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The Ancient Greek Influence on Friedrich Nietzsche's Philosophy of Education  
by Thomas Hart  
October 2002

Abstract

From early in his life Friedrich Nietzsche had a deep and abiding concern for the state of educational practices and cultural development because he felt that the educational system lacked the necessary structure and philosophy to facilitate what he called true culture. His studies of the ancient Greeks led him to an understanding of the importance of the agonistic nature of culture and reality. In the development of his larger philosophical project he saw this knowledge of antiquity as the means for developing contemporary culture and education. In this dissertation I will demonstrate the ancient Greek legacy in Nietzsche's philosophy and that his pedagogical thought is both the foundation of and consistent with his mature philosophical position. In order to achieve this I will begin by looking at the work that Nietzsche did during the period of his active service as the chair of Classical Philology at the University of Basle. I will then move on to the philosophical development of the central questions surrounding history and culture as these relate to education in Nietzsche's thought. This will be followed by an analysis of the connection between Protagoras, Gorgias, Heraclitus and Nietzsche with regard to the central concepts of epistemology and becoming. And finally, I will set out what I take to be the composition and structure of Nietzsche's philosophy of education as this relates to the ideas developed throughout this dissertation. I hope to show that Nietzsche's pedagogical philosophy is best understood as the origin of the concerns and ideas that make up his larger philosophical project and that this is in turn best read in the context of the tradition of which it is a development and extension, the sophistic tradition of practical and subjective thought.

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# The Ancient Greek Influence on Friedrich Nietzsche's Philosophy of Education

Thomas Edward Hart

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Durham

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2002



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# **The Ancient Greek Influence on Friedrich Nietzsche's Philosophy of Education**

## **Introduction**

In the development of the modern university, one of the chief influences on the structure of the institution has been an increasing proliferation of the categories into which education and knowledge have been divided. In its Mediaeval form, with which Nietzsche identifies its inception, university and indeed all education, was carried out under the titles of the liberal and the physical arts. The first group consisted of training in grammar, rhetoric and logic, known as language arts, and the second consisted of arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy or the so-called real arts. This second group had branched from the first which were considered the necessary foundation of knowledge. Part of this foundation was the recognition of the relationship of each area to the others and an understanding of their collective identification as knowledge. This idea is an ancient one and is perhaps best expressed by the ancient Greek concept of *harmonia*, or harmony, the ideal of the integrated whole. Not to put too fine a point on it, we can safely say that in modern education these relationships have been lost. Each of the modern disciplines competes with the others rather than working with them, in an effort primarily to secure a future in funding and prestige. This fragmentation of education can truly be said to belong to the modern era, starting as it did in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At that time the dominance of the traditional and professional disciplines of Law and Theology, derived from the language arts, and Medicine, derived from the so-called real arts through the language arts, was being challenged by the creation and expansion of the exact or natural sciences which can be said to have developed out of the real arts to a certain exclusion of the language arts. In essence, interpretation was giving way to the perceived greater validity of scientific method. Within the liberal arts, Classical Philology had begun to

emerge as a mix of interpretation and strict method. Law, Theology and Philology can be associated with one another under the title of hermeneutics in the loose sense of this term or the art of interpretation, but in the new university there was a growing desire to emulate the methods of the sciences rather than develop the increasingly esoteric arts of interpretation. In 1795 the two were effectively combined for Classical Philology with the publication of Friedrich August Wolf's *Prolegomena ad Homerum*. The subject matter of that work, though cultural and intellectual rather than physical, could now be studied using strict methods that were more closely associated with the sciences. In part, this can be seen as an important step in the fragmentation of education. These circumstances precipitated the wholesale reformation of education in Germany under the Prussian Gymnasium system and the re-organization of university departments into what we now know. The force behind this development was the increasing specialization of academic research which had become a necessity in the new environment of professional academia. One of the criticisms of education that we come across first in Nietzsche's work is directed towards precisely this.

By the late 1860s Nietzsche had, in the strict sense of the word, become disillusioned not only with his chosen discipline of Classical Philology, but with education in general. His decision to abandon his discipline in the 1870s should be seen as an enormous set-back in our understanding of Western antiquity, but this break was to be of great benefit to philosophy in general and to the philosophy of education specifically since, as I shall argue throughout this dissertation, it was on the foundation of his understanding of the latter that the former achieves its ultimate coherence, and while many may wish to reject Nietzsche's philosophy, his influence is something that cannot be denied.

The development of Nietzsche's philosophical understanding of life and living can be seen as partly responsible for the breadth of the debate about what his philosophy is. At the same

time, this debate seems to ignore a point that Nietzsche championed throughout his career, that there is and should be no final outcome of such activity other than the recognition of it as an unending process. Both Nietzsche's critics and proponents often seem overly concerned with categorizing his work as that of the quintessential metaphysician, anti-metaphysician who represented the end of Western metaphysics, radical nihilist, or liberator. The list is, as Nietzsche would have us understand philosophy and education, endless. Part of the reason that he remains at the heart of so many debates in philosophy is that his development was carried out very publicly and self-consciously. From his earliest insights into the philosophical nature of life Nietzsche appears to have had a great desire for his thought to develop publicly. When, for instance, confronted with what he felt were the inadequacies of his school education at Pforta, he sought to remedy the situation not by the retreat into the *vita contemplativa*, but by seeking out the comment and criticism of others, in this case his childhood friends Pinder and Krug. In the years between the inauguration of this association of friends called *Germania*, and his first philosophical works, Nietzsche lived as a wanderer in both the literal and metaphorical senses. His move from the University of Bonn to Leipzig can be seen as a key moment in this wandering because, having stemmed from his distaste for the politics of the academy, this move precipitated his philosophical awakening in the chance discovery of the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer.

Nietzsche's next move was to Basle in order to take up the chair of Classics. To this post, which had fallen vacant at a time when Nietzsche had decided to give up on professional scholarship in order to investigate the possibility of a more philosophically and self-consciously grounded form of research, he brought a strong desire to reform, and from the outset he was careful to make it clear that his concern was for the quality of education and its importance to the health of the society and its culture, what he called 'true culture'. In his

inaugural address, as we shall see in chapter I, he criticized the discipline of philology through an analysis of the then jewel in the crown of the discipline, the so-called Homeric question. Nietzsche analyzed the Homeric question as a way of identifying the philosophical and methodological flaws that he felt were responsible for the decline of classical education. He charged the discipline with a lack of any underlying unity or coherent hermeneutic. He called it a strange mix of blood and bone, citing as proof of this the title given it at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Altertumswissenschaft*, which name partly acknowledged the diversity of the subjects studied and partly elevated the discipline to a level that it could share with the sciences. By choosing to analyze the question of the composition and authorship of the Homeric poems, he hoped to lay bare not only what he felt was the great disparity within the discipline, but also to demonstrate its loss of focus and resulting superficiality. And while these ideas were initially directed only towards classics, Nietzsche came to realize that these problems applied more broadly to education in general. As a result, his own attention was drawn away from the discipline and towards the larger problem of the philosophical foundations of education. This led him to the question of the connection between education and culture, whose enhancement, he concluded, was the primary function of education. Education should desire to transmit the knowledge, wisdom and example of the past for the benefit of the present and future. But in the new educational environment those benefits seemed to have taken a back seat to what he considered an unhealthy egoism born out of the fragmentation of scholarly interest and the over-specialization that was its result. Culture suffered because education had lost its focus. Nietzsche determined that this was nowhere more evident than in modern society's apparent subordination to and fascination with history. But the study of history, as he felt was the case with the rest of the disciplines, had itself become so fragmented that it could offer no aid to culture. This had resulted in what he called excessive historicism which was a major contributing factor to the creation of the culture of

the philistine or cultivatedness. Feeling that this situation had resulted from a long historical process, Nietzsche set out to find an example of a period in which his so-called historical sickness was not the defining characteristic of culture. He found this in the period leading up to the Golden Age of the Greeks since it was then that, we may say, the Greeks 'became who they are'.

Nietzsche's analysis of the culture of that age is best known from *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which he identifies Socrates as the first decadent of the decline in culture. At the same time though, Socrates also represents the epitome of the culture that led to his own activity which in part explains Nietzsche's ambivalence towards him. In identifying the point at which the decline had begun, Nietzsche could now identify the last point at which he felt culture was in a truly healthy state. This period was that of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC and overlaps with that of Socrates' life. This culture, as I will demonstrate, appealed to Nietzsche because it embraced the notion of change as fundamental and promoted the kind of competition that he felt ensures the growth and progress of culture. In addition, the sophistic culture he identifies with is based on the notion that philosophy serves a primarily descriptive function which has as its objective the incorporation of a multiplicity of perspectives in an effort to create meaning and a more inclusive and therefore more holistic understanding of things. Against this he criticized the Socratic culture of hyper-rationalism on account of its denial of the value of sense-experience in knowledge and understanding. This denial, he argued, leads to the assertion of individual opinions as true which can be seen as the basis of the process of fragmentation from which he felt contemporary society and culture suffered. As a result he identified the Socratic culture as primarily prescriptive.

This opposition was in part the result of his earlier observation of the fundamentally agonistic or competitive nature of Greek culture and society. What Nietzsche saw as the key to the

inauguration of the cultural decline was the implication that hyper-rationalism purports to be the correct path to the good. Seen this way, as 'correct', this version of culture and inquiry would need to deny the validity and value of its opposite, but in so doing it would undermine the competitive nature of culture. Nietzsche felt that without competition all that we count as classical about the Greeks could not have come into being, and thus the gates were opened to the establishment of the collage culture of his own time. Against this Nietzsche held the Sophistic to be that which actively promoted the competition that best explained the flowering of Greek culture in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

Through his investigation of sophistic culture, Nietzsche found a model for culture and education that relied on the notions of progress and change. Understanding that the primary function of the Sophists was as teachers, Nietzsche had also found his connection between education and culture. After establishing the questions that Nietzsche identified as fundamental to education, I will look to the positive role of history in education as a link to how culture relies on it to create an environment which allows culture to flourish. Nietzsche's example of the sophistic culture of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC will lead me to a demonstration of the close link between the philosophies of Protagoras, Heraclitus and Gorgias as a way of understanding Nietzsche's larger philosophical project.

