could be suggested that Nietzsche is simply demonstrating his arrogance by noting the sophistication of his philosophy that renders it opaque to all ‘lesser’ minds. Conversely, it could be understood to be Nietzsche telling us to pay attention to what he is ‘really’ saying, as he is aware scholars tend to read their own agendas into authors so as to suit their interests.

I believe, however, that Nietzsche is going even further than this; namely, that he is not warning us to take academic caution when reading his texts but, rather, that the very task of academic investigation is itself a failed project. I believe that Nietzsche is suggesting that we as humans are utterly incapable of extrapolating beyond our own experiences, our own values, and our own conceptions of language. It is the innocence of interpretation that Nietzsche is here endorsing, but this interpretation must be *recognized*, and not simply ignored for the sake of one’s academic ambitions.

It is on this point which I would like to close. For if we are to take this position seriously, then this thesis, which aimed to outline Nietzsche’s understanding of life has, by necessity, *failed*; for by interpreting Nietzsche’s account of life I have, by this very process, made it my *own* - made it *un-Nietzschean*. However, if this always-interpreted nature is the central idea of Nietzsche’s account of life then by articulating it, this thesis has, in another sense, *succeeded*.

Oh Dionysus, unify our contradiction one last time...

* * *

²⁸⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, 101.

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