The chief reason for undertaking this research is that, while Nietzsche's pedagogical thought is not a new topic for modern theorists, one of the problems that they pay insufficient attention to, or even ignore, is the fact that Nietzsche was himself a man constantly in development and progress. In addition to this there has been, in my view, a failure on the part of much of the work that has been done in this area to attend to Nietzsche's development of and engagement with the Greeks of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. As a result, our understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy suffers from a lack of background and context.

Understanding Nietzsche's philosophy of education, therefore, requires more than a demonstration of its coherence within his larger philosophical project, as important as that is, but in addition it requires an understanding of what it is a development of. In this dissertation I intend to show that from his earliest thoughts on education Nietzsche emphasizes his debt to the ancient Greeks. Simply put, he says, "it is only to the extent that I am a pupil of earlier times, especially the Hellenic, that though a child of the present time I was able to acquire such untimely experiences" (*UD*, 60). The untimeliness of Nietzsche's thought comes partly from its call for a "radical redefinition of the aim of education...as the recovery of health and worth" (Aloni 1989: 302), and partly from his focus on the ancient Greeks as a model for progress in educational and cultural development. The reason for this debt stems ultimately from his conviction that it is necessary to educate ourselves against our times and "to assassinate two millennia of antinature and desecration of man...[and to] tackle the greatest of all tasks, the attempt to raise humanity higher" (*EH*, 'BT', 4). In order to achieve this Nietzsche sought the period during which the ills he had uncovered, through what would later become known as his genealogical method, were not the defining characteristic. And while there is general acknowledgement of that debt, it has not been sufficiently recognized in the literature. Nietzsche exhorted his contemporaries in philology to give up the notion of the Greeks as the serene children of the gods as the fiction that this so demonstrably is and to embrace both the beauty and the horror that they were. This was largely due to the fact that the Greeks that Nietzsche used as the cornerstone and starting point for his thought were not the ones that make up the canon we study, but the ones who are uncritically seen as the antithesis of that canon, the Sophists. Without recognizing this fact, much of the work that has been done on Nietzsche and education, while losing none of its importance in terms of its particular utility, will remain slightly disembodied, even ethereal. By grounding Nietzsche's educational thought in an understanding of it as pointing to the Greeks and by understanding



his philosophy as an extension and development of the practical and subjective philosophy of the Sophists, I hope to show that Nietzsche's philosophy of education provides us with a more coherent understanding of both the relationship between his thought and that of the Greeks and that it allows us to read his larger philosophical project as unified through its educational character.

Within the study of Nietzsche as a philosopher of education, the emphasis has largely been on individual aspects of his thought. While research that asks questions such as how Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power, eternal return or his position of immoralism fit in a philosophy of education is not hard to find in the literature, the question of Nietzsche's larger philosophical project as a philosophy of education is much more difficult to find. I believe that this is due to the over-emphasis of a sentiment expressed by Foucault, that "[the] only valid tribute to thought such as Nietzsche's, is precisely to use it" (Foucault 1980: 53-4). And while I do agree with this sentiment, there is a certain hastiness that I feel has driven consideration of Nietzsche as a philosopher of education away from what he considered the necessary understanding of context. In his 1991 article, "Nietzsche as Educator?", Aharon Aviram asserts that "unless [Nietzsche's educational] ideal can be rendered compatible with the liberal democratic view...it cannot be considered a desirable educational aim within democratic societies" (Aviram 1991: 219). The problem with this view is that education is not a democratic institution for some very good reasons and this view falls victim to precisely the 'ease and comfort' attitude that Nietzsche identifies in his meditation on David Strauss which will be discussed in chapter 2 below. This position fails to recognize some of the fundamental points that Nietzsche makes throughout his work concerning the antipolitical nature of education and culture, not to mention the fact that education is practiced in democratic and non-democratic societies alike.

Other research has chosen to consider parts of Nietzsche's philosophy within the context of the philosophy of education, but these have generally failed to recognize Nietzsche's own point that dissection and categorization are poor replacements for a holistic understanding of a philosopher. James Hillesheim, in "Suffering and Self-cultivation: The Case of Nietzsche", raises the very pertinent point that Nietzsche calls for an understanding of the place of pain and suffering in the educational process. It is important, from Nietzsche's point of view, to understand that what he calls for is not a holiday camp atmosphere for education, but for strict discipline in education. This point is quite central to all of Nietzsche's philosophy, but in emphasizing this aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy of education to the exclusion of the many others, the resulting picture is not one that will attract people to look more closely at Nietzsche's thought in the area.

My objective in raising these points is not to reject the work that has been done, for I believe that it has a certain merit, but the approach has a tendency to leave something wanting. What I think is needed is a more holistic and inclusive approach to Nietzsche's thought that will allow us to recognize that, as Cooper rightly points out, "it is hard to divorce [Nietzsche's philosophy of education] from his whole philosophical endeavour" (Cooper 1983b: 119). And while there have been repeated calls for greater understanding of Nietzsche as a philosopher of education, the scope of the research in this area has, in my opinion, not as yet taken close enough consideration of the foundations and integration of the fundamental influences on Nietzsche's thought. Whether it is the question of Nietzsche's fitness as a philosopher of education within a liberal and democratic society (Aviram 1991), the question of the value of pain in the educational process (Hillesheim 1986) or the definition of his philosophy of education as derived from a narrow selection of his works (Gordon 1980 and Jenkins 1982), I have found that much of this work continues the trend to 'place' Nietzsche within one

tradition or another. The problem with this approach is that it can do little justice to what is novel in Nietzsche's thoughts on education or the function of that thought within his larger philosophical project. With this in mind I intend to proceed in the following manner.

In order to demonstrate the development of Nietzsche's philosophy of education, its relation to his larger philosophical project and the influence of the ancient Greeks on both, I have divided this dissertation into 4 chapters. In the first chapter, titled *Practice*, through the close analysis of the inaugural lecture at Basle, *Homer and Classical Philology*, his introductory course in Philology, called the *Encyclopaedia*, and his five public lectures *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, the objective is to make clear the nature of Nietzsche's educational concerns prior to the watershed of his philosophical activity as a way of demonstrating that his larger philosophical project is defined in part by these pedagogical concerns. Moreover, the mark of the influence of antiquity on these concerns can be more readily borne in mind once we understand that what will become his philosophy of education stems initially from a concern for the waning appreciation of antiquity, through the falsification of the Greek character for largely political reasons, in its function as a model for the cultural progress he felt was lacking in the modern world.

Chapter 2 is titled *Theory* and will be an investigation of Nietzsche's early philosophical thought on the relationship between history and culture. By the time Nietzsche had decided to leave his post at Basle he had become deeply concerned with the central role that history played in the educational system of the day and how that affected the cultural development of modern society. Some of the works to be considered in this chapter come from the series of *Untimely Meditations* that Nietzsche wrote during the 1870s. It was Nietzsche's conviction that the study of history had a particularly important role to play in the development of culture due to the fact that it is through this discipline that the modern world gains its understanding

and knowledge of human achievement. Nietzsche felt that the concerns he expressed concerning education and scholarship as detailed in chapter 1 were manifest in the study of history. The fragmentation that he describes reifies the object of study to such a degree that far from affirming life, it serves as an explanation of why life, in a sense, had ended in cultural terms. He uses as an example of this point the work done by his contemporary, David Strauss. The term used to describe this modern attitude is philistinism. Though perhaps too overly rancorous, Nietzsche's analysis uncovers the deep-seated effects of the then current academic and cultural climate. Against the likes of Strauss, Nietzsche identified Arthur Schopenhauer as an example of the type of philosopher and 'true educator' that has maintained his intellectual independence from the 'hurry-scurry' nature of the modern era. Once again, Nietzsche looks to the ancient Greeks as a way of identifying a culture that sought definitions for itself. As an example of this I will offer an analysis of Thucydides as a historian who is marked by his independence of thought, his overt concern for the object of study and his understanding of the importance of tradition seen as a record in the service of the present rather than as an authority which dominates and limits the present. Once the analysis of the tripartite relationship between education, history and culture has been identified, we will be in a position to look more closely at the relationship between Nietzsche and the 'true educators' he identifies in the Greek culture of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

In chapter 3, titled *Philosophy*, I will give what I believe to be a more accurate account of the positive role played by the Sophists in the development of what we know as the classical age of the Greeks. This will be done in order to demonstrate the integral nature of their thought to that age, but also to show that these itinerant thinkers and teachers bear all of the hallmarks of the type of independence, holism and culture that Nietzsche felt represented culture in its healthiest and most vigorous state. Following from this I will highlight the relationship

between Nietzsche and the Sophists on a philosophical and intellectual level in order to demonstrate that Nietzsche's thought can be seen as an extension and development of that thought. I will explicate Protagorean epistemology through his doctrine of man as the measure of all things. In the second half of the chapter I will investigate the relationship between Nietzsche and Gorgias on the concept of becoming and this will be undertaken in the light of Heraclitus' seminal considerations of this topic.

And finally, in chapter 4, *Education*, I will set out the definition of Nietzsche's philosophy of education in light of the considerations of the first 3 chapters. Pointing to the nature and place of change, self-definition and the positing of meaning, I will identify the pursuit of authenticity as the first aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy of education to arise out of the closer understanding of the Sophists in his work. Coupled with this is the notion that this pursuit must be fundamentally directed inward on an individual basis in the first instance and then eventually outward on the level of society in order to guarantee the maintenance of competition which I will define as the second part of that philosophy. And third, I will show that Nietzsche's notions of instinct, drive and progress embrace the notion of sublimation in the process of growth and development. And thus I hope to show that Nietzsche's philosophy of education is best understood as the origin of the concerns and ideas that make up his larger philosophical project and that this is in turn best read in the context of the tradition of which it is an extension, the sophistic tradition of practical and subjective thought.

## 1. Practice

### Inauguration

From a very early age Nietzsche expressed a great deal of interest in the methods used by his teachers and as his education progressed, he became increasingly critical of what he would later describe as the *gelehrt-historischen* method of education for its narrow scope and inappropriate application. What Nietzsche wanted, what he chose to concentrate his efforts on, was to see the great achievements of human culture in general, and ancient Greek culture in particular, used as an affirmation of humanity's cultural potential, but as they were presented in his education they seemed, on the contrary, to be its limit. For Nietzsche, only after academics and their institutions ceased to hold up the past as an object for imitation can it produce the benefits that are capable of bringing about the life-affirming qualities of knowledge and study. This is best characterized by Nietzsche's use of the word 'philistine' in his meditation on *David Strauss*. In his writing this word is used to describe those scholars who have studied too much, and who have thereby fallen into a kind of deluded idealization of their object of study. He felt that the over-specialization that he saw as characteristic of the champions of Classical Philology rendered the study of the ancient world isolated from any positive influence on or for society. In a sense, Nietzsche felt that Classical Philology misrepresented the ancient world and then re-invented it in its own image. Over the course of his career he came to see this as characteristic not only of Classics, but of scholarship in general. The question that he asked was how one can expect modern culture to develop if it is forced to live forever in the shadow of a culture that had long ago ceased to exist in its 'living' aspect.

Nietzsche's early education was characterized by the strictest discipline and a lack of imagination, or what he would come to see as the lack of any feeling for beauty. As R. J.

Hollingdale has noted, Pforta would seem to the modern eye to be designed for the rehabilitation of hardened criminals rather than for the education of young men. "The children shall be brought up to the religious life," says an instruction from 1540. "For six years they shall exercise themselves in the knowledge of letters, and in the disciplines of virtue" (Halévy 1911: 26). The students boarded at the school and were given only a few hours on Sunday to do with as they pleased. For Nietzsche these hours were a chance to visit with his mother and sister, both of whom he missed very much, in a nearby town, mid-way between Naumburg and Pforta. On a typical day the students rose at 4 a.m., were prepared by 5, and spent the rest of the day at their studies, breaking only for meals and retiring for bed at nine. On the days when they had no instruction they could lie in bed for an extra hour and would spend the day reviewing the work of the past week. The school was anything but modern or liberal. "The real interest of Pforta lay in Greek and Latin, and to a lesser degree in the German classics. The school was fundamentally...a world of books: the students breathed the air not of modern Europe, but of ancient Greece and Rome and of the Germany of Goethe and Schiller" (Hollingdale 1999: 19).

In response to what Nietzsche felt was the failing of the curriculum to develop a real sense of culture, he and two friends, Pinder and Krug, in the summer of 1860, entered into an agreement to develop those artistic interests. The association of these three was called *Germania* and for three years they presented their creative and scholarly work to one another for discussion and criticism. They agreed that they would come together once a month for this purpose. With his preference for ordered reflection and a critical attitude towards the standard organization of institutional education, the association that he and his friends founded allowed him to develop and express his pedagogical philosophy at a very early age. It is remarkable that at such an early point in his life he had such a developed sense of pedagogy.

Even with this pleasant outlet for his energies, Nietzsche was still troubled by the question of his future, and in 1862 he wrote:

I am much preoccupied with the problem of my future. Many reasons, external and internal, make it appear to me troubled and uncertain. Doubtless I believe myself to be capable of success in whatever province I select. But strength fails me to put aside so many divers objects which interest me. What shall I study? No idea of a decision presents itself to my mind, and yet with myself alone it lies to reflect and to make a decision. What is certain is that whatever I study I shall be eager to probe it to its depths. But this fact only renders the choice more difficult, since the question is to discover the pursuit to which one can give one's whole self. And how often they deceive us, these hopes of ours! How quickly one is put on the wrong track by a momentary predilection, a family tradition, a desire! To choose one's profession is to make one in a game of *lotto*, in which there are many blanks, but only very few prizes! At this moment my position is uncomfortable. I have dispersed my interest over so many provinces that if I were to satisfy my tastes I would certainly become a very learned man, but only with great difficulty a professional animal. My task is to destroy many of my present tastes, that is clear, and, by the same process, to acquire new ones.<sup>1</sup> But which are the unfortunates that I am to throw overboard? Precisely my dearest children, maybe! (quoted in Halévy 1911: 35-6)

At the time of this passage Nietzsche had not yet chosen Classical Philology as his course for university study, but already there was a great deal to indicate that his intended course in theology was becoming less attractive to him. Throughout his life he would be plagued by the sentiments expressed here as he searched for the solutions that would help him overcome his ambivalent feelings. This, of course, is one of the strongest feelings pervading his philosophy and it was during this period that he developed a serious mistrust of tradition and dogma. He would meet these problems face to face while at Bonn during the public battle that would arise between two central figures in the Bonn seminar, Friedrich Ritschl, Nietzsche's eventual supervisor and the chief supporter of his career as a philologist, and Otto Jahn, his supervisor at the time. This conflict convinced Nietzsche of the problem of the personalities of the great

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<sup>1</sup> This statement is particularly interesting in light of the importance Nietzsche placed on sublimation, discussed below in chapter 4.3, and it is also an early indication of the development of his concept of overcoming oneself.



scholars and by the time he was appointed to the chair at Basle he had become disillusioned about the world of academic scholarship.

Strife is the perpetual food of the soul, and it knows well enough how to extract the sweetness from it. The soul destroys and at the same time brings forth new things; it is a furious fighter, yet it gently draws its opponent to its side in an inner alliance. And the most wonderful thing is that it never concerns itself with outward forms: names, persons, places, fine words, flourishes, all are of subordinate value: it treasures what lies within....I think now of much that I have loved; the names and the persons changed, and I do not say they always grew deeper and more beautiful in their nature; but this is surely true, that each of these moods meant for me a progress and that it is unendurable for the spirit [Geist] to have to step again on a step it has passed over; it wants to advance to greater heights and greater depths (quoted in Hollingdale 1999: op.cit.)

The Heraclitean sound of this passage is unmistakable. Nietzsche had progressed to the heights of the education that had been provided for him, taken what was of greatest value to him, amending the omissions by associations with like-minded individuals, and found himself in the bosom of the 6<sup>th</sup> B.C. From the time Nietzsche left Pforta until his appointment at Basle, the independence of university study allowed him the freedom to further develop his pedagogical thought. By the time he took up the chair at Basle he was prepared to begin what he felt were the necessary corrections of the academic approach to the ancient world. His position is clearly expressed in the inaugural lecture, *Homer and Classical Philology* which will be discussed in section 1.1 below. From here he took his new formula into the classroom. In Nietzsche's *Encyclopedia*, discussed in 1.2 below, he outlines what he considers the necessary critical and philosophical foundations of the discipline, and over the course of his time as a professor of Classics he came to see the problems of his own discipline as evident in all modern education. From first-hand experiences in his field he began to develop his ideas in the broader context of the philosophy of education and nearing the end of his active service at the university he gave a set of public lectures, later published under the title *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions* to be discussed in 1.5 below, outlining what he saw as the rot in

education. Over the course of the following chapter I will analyze some of the work he produced during this period in an effort to uncover the fundamental questions raised during this period which would eventually form the foundation of his pedagogical philosophy and that drove his philosophical inquiries. And while this will focus on the discipline of Classical Philology, most, if not all of his comments and criticisms should be taken as applying to the field of education as a whole.

## 1.1 Nietzsche's Direction in Classical Philology

In January of 1869, not long after Nietzsche had decided on a plan to leave the university at Leipzig without having completed his doctoral examinations, in order to move to Paris for a year of concentrated and independent philological work (to Mushacke, 08/1868 in *KGB* Iii), his plans were drastically changed by his appointment to the chair of Classical Philology at Basle. Friedrich Ritschl had been asked for a recommendation for the vacant position and had put Nietzsche's name forward. That this favour was anathema to Nietzsche at the time is certainly an overstatement, but at the same time it is clear that his objectives were changing and these appear to have involved an extended break from university life. Nietzsche unfortunately did not spell out his feelings towards this position, and so we will need to analyze his activity in Basle in order to come to a better understanding of the relationship between Nietzsche, Classical Philology and education in general, for it is in this relationship that we can get the clearest view of the concerns which form the foundation of Nietzsche's philosophy of education. The only clear statement that Nietzsche makes before his arrival in Basle is in a letter to Erwin Rohde of January 16, 1869, that he is sorry that their Paris plans will not come about. And the clearest statement he makes after his arrival is his inaugural lecture, later published as *Homer and Classical Philology*.

With a certain reluctance, Nietzsche did in fact take up the post and pursued his role as professor and teacher with enthusiasm, but both the tone and the content of his inaugural lecture in May 1869 raise the question of his motivation for taking a position in a discipline which he seems to have felt was in a rather poor state less than 75 years after its inauguration. Looking back to the correspondence during his years at Leipzig one finds an increasing ambivalence towards Classical Philology which was responsible, at least in part, for his desire to take a break from the received approach to the classics and to set up a community of

philosophically minded philologists since it was the apparent lack or loss of a coherent philosophical foundation that caused much of Nietzsche's frustration with the discipline. This group was to be made up of what he called 'Schopenhauer-friends', in Paris. Part of the reason that Nietzsche chose to remove himself from the setting of the university was that he had begun to see the cause of his ambivalent feelings, which can be traced to his year at Bonn, in the superficiality of the personality cults of philology's great men and the political nature of German academic positions, both of which had worked to undermine the integrity of the Bonn seminar.<sup>2</sup> This type of extra-academic or extra-intellectual controversy was due in Nietzsche's mind to a much deeper pretension to superiority in German culture and society.<sup>3</sup> This pretension, in turn, was the result of the restructuring of the German educational system by, among others, Wilhelm von Humboldt who had been inspired by the work of Friedrich August Wolf. These two epoch-making scholars met as the students, at Göttingen, of one of the founders of *Altertumswissenschaft*, Christian Gottlob Heyne (Briggs and Calder III 1990: 176-9), and it was the growing disparity in the newly named discipline which drew Nietzsche to his choice of topic for this inaugural.

Nietzsche begins his lecture in the required fashion by defining his topic. His first step was to set out his interpretation of the composition of philology: its content, aims and function.

[Philology] is just as much part history as part natural science as part aesthetics: history in so far as it attempts to understand the uniqueness of the ancient peoples in ever new images and the prevailing law of its disappearance; natural science in so far as it seeks to understand the deepest instinct of man, that of speech; and finally it is part aesthetics because from the catalogue of antiquities it tries to extract the "classical", with the claim and intention of revealing a buried ideal in order to hold up to the present the

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<sup>2</sup> For an explanation of some of the events which contributed to this attitude in Nietzsche see *Classical Scholarship: A Biographical Encyclopedia*, edited by Ward W. Briggs and William Calder III (New York and London, 1990), pp. 232, 390 & 492.

<sup>3</sup> Concerning the role played by *Altertumswissenschaft* in this connection see Martin Bernal, *Black Athena*, Vol. I. (London, 1987), pp. 285-288. See also Friedrich Paulsen *Die deutschen Universitäten und das Universitätsstudium* (Berlin, 1902), pp. 60-77.

classical and eternal model (*KGW* IIi: 294).<sup>4</sup>

The tone in this passage is anything but congratulatory. There are serious questions, even accusations behind his description. Philology, Nietzsche says, is a collage of discordant elements, a forced union of contradictory academic interests, resulting in what he calls a “false monarchy”. This may sound harsh but it cannot be denied that Classics is in fact a mixture of differing philosophies, techniques and concerns, and in this sense it can be rightly considered a pseudo-discipline. Nietzsche is drawing a distinction between the philology that is practiced in his day and one from which he felt the discipline had diverged. It becomes clear that Nietzsche will not speak in praise of philology, but rather intends to provoke his audience, not comfort them. Nietzsche is determined to concentrate on what is rotten in the state of philology, for “the individual followers of this science take their respective aims to be *the* aims of philology, such that public opinion of the discipline is very much dependent on the weight of the personalities of philologists” (*KGW* IIi: 250). Whereas for Nietzsche, philology is a means by which one strives to achieve a deeper understanding of the root causes of modernity, not an end in itself.

Nietzsche, who stood in the front rank of the philological profession, gave this lecture to an audience of colleagues and effectively baited them and their achievements, because defining the discipline as he does implies that current practice has fallen short of the mark. He claims for *his* philology, “future-philology”, a more tangible goal and a more coherent motivation because the minutiae gathered in debates such as the so-called Homeric Question show the focus of the discipline to be rather narrow and isolated which was a problem that he saw as characteristic of the philology of his day. He felt that such debates could only ever be a first step towards understanding, whereas on their own they cannot contribute in a significant way, a point he intends to make clear in the inaugural. He backs up his claim with an appeal to the

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<sup>4</sup> This and all future citations from the *KGW* are my own translations.

public interest, because for Nietzsche, education of any sort holds value only in so far as it serves the development of culture and society, though this is not to ignore that fact that at a deeper level he did feel that the public was more or less incapable of determining its own interest, for this is achieved as a result of something that he counts as transcending society, namely good taste and aesthetic harmony, two characteristics of his 'higher type'. Although, as he says, philologists have distinguished themselves in every area of the discipline, their achievements lack the ability to transcend the discipline because the exclusivity of their debates results in the loss of the educated public's interest in philological matters. Where once it could hold the attention of an insatiable public, philology had become slightly embarrassing and attracted much criticism. "Where do we not meet them, these jokers who are always ready to strike a blow at the family of philological moles, the *ex professo* dust-eaters who gobble up for the eleventh time the clump of earth they have eaten ten times before" (ibid.). But this type of 'enemy' is not particularly dangerous in Nietzsche's opinion, since they do little more than hold philology in contempt. Philology is to these detractors the hobby of men in their dotage who have grown weary of the world as it is and retreated to a world that exists only in books, one which has long since been surpassed. Later, towards the end of Nietzsche's philosophical activity, these characteristics will come to be seen by him as part of the definition of the nihilist (cf. *WP*: 585). Rather, for Nietzsche, the danger lay in the spirit of 'modernism'.<sup>5</sup>

This latter category of enemy is the academic and thinker who, in the spirit of the Enlightenment, seeks to remove the authority of dogma, whose source was received tradition. But for Nietzsche, while he was not terribly interested in dogmatic positions, where tradition is removed as the foundation of academic pursuit, we lose the assistance that can be provided by hindsight. It is essential to Nietzsche's educational thought that each individual be to a

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<sup>5</sup>This term is not to be taken in any technical sense, but rather as a reference to an attitude of rejecting the models of the past in favour of the novel formulations of a given 'progressiveness'.

certain extent “embedded” in some tradition in order to be able to gauge its values and progress. Without a record of the way things have been interpreted there can be no guard against stagnation through endless repetition which, as we shall see, was one of the reasons that Nietzsche chose the Homeric question as his topic for this lecture. This is one of the first instances where Nietzsche makes a distinction between tradition seen as an authority and as a simple record of the way things have been thought and interpreted. His warning is that without philology our knowledge will decline. The defense of the historical consciousness of philology is provided in Nietzsche’s analysis by what he calls the aesthetic sensibilities.

In opposition to these enemies, we philologists should always count on the aid of artists and those of an artistic nature, since they alone can understand how the sword of barbarism sweeps over the head of everyone who loses sight of the indescribable simplicity (unity) and noble dignity of the Hellene; and how no brilliant progress in technology and industry, no modern school regimen, and no widespread political education of the masses can protect us from the curse of ridiculous lapses of taste and from extermination by the horrible Gorgon head of the classicist (*KGW* II: 251).

The artistic nature, or aesthetic sensibility, is to be taken as the restraining influence on both the learned public’s insatiability and academic self-importance. The public needs the aesthetic to protect it from its own appetite for progress and novelty, and the academy needs it to protect it from the sterility of over-emphasizing the perceived ideality of the past. Technology, industry, political education and school regulation are attacks on the concept of progress as conceived in the Germany of Nietzsche’s day and against which he levels his criticisms. The first of these three are a reference to the materialism that was driving Europe, the capitalism and democracy of the time. The reference to school regulation betrays Nietzsche’s belief that the Humboldtian revolution in German education in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, which had played such a central role in the creation not only of *Altertumswissenschaft* but also in the German dreams of *Reich* and *Kaiser*, had failed in its bid to create a better society. The desire to create a productive, educated and cultured society

had unfortunately led to the development of a national pretension to superiority through the imitation of an idealized image of antiquity. Moreover, as Nietzsche points out, the dangers are not limited to these concerns. In addition to the dangers of passivity and apathy, what Nietzsche defines as nihilism in his later philosophy, is the danger created by a philology that is organized around the personalities of its leading figures. This is how Nietzsche introduces the topic which serves as the example of that type of scholarship which he feels is a danger to culture which is represented by the 19<sup>th</sup> century resurrection of the Homeric Question. As Nietzsche sees it, this debate is characterized by the responsibility it bears in the creation of the “internal dissensions” and competitions among scholars which are based on little more than jealousy, or at least not based on an interest in understanding the ancient world.

For Nietzsche, the Homeric Question represents a great failing in the philology of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: “from now on we must take note of a definite and really surprising hostility which philology has great cause to regret” (*KGW* II: 252). After having pointed to the need for aesthetics as the saviour of that philology which he holds in high regard, Nietzsche now turns to the nature of modern philologists. Characteristic of the philologist to whom Nietzsche refers, and in this we find one of the many reasons for his ambivalent feelings towards the discipline, is the tendency to over-analyze and scrutinize the remains of classical antiquity. “Life is worth living, says art, the beautiful seductress; Life is worth knowing says science (scholarship)” (*KGW* II: 251). In its effort to *know* life, Nietzsche is saying that philology has forgotten to *live* life. It will seek out that which is beautiful with an eye to understanding it, the theory being that anything that attracts us is, almost axiomatically, worth studying. But this theory fails to see that beauty appeals to one’s emotions in the first instance and to the intellect as a distant second.<sup>6</sup> By replacing the natural impulse to enjoy a poem, for example, with the impulse to dismantle it into its component parts for further analysis, the philologist

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<sup>6</sup> As we shall see below in chapter 3, the analysis of the basis for such attraction forms a direct link between Nietzschean perspectivism and Protagorean epistemology.



undermines poetry as such, and when the sum of the parts do not equal the long forsaken whole, the 'scientific' sensibility of the scholar is offended and causes him to seek defects in the composition of the object of study, and as a result "we always lose the wonderful formative aspect, the authentic aroma of the ancient atmosphere; we forget that longing feeling which led our minds and enjoyment to the Greeks with the force of the instincts" (*KGW* III: 252).

As is often the case with inaugurals, Nietzsche uses his lecture as a way of defining his personal objectives as a scholar and teacher. In order to understand the significance of his choice of topic for this lecture, it is necessary to remember that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the German educational system had been re-organized in such a way that classical studies and Classical Philology stood as the central link in the chain of knowledge. During the formation of the new university, it was the responsibility of each discipline to demonstrate its value in education and this was particularly true of one that was as relatively young as Classical Philology.<sup>7</sup> In the case of philology, F.A. Wolf's *Prolegomena ad Homerum* was the work which served to establish the 'scientific' or *wissenschaftlich* stature of philology as well as the discipline's modernity, which consisted in its combination of historical consciousness and linguistic specialization. From its origins as a gentlemanly pursuit in European society, classical studies in general, and Classical Philology in particular, had gradually become thoroughly academic and professional.<sup>8</sup> "For the old "Arts Faculty" in a German University had long ceased to fulfill its proper purpose as a preliminary course for Theology, Law or Medicine; and the new

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<sup>7</sup> Before the publication of Wolf's *Prolegomena ad Homerum* philology had yet to clearly define its province with regard to classics. Wolf's insistence on being registered at Göttingen as a student in philology was, while not the first time this had been done, particularly significant as a step in the rising domination of *Altertumswissenschaft* in German education. The faculties of Medicine, Theology and Law were still very much the superstructure of the university, but their position was weakening. In this connection see Sir John L. Myres *Homer and His Critics*, (London, 1958), p.73 and the introduction to F.A. Wolf, *Prolegomena ad Homerum*, translated with introduction and notes by Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most and James E.G. Zetzel (Princeton, 1985), p.29.

<sup>8</sup> C. Diehl describes this development with great economy in his *Americans and German Scholarship 1770-1870* (New Haven & London, 1978), pp. 36-37.

purpose was being only dimly conceived, of a school of Humanities which should rank not below but abreast of the old professional studies" (Myres 1958: 73). The educational revolution that took place during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries shifted the focus of German universities from training for the traditional professional degrees to the academic concentration on antiquity. Or, to put it another way, one can say that the Humboldtian reforms of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century not only professionalized Classics, but also put the older disciplines into a subordinate position; the logic behind this was that only after one had mastered antiquity and its wisdom, could one hope to contribute to modernity and its growing knowledge, and this logic was one of the reasons for the development of the ailment characterized by an excess of historical consciousness that Nietzsche would criticize in *The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* considered below in chapter 2. "As a common treasury of ideas and experiences, [the study of antiquity] linked almost all educated Germans, shaping into common forms the thought and language of men who in other respects agreed on nothing. It is sobering to realize that Marx, Nietzsche, Lagarde and Freud—had they met—could have denounced one another as readily in Latin as in German" (Grafton in Wolf 1985: 159). This statement's point is quite clear: a knowledge of the ancient world *as it was seen* in Germany was equated with intelligence in the new university. The restructuring of the educational system had the intended effect of rebuilding that system on the perceived morally and intellectually superior foundation of antiquity, but this foundation was in fact made of sand. In effect an ideal antiquity was constructed in order to create a mold in which the German educated public might recast itself. This is part of what Nietzsche sought to point out in his inaugural: "The whole scientific-artistic movement of these eccentric centaurs moves with enormous force, but cyclopic slowness, to bridge the gap between the ideal antiquity which is perhaps only a Teutonic longing for the south, and the real antiquity" (*KGW* Ili: 253). Nietzsche's contention though, is that this has not taken place, and a clear indication of

this is the kind of debate that the Homeric question represents. The aim of philology was defeated at the time of its inception, with Wolf's *Prolegomena*, and the resurrection of a debate that had been abandoned in antiquity. Let us now consider this debate at some length as a way of understanding Nietzsche's position with regard to professional scholarship, for this will prove a useful point of reference when we come not only to discuss Nietzsche's 1872 lectures on the educational institution, but also for understanding this aspect of the motivation behind the development of his pedagogical philosophy and its central role in his larger philosophical project.

"Before Wolf, classical studies had consisted in a largely fruitless effort to improve individual passages in classical texts by daring conjectural emendations. After his time, philology was the first historical discipline, the model for all other historical sciences from *Germanistik* to *Geistesgeschichte*" (Grafton in Wolf 1985: 161). It was no accident that Nietzsche chose the debate over the composition, authorship and transmission of the Homeric epics as his subject since it was with its resurrection through Wolf's *Prolegomena* that philology had begun to become a discipline as 'scientific' and as respectable as any other (Pfeiffer 1968-76: 174), and as such the debate that rose out of that work can be seen as representative of the discipline.<sup>9</sup> In order to understand the importance of Nietzsche's lecture one must read the history of the Homeric question as the backdrop against which this inaugural was given. An understanding of the centrality of the debate over Homer within the discipline and the state of the debate in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century will help to clarify Nietzsche's position and his motivation with regard to Classical Philology, and the eventual translation of this into his philosophy of education.

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<sup>9</sup> "It is fundamental to understanding the Homeric Question as a nineteenth-century phenomenon to realize that it was philology and philological careerism rather than concern for Homer that fueled the Question. It was the case of a modern methodology making its way in the world by addressing a subject of long-standing interest. Consequently the nineteenth-century Homeric Question was in large measure as much a quarrel about arguments as it was a dispute over Homer." Davison in *ACH*, p.126. See also Pfeiffer "The so-called 'Homeric Question' at once became one of the central problems [of classical scholarship] and remained so until our own day." p. 175.

Though antiquity and the accompanying admiration for the Greeks had been one of the central pillars of European culture and education since their resurrection during the Renaissance, their interest, if not their influence, had begun to diminish during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, especially in France where, following the spirit of the Enlightenment, came the spirit of revolution and a strong desire to throw off the yoke of anything that was perceived as being part of the dogma of received tradition. The popular attitude was in favour of seeking scientific fulfillment in modern studies, using modern methods, instruments and data.<sup>10</sup> In a recent translation of the *Prolegomena*, the editors point out that “[as] the eighteenth century wore on, the study of dead languages and classical texts was much criticized as a waste of time and talent” (pref. in Wolf 1985: 11). The public interest, that final judge of viability for most things, had shifted to the primitive and exotic. “The direct, vivid, popular songs of the Celts and Bedouins were in favour, even if they had to be forged to meet the desires of the public” (ibid.).<sup>11</sup> In this environment the traditional interpretation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as the first and best examples of Western poetry presented a picture far too sophisticated, too developed and polished to maintain mass appeal. At the same time, since Europe had come out of its own long period of ‘darkness’ and had rediscovered the salutary nature of ancient wisdom, the great minds of the Enlightenment had begun to surpass the knowledge presented in the resurrected works of the ancient sages which raised the question: “if Greek physics could be superseded, then why could not Greek poetry as well?” (ibid.: 9). In this new spirit, Homer’s status in the canon of Western literature came into question and with that a debate which had been abandoned since late Hellenistic times was re-born. Although there were many versions of Homeric interpretation from antiquity onwards, Nietzsche saw Wolf as the most significant resurrection of the debate: “From those times until Friedrich August Wolf, one must make a

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<sup>10</sup> This attitude of novelty during the period of the Enlightenment, and the dogmatic rejection of tradition that was its result, are explained to great effect in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. (New York, 1996) p. 272ff.

<sup>11</sup> Here one might consider the scholarly integrity of MacPherson’s work on Ossian and the influence that that work had on the development of the Homeric debate and German folk culture of the 19th century.

leap over a great vacuum; and now, beyond this boundary, we find the study yet at the exact point at which the ancients dropped it: it matters little that Wolf took as certain tradition what the ancients themselves laid down as a mere hypothesis" (*KGW* III: 256). Taking such a hypothesis to be a tradition is the result of what Nietzsche called the mist and atmosphere of history, or the tendency for historical reality to become obscured due to the need to have it serve the present.<sup>12</sup> The contemporary desire to overthrow the authority of Homer had in a sense caused Wolf, and therefore the whole profession, to take up an investigation that was based on an abandoned hypothesis inherited from the Alexandrian, Antiochan and Pergamese scholars of late antiquity. Ironically, criticism of the father of Greek poetry became an indispensable defense for the study of antiquity in the politics of the new university.

The job of professional literary critic owes its existence and origins to the difference between the world in which a reader lives and the world described in a text. The remnants of a by-gone era represented in a text raise questions about that difference because the fixity of the world described is inevitably at odds with the present world. The seemingly familiar words in the text will have developed new meanings and significations over time. When one considers a text as central to a culture as Homer's appears to have been for the Greeks, there should be little wonder at the ancients' desire, even need, to reconcile any apparent discrepancies between their world and that of Homer. After the Peloponnesian war, the Greek world was in a greatly weakened state. In addition to the huge cost in terms of lives, from both fighting and disease, there was a huge expenditure of wealth and resources. This situation laid the Greek peninsula open to those marginal groups who had seemed to the Greeks too primitive to be a threat, but who, because of that perceived primitiveness, were left in peace to develop politically, socially, economically, culturally and militarily. The 'not-quite-Hellenic' world that resulted from the conquests of the late classical period in Greece created a world that was

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<sup>12</sup> That this takes place was an observation that Nietzsche used in order to demonstrate that history should be used as a gauge of the predisposition of the present, as we shall see in his analysis of the positive aspect of historiography in chapter 2 below.

utterly alien to whoever Homer may have been and the poetry attributed to him. "What was meant by the name Homer at that time? Apparently that generation felt itself unable to grasp any such personality and the limits of its academic manifestations. "Homer" had become an empty shell" (*KGW* IIi: 257). In this passage Nietzsche seeks to remind his audience of the difficulties involved in answering the Homeric Question even for scholars who lived closer to that world. He uses the example of the difficulties in clarifying the law of gravity when only the largest body's influence is calculated as a metaphor for the confusion created when only the prevailing hypothesis concerning the authorship of the Homeric poems is used as a rubric for truth. This is precisely the problem that the ancients faced and it is to this day one that has not, and likely cannot, be resolved. This illustrates the complexity if not the misguided nature of the question asked. The Homeric Question raises more questions than it answers for the simple reason that sufficient evidence for one argument or the other does not exist:

[History], even of the Greek states of the classical age, still more, that of the Homeric age, had almost ceased to have any bearing on politics or diplomacy, now that the masters were no longer city-states like Athens, Sparta or Thebes, but upstart Macedonian adventurers and their descendants in the Succession Kingdoms. Consequently the study of the Greek classics—for such they had become—and not least the study of Homer, became an indoor pursuit, a library subject. (Myres 1958: 27)

This library subject was pursued by the highly educated adherents to particular philosophical interpretations of the world, along with its order and its chaos, in much the same way that one religious faith gives rise to bodies of priests or holy men to whom the faithful will cling for instruction on how to interpret the world, its good and its evil. The two main camps of librarians where Hellenistic criticism of Homer was concerned were known as the analogists and the anomalists.

Ultimately the division, discussion and debate that these two opposing views inspired were less fruitful than anyone at the time might have hoped. Since at bottom the two theories represent a difference of degree rather than quality (cf. Myres 1958: 29-31), they make the

same argument from two different perspectives; this was that Homer was a great poet and his poems are beautiful. “[In Alexandria] Homer was all but universally accepted as the author of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; the aim of the great Alexandrian scholars was to produce texts of the two poems which should be worthy of his fame” (Davison 1962: 240). But because, from both the analogist and anomalist points of view, there were so many concerns to be discussed and questions to be answered, the theories themselves eventually became the object of study. This point represents an example of the fragmentation that Nietzsche felt pervaded modern, professional scholarship. In this way his analysis here demonstrates that while there may have been a desire to answer an original question, the process of devising that answer has a tendency to draw attention into completely different areas and the original object is lost. The question implied by this analysis is that if we see this happening now and we know that the same effort produced the same results, by analogy we ought to be more cautious about the underlying drives that created the question. “Independent criticism faded out before the Augustan Age. Even the possibility of research into Homeric origins was precluded by the underlying assumptions” (Myres 1958: 33). This assumption, that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were in fact composed by Homer, led to an increasing body of conjectural ‘facts’ about the life of Homer, which led to a number of spurious biographies.<sup>13</sup>

More to the point, Nietzsche asks: “*Was the person created out of a concept or the concept out of a person*” (KGW Iii: 257). This question forms the central theme around which the question of Homer revolved from late antiquity until Wolf’s intervention at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A question that started with the admiration for poetry and its picture of an earlier version of society became a question of authorship, which in turn obscured comprehension of the poem. The enormous amount of time and energy that went into Homeric scholarship led to

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<sup>13</sup> For an exhaustive, and somewhat exhausting, account of the many ancient biographies of Homer and their interdependence, see T.W. Allen, *Homer: Origins and Transmission* (Oxford, 1924) pp. 11-42. Included in this account is a very revealing chart which lays out the various accounts side by side (insert between pp. 32 and 33).

the increasing mystification and obscuring of both the text and its author. "As the Homeric text could not be altered—and to the allegorists we may at least be grateful for having shown us *that*—and as it could not be decently taught as meaning what it said, it must be supposed to mean something else; in which event the field was open to the most ingenious or the most devout, to discover what that hidden meaning was" (Myres 1958: 33). In this way the text, or rather the story told by the text ceased to be the object of study, and all of the possible meanings that it might contain took precedence. In drawing attention to this fact, Nietzsche hoped to draw his audience's attention to the dangers of over-specialization, which tendency caused him the greatest concern for the future of scholarship's contribution to society and culture. In showing how this leads to no good end in the study of antiquity he hoped to make the practice less attractive to his contemporaries.

In 1795 Wolf's *Prolegomena* made him the father of modern Classical Philology. The precepts and ideas presented in this work arguably set the agenda of more than two hundred years of philological enquiry and investigation into ancient texts. Indeed, "[the] *Prolegomena* made the decision to concentrate on classics look intellectually respectable. It offered classicists the right to claim for their field a new intellectual weight and legitimacy. If Wolf had not written such a book, it would no doubt have been necessary to invent it—and to create much ballyhoo about it" (pref. in Wolf 1985: 29). Seventy-four years after its publication, Nietzsche, one of the brightest stars of the discipline and one of the youngest ever to hold a chair in it, chose to re-assess philology and its state of health. Nietzsche questioned the purpose of philological enquiry, and more importantly, its utility as demonstrated by the debate over Homer.

At the age of 24 Nietzsche was called to the chair of Classical Philology at Basle as *professor extraordinarius*. As we have seen, Nietzsche gave his inaugural lecture on the Homeric



Question, or as he termed it, the question of the personality of Homer. His choice of this topic was due to its currency, because of its relevance to divisive debates within the discipline and because of the topic's role in the development of philological method. As noted earlier, in spite of the work done by Wolf and others, Nietzsche felt that philology lacked unity and clear definition. While inaugural lectures are generally used to define one's intentions in an area of interest, it should be clear at this point that Nietzsche intended to use this lecture as a way of expressing his concern for what he felt was a crisis in the discipline's development and to define his vision of Classical Philology which over time would form part of the basis of his philosophy of education. The reason for this crisis, Nietzsche says, is that it is in the nature of philology to consider all aspects of classical antiquity and since this necessarily involves such disparate areas as literature, history, architecture, sculpture and philosophy, among other things, there is a need for the use of "diverse academic activities which are connected with each other only by the name "Philology"" (*KGW* III: 249). Philology seeks to understand the abstract unity of ancient culture and society based on an admittedly incomplete record. In order to bind this diversity more tightly together what Nietzsche proposes as a unifying principle for modern Classical Philology is, as was mentioned above, aesthetic sensibility which is something that he saw as the cultural imperative of antiquity, and which he latter expressed as "unity of artistic style in all expressions of life of a people" (*UD*: 25). Later, in his introductory lecture to the discipline to be discussed in 1.2 below, this idea will form the basis of his hermeneutic approach to antiquity and during his philosophical activity, it forms the basis of his hermeneutic approach to life.

This cultural imperative is given the utmost importance by Nietzsche because of his conviction that the study of antiquity ought to be an ennobling resource for contemporary society as a whole. Here lies what Nietzsche considers the fundamental flaw in the type of scholarship which is seen as an end in itself: the appreciation, explication and interpretation of

antiquity should contribute to society by using the knowledge gained as an impetus for cultural development and progress. The aesthetic is but one of three elements that Nietzsche lists as encompassed by the word philology, but from the analysis we have seen it is the first to be forgotten. The two remaining aspects are its historical and scientific components. The discipline is historical he says, in so far as it seeks to understand the ever-changing character of the peoples and cultures it takes as its object. It is scientific in its capacity as a developer of linguistic theory, which is to say that in order to understand their object of study philologists must understand that object's mode of expression which implies that the best method for understanding one's object of study ought to be derived from the object not as a way of defining that object. When he explains the aesthetic element in philology, Nietzsche comes to one of the sources of the division he sees in the discipline; a point that would later be applied to all of the disciplines and to education in general. As it is currently organized, "it is aesthetic, finally, because from the range of antiquities available it attempts to select the so-called "classical" antiquity, with the claim and intention of digging up a buried ideal world and holding up to the present the mirror of the classical and everlasting standard" (*KGW* III: 249). Nietzsche argues that the notion of a mirror of such a classical and everlasting standard is the result of an error in judgement. To regard antiquity as an image that is to be imitated is to impose a definition on it which reifies one particular and therefore limited view of it. This in turn carries with it the notion that this image is the ultimate objective for cultural development and this is, in Nietzsche's analysis, the source of the force behind an academically driven imperative to imitate past glory and its ossifying effect. The relevance of the term 'academic' requires some further clarity here. One must remember that in the Germany of the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century a notion of 'classical' antiquity had become an institutionalized ideal which became the basis of education much as it had all over Europe. In this capacity a certain view of antiquity had become standardized as a necessary part of

developing school curricula, but Nietzsche wanted to question that conception of antiquity because in his opinion this was responsible both for a growing public dislike of philology and the increasing fragmentation of the discipline.

As a result of that fragmentation there was a trend towards relying increasingly on high profile individuals in scholarship for public recognition of the discipline's validity. As the access to each of the carefully categorized areas of philology becomes more and more restricted, a particular scholar will seek to become the expert in an ever narrower field of study. "[The] individual followers of this science consider their particular abilities and desired goals to be *the* central goals of philology, such that the valuation of philology in public opinion is dependent upon the weight of the personalities of philologists!" (*KGW* IIi: 250). Once through the educational system, including both elementary and Gymnasium education, students are inclined and indeed encouraged to pursue higher education under the tutelage of one or another specialist. This tends to create a kind of factional mentality which Nietzsche experienced first hand while at Bonn, and which he would experience again at the hands of his younger contemporary and one of Otto Jahn's later students, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff after the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*. This factionalizing process and its attendant restrictiveness also creates a situation which undermines one of the basic functions of education; that of disseminating knowledge to society.

As this detrimentally competitive aspect of scholarship grows, so too does the need for more effective weapons of defense, which in Nietzsche's opinion manifests itself as excessively specialized knowledge. This type of external competition was something that Nietzsche came to see as manifest in culture as a result of its misapplication in modern education. Below, in chapter 4, we shall see that while competition forms a fundamental part of Nietzsche's philosophy of education, it is a type of competition which is essentially internal and aimed at

self-overcoming rather than at the domination of others. The unfortunate result of the external type of competition, according to Nietzsche, is that higher education, or indeed anything other than the most basic technical and practical education, isolates itself from society as a result of scholarship's effort to master, and so carve out, particular areas of research and also creates the cultural attitude of ownership and philistinism as I will discuss in chapter 2 below. "At present, when we have seen philology distinguished in just about every possible direction, a general uncertainty of judgement has increased alarmingly, and similarly there has been a general relaxation of participation in philological problems" (*KGW* II: 250). The alienation and restriction that is created in this way is what lies behind the increasingly negative public attitude towards scholarship which was noted earlier. In recalling the reification of a so-called 'classical' antiquity in conjunction with the restrictive tendencies of such a system, Nietzsche observed the following situation: "[There] is a wrathful and unrestrained hatred of philology wherever an ideal as such is feared, where modern man falls down in joyous admiration of himself, and where Hellenism is seen as a superseded and banal standpoint" (ibid.). This raises the question not only of the relationship between the ancient and the modern world, but also of the relationship between society, culture and education. 5

When society begins the process of dismantling old ideals, as was the case in Germany during the liberal revolutions of 1848 and 1871, those institutions which are seen to champion the old ideals will quickly come under fire. While Nietzsche does indeed advocate the use of antiquity as an ideal of the potential of culture, there is a significant difference between his objective in this regard and that of the idealized 'classical' antiquity of the type of philology towards which the public opinion he describes is directed. In using antiquity as an ideal Nietzsche means to offer an intentionally unattainable goal, a point he makes in his inaugural at *KGW* II: 253. The understood impossibility of its achievement is meant to discourage any attempt to imitate it. In this way antiquity can serve as a model, and as a model it can be used

as a reminder, a lesson, and a driving force behind cultural progress in the modern world. The idealized antiquity that is the product of the other philology was a representation held up for imitation. One could say that Nietzsche's approach encourages the exploration of guided and informed possibilities, whereas the other inadvertently reminds society of what it is not and of what it can never be. And it seems ironic that in condemning contemporary practice as represented by the 'moderns', as Nietzsche appears to be doing here, he is led back to another set of 'moderns' who were marginalized in their own time; for in order to remedy what he saw as the crisis in contemporary education, Nietzsche looked to the Sophists of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, as we shall see over the course of this dissertation.

As we have seen, Nietzsche's starting point for the repair of this situation is the resurrection of an aesthetic approach to education and research and the investment of artistic sensibilities. Towards the end of the lecture he notes that, until now, classicists have always found themselves in the company of artists but that the association between the two has all but disappeared. It is a return to the idea of aesthetic sensibilities as mediator that he again urges his audience. Nietzsche sees artists standing as mediators between the public desire for change and unreflective progress on the one hand, and the crippling fear of change and progress that he considers represented by an idealized conception of an ossified antiquity on the other. Concerning the academic world Nietzsche sees the need for an aesthetic point of view as a check and balance against what he feels is the very limiting tendency of the purely academic approach to antiquity. This is not, however, an appeal for abolition of any sort, rather his argument is that the tools with which scholars are provided by their discipline ought to be regarded only as tools. Nietzsche's point is that although it is necessary to be able to identify the component parts of a given historical period, or a master piece of literature or sculpture, and although the derivation of rules from exemplary aspects of antiquity naturally follows from this process, when such rules are taken to be immutable laws and when their

identification is taken as *the* end of the discipline, the educational value of antiquity, and indeed of history in general, is lost. It is at this point that the real challenge of this lecture and of Nietzsche's objectives as an educator and scholar become clear.

Nietzsche is making an appeal for inclusion rather than exclusion and for individuality as a step in the move towards collectivity, which is to say that he seeks a holistic approach to our interpretation of antiquity and what that has to offer society. In the same way that the academic and intellectual tools of the philologist are a contributing element to the discipline, so too are the individual scholars. His claim is that the development of the discipline has lost sight of its objectives and has become excessively competitive and faction ridden, which stands in the way of coming to both a real and a really beneficial view of antiquity. Once again, we should remind ourselves that for Nietzsche the word 'real' is to be understood as real in the context of a given interpretation. "[What] we maintain and hold high on our banner, is the fact that Classical Philology has nothing to do with the quarrels and unfortunate debates of its individual adherents. The entire academic and artistic cause moves with an enormous force to bridge the gap between the ideal and the real antiquity" (*KGW* III: 253). In so far as this movement is academic it requires the participation of a variety of individuals with particular skills; that it is artistic indicates that these individuals will work together towards a common goal. This goal is the creation of a coherent interpretation of antiquity that is at once true to its sources and honest with itself. Nietzsche wishes to see the *creation* of an image that suits the needs of the present in its desire to develop its culture; looking back only to become aware of possibilities, not templates.

What Nietzsche here calls the 'ideal' antiquity should be understood as that ossified version of what has become known as the classical element in antiquity. This was in his opinion the source of much contemporary debate and degeneration in education. Nietzsche's 'real'

antiquity is that version of the ancient world interpreted holistically. In practical terms, and for the goal that Nietzsche has set of cultural development, this objective becomes defensible. There simply is not enough information to provide a completely accurate reconstruction and knowledge of antiquity, but here lies the virtue of Nietzsche's definition of philology. From the point of view of the modern world, because ancient Greece, like anything else, is a conglomeration of heterogeneous physical and intellectual remnants, be they temple ruins, texts etc., the full richness of the culture that created them is lost. The relationships between such remnants are subject to varying degrees of better and worse interpretation. Nietzsche's point is that the wider an interpretation is, the greater its value with regard to the service of cultural development. Since interpretative sensibilities are in a constant state of change, the value of philology and its contribution to society are unending. The discipline will always be charged with the task of re-interpreting antiquity as a way of guiding and informing cultural progress. But where philology seeks to create a fixed view of antiquity, like an ancient vase catalogued in a museum vault, its usefulness is limited by such things as the requirements for gaining access. Nietzsche's is a description of practical inclusion and holism.

Moreover, it is well that a philologist should state his goal and the way to it in the formula of a short confession of faith, and so let this be done in a phrase of Seneca's which I reverse—

„Philosophia facta est quae philologia fuit.”

With this shall it be stated that all philological work should be enclosed and embraced in a philosophical world view. (*KGW* IIi: 268-9)

It is of course one thing to assert these ideas in an inaugural lecture and quite another to implement them.

In an effort to consider the philosophical underpinnings of the discipline, in order to remedy the problem of the lack of abstract unity, Nietzsche sought to uncover the presuppositions that he felt stood in the way of such coherence. As his thought matured, and after his break with

the discipline of Classics and Classical Philology, Nietzsche began to realize that the concerns he had with his own area were as much of a problem in other disciplines. We can see something of the results of this in our own time in the philosophical division between the Continental and the Anglo-American Analytic tradition which, in spite of repeated calls to dispense with the division and seek common ground, the divide has only widened. These considerations caused Nietzsche to realize that one of the fundamental problems with modern education was the level of specialization that is encouraged in the student before they have the chance to develop the maturity and appreciation to assess these issues independently. And so he took up a traditional practice among philologists, the encyclopedia, in order to draw the attention of the students to this problem. Nietzsche's inaugural lecture at the University of Basle raised some of the key issues which would form the basis of many of his later philosophical investigations. The issue of progress and its meaning emphasizes the gulf that was being created in society with regard to the concerns of culture. The expansion and narrowing of education inaugurated the degeneration of education's scope and influence, not to mention interest. It was also responsible for the over-specialization that had fragmented the discipline to such a degree that the Homeric Question could become a divisive issue more than 2000 years after it had been abandoned. Nietzsche's call for greater integration and holism stood as a warning to his audience because this fragmenting tendency threatened to impose itself not only on academic research and pedagogy, but through these it was a very real threat to the cultural objectives of education and *Bildung*. The development of the individual had come to resemble the factory production of industry and this, in Nietzsche opinion, could only serve to cause society and culture to lose the coherence by which they are defined. Because the nature of this interpretation is difficult to conceive we will now turn to Nietzsche's introduction to philology in order to determine what he considered the basis for



his version of education which was the incorporation of a more coherent method of interpretation and *philosophische Weltanschauung*, in short, hermeneutics.

## 1.2 Nietzsche's Encyclopaedia: Philosophical Foundations

In 1871 Nietzsche gave a series of lectures which were designed to outline the critical foundations and methods of philology. This was in fact a common practice in philology, known as encyclopedia. He begins this course by giving a brief description of the development of the range of significations encompassed by the title encyclopedia from its Greek roots. The most important of these for the present purpose is the idea of thoroughness of cultural education which was the central objective of *Bildung*. The idea behind such a description is to make clear the fact that philology and the study of antiquity has as much, if not more, to do with the approach that one takes to the subject matter as it does with the subject's content. This can be taken as a reference back to the inaugural and the "false-monarchy". If justice is to be done to the study of antiquity, it must comprise breadth rather than narrowness of understanding. "We emphasize that much more lies in the meaning of the word ἐγκύκλιος we do not understand it to mean a general knowledge of philology, but rather the entire sphere of philological scholarship" (*KGW* IIIii: 342). Nietzsche appears to have felt that students had been subject to too much specialization in the Gymnasia and so he wishes to emphasize the notion that the pursuit of knowledge and understanding is an ever expanding endeavour. This is an attempt to address such notions and expectations of specialization that the students may have brought with them from their early education. This echoes the comments that Nietzsche made in his inaugural about the need for abstract unity and his criticisms of the decreasing scope of scholarship. His concern is for what philology meant at that time in the context of its varying historical significations though not under their domination. "In antiquity, philology was in no way a science, but rather only a general interest in divers knowledge. In the Middle Ages it came to mean 'scholasticus' and 'scholastissimus'" (*KGW* IIIii: 343). This again is an invitation to reconsider the tradition that has given rise to the discipline in order to determine what ought to be perpetuated and what

ought to be changed; a practice that Nietzsche advocated as central to the philosophy of education.

To this end Nietzsche identifies the reasons that antiquity has held the attention of scholarship and society for so many centuries with the following simple explanation: "The desire is to grasp the classical being. But to arise from such artistic superiority: how must a people be in order to produce such geniuses?" (*KGW* IIiii: 344). In so far as philology looks to the past in order to understand the complicated circumstances, coincidences and contradictions which created the modern notion of a 'classical' antiquity it is a historical discipline, and in this capacity it has a great deal of influence and responsibility with respect to the understanding of history. One point that runs throughout Nietzsche's hermeneutic considerations of education is that there can be no absolute view of a given subject nor of its influence on the development of culture and society in the West. It is from this perspective that he urges his students to abandon the ideas of recreation and reconstruction except in so far as such productions make their claims to truth only within their own context. "Historical understanding is nothing more than grasping a certain set of facts under a particular philosophical premise. The quality of the premise determines the value of the understanding. For a fact is something infinite, a full reproduction. There is only the historical understanding" (*ibid.*). This is to say that when one looks to the past what tends to arise is a more or less coherent collection of steps towards one's own knowledge and understanding which is in itself impossible to complete. The hope is that the greater the degree of reflection, the greater and more useful the understanding.

This is clearly not a claim to truth in any absolute sense, but to truth in context which is determined to a degree by the preconceptions of the thinker and the tradition in which they are embedded. The point is that one must be critically aware of those presuppositions in order to be able to understand what part of an interpretation of a set of facts reflects their own point of

view, or their blood, and what part inheres in those facts independently of them, or their ghosts. "The philosophical premise of classical philology is the 'classicity' of antiquity" (*KGW* IIiii: 345). By identifying the 'classicity' of antiquity, which is to say that which the modern world chooses to define as 'classical' about it, Nietzsche is pointing out that to a large extent the disciplines are constructs. The context in which it bears truth is the contemporary world. The presupposition of the discipline is a comparison between the remains of antiquity and the highest cultural productions of contemporary society. Following from this is the idea that the service that a discipline provides is the interpretation of evidence, but rather than performing this task for its own sake it does this in order to provide information to the modern world to benefit its development as this relates to those aspects of the object of study, in this case antiquity.

Nietzsche outlines the relationship between the practical endeavour of philology and its practitioners' psychological or intellectual disposition: "To each occupation there must correspond a particular need and to each need, a drive. For philology these are 1. an inclination to teach, 2. a delight in antiquity and 3. a pure desire for knowledge. All of these drives must be fused in the 'higher teacher'" (*KGW* IIiii: 366). The problem that Nietzsche sees here is the fact that these three characteristics rarely come together in any one individual due to the prevailing, that is fragmented, approach to education. Each aspect has been separated from what might otherwise be considered an organic whole. Those with a sense of pedagogical vocation are sent to the schools, but "It is unlikely that many come to philology out of pedagogical vocation. Most have a strong aversion to schoolmaster rule" (*ibid.*). Those with an inclination to the appreciation of antiquity are sent to the Gymnasia "as if one had this or could give [such appreciation]" (*ibid.*). And finally, those with a strong desire for knowledge often seek to carve out an area of learning which they may claim as their own, as if knowledge were an object to be appropriated and commodified. "It is quite by chance that

so many satisfy their need for research with antiquity, for here they do not need to start anew. This indicates a certain sort of slowness and lack of initiative" (*KGW* IIiii: 367). He concludes that the fragmentation he has spoken of within academic research is the result, but he feels that "None of these drives is [thus] entitled to isolation" (*ibid.*).

In spite of this, according to Nietzsche, over the course of the development of the educational system, these drives have become separate and isolated from one another, thus limiting the influence of any one on any other. This categorizing process is in part responsible for the loss of any organic or holistic view of the object, and it is this fragmented view that drives the desire to imitate as opposed to using knowledge and scholarship as tools for modern cultural development. "Our schools tend to educate scholars by way of their *learned teachers*. One likens this to the education of the Greeks: and yet such men as Plato and Aristotle were so made possible.—These scholars are not at all in the same league as to defend classical antiquity from within their [particular] schools [of thought]. They flee behind the formal value of Latin, when mathematics is of much greater value to formal thought" (*KGW* IIiii: 367). This statement describes what Nietzsche felt was the misrepresentation of the value of a knowledge of antiquity. Relating the value of Latin to that of mathematics is meant to demonstrate the purely practical function to which Latin had been relegated as opposed to what he considered the more valuable use of the study of language for the purpose of developing an appreciation of the aesthetic possibilities of style and speech. Nietzsche took a very dim view of the language instruction of the time with regard to Latin and Greek, but also to German, and the importance of this point will be discussed in greater detail when his lectures on education are considered below in chapter 1, sections 5-9.

Nietzsche recognizes the kind of idealism that he is advocating, but contends that for the expressed purpose of achieving *Bildung* in its widest sense, such idealism is required: "He must be the ideal teacher for the most capable age: both teacher and bearer of learning,

between the great geniuses [of the past] and the new, developing geniuses [of the present], between the great past and the future" (*KGW* IIiii: 368). The importance that Nietzsche places on the teaching profession, while perhaps extreme, is meant to emphasize the importance of the holism that he uses to define education and culture. In other words, it is not only professional scholars who need to eliminate the tendency towards self-aggrandizement and the building of professional reputations, but all teachers, for according to Nietzsche, insofar as the object of their effort is the next generation of teachers, scholars and cultural leaders, they serve the future and so must make a great effort to reach what he called the reality of their subject understood in the context of contemporary understanding. "As a person, as a teacher and as a scholar must he approach antiquity" (*ibid.*). The teacher must not only know the facts of the object of study, but also have a real feeling for the beauty and value of it and for the distance or difference between it and the modern. Upon this foundation the benefit and pedagogical value of the object can be more readily accessed. "Particularly important is the intimate closeness with Winckelmann, Lessing, Schiller and Goethe, that we simultaneously feel with them and from them what the ancient means for modern man" (*ibid.*). What antiquity may mean in these terms is the most important aspect of this statement. As we shall see in the discussion of the place of sophistic thought in Nietzsche's larger philosophical project, this is the key to his epistemology and philosophy of education.

These definitions and opinions cannot be said to be held by everyone. The necessary universality of opinion that is required by Nietzsche's programme must be based upon a more coherent definition of the methods and goals than have hitherto been provided, or in other words it must have a more transparent hermeneutic. Nietzsche himself made the claim, at the beginning of his inaugural, that there is a lack of any abstract unity within classical philology. The question that must now be answered is how does one form the unity of vision and approach that Nietzsche sees as facilitating his holistic vision of education.

### 1.3 Philosophical Preparation: Hermeneutics

Nietzsche proceeds to explain what he considers the necessary philosophical foundation of scholarship; that at least one year of philosophical studies be undertaken in order to broaden the scope of interest and emphasize the importance of careful philosophical development to the student. The function of this is to ensure that "...he in no way resembles the factory worker who produces his screw year in and year out. However, the Classical Philologist must always hold on to that philosophy, so that his claim to the classicity of antiquity does not sound like a ridiculous pretension to the modern world" (*KGW* IIiii: 370). Here Nietzsche is trying to emphasize the idea that our understanding of antiquity, what we call the classical, is seen to be interpretation rather than absolute truth. This statement can be seen as a defence against the public's negative opinion of Classical Philology which was described in the inaugural. The reason for this is clear enough. If the body of knowledge that a given discipline presents is to be seen as relevant outside the confines of the discipline, in both the wider university community and the society at large, then it must be approached with an eye towards some coherent characteristic or principle. The lack of a clearly identifiable philosophical framework, or losing sight of one that already exists, can be the cause of self-defeating practices and isolation. This results in what Nietzsche calls the reversal of philosophical underpinnings. For example, in the case of philology, the desire to understand antiquity leads to the dissection of its component parts. These parts give rise to specialized studies which in turn become the substance of education. Finally, instead of gaining a knowledge, understanding and appreciation of classical antiquity, the student becomes expert in one area of the study of antiquity, which is to say that what once was a tool has become the goal. The principle that Nietzsche is defining here is the claim that this process of reversal is to some degree a historical constant, although it is a result not of the nature of the academic endeavour, but is due to a lack of attention to, or critical awareness of, received tradition. And

so an important part of education's philosophical premise is the idea of receiving tradition with diligent attention paid to what applies to contemporary circumstances and concerns and what does not. In spite of the description that Nietzsche has offered concerning scholars and teachers, with its emphasis on ideal characteristics, he is aware of the difficulty of achieving this goal: "We must always maintain that the ideal person is something very rare: namely, someone with exceptional talent and a balance of the instincts: profound, mild, artistic, political, beautiful..." (*KGW* IIiii: 371). The importance of ideals in the definition of 'teacher' or 'scholar' is reflected by the need for ideals in the academic and scholarly approach to antiquity that Nietzsche advocates. The logic of his position is that in recognizing and accepting ideals as ultimately out of reach, Nietzsche can promote concentration on the method and process in an effort to maintain the drive for progress. In this way ideals cease to have the negative effect of creating further fragmentation. "If one can speak of the unattainability of this goal, even call it an illogical demand—the striving, the movement along this line exists there" (*KGW* IIi: 253). This point underlines the relationship between an ideal and the reality of its purpose or function. One must strive in order to progress in teaching, in research or in any endeavour where there is a desire to improve upon the present, since in simply accepting what has gone before, the present restricts its ability to progress. The significance of this point can be seen in the philological tradition when one considers the progress that had been made by Nietzsche's time in the area of textual criticism and linguistic analysis. He uses this progress as an example in order to illustrate the function of the combination of skills involved in philology as opposed to the view that these skills are ends in themselves. Progress occurs only when one becomes willing to see things in a different light. It begins with comparison, reconsideration and the suspension of the authority of received tradition. "All that we see and all that we are challenges the comparison. This is why the philologist must have a contemplative spirit. [This spirit] should educate itself in this



comparison. Though he still does not become Greek, he practices among the most educational of materials. In this way is it no longer swept away so stormily by the present" (*KGW* III: 372). The objective is to keep scholars aware of their responsibility to the context in which they exist, the future they inevitably influence and the past they interpret. Coming to understand the philosophical foundations of education in conjunction with a central or unifying, albeit arbitrary goal, what Nietzsche identified as the missing abstract unity, is key to the success, relevance and continued value of scholarly education: "to recognize the nearest and most universally known facts as worthy of further explanation: this is the true characteristic of the philosopher" (*ibid.*). Nietzsche goes on to say that the responsibility an educator feels to the past is thus made possible on the grounds that they will always strive towards that abstract unity for the benefit of contemporary society, which is the gauge and model for progress mentioned above. It is this that Nietzsche considers the highest possible service that can be rendered by the academic disciplines. Nietzsche's imposition of this constant reminder comes from a fear of what he considers the great danger of the disciplinary approach, indeed of any *Wissenschaft*: "One can easily get caught on particulars: whereas for the comprehensive philosophical spirit, afterwards, to him there is light in all directions" (*ibid.*). When due attention is paid to the relationships and connections that are involved in an area of study there is less chance of any individual isolating his research from the larger body of concern. Once again it is the value of ideals that facilitates the safeguard. "He must be convinced of this idealism and correct its naïve [and artless] observations of reality. If he has gained this fundamental realization he will have gained the courage for great considerations and will not be frightened before apparent contradictions" (*ibid.*). The idealism of which he speaks is based upon a firm grounding in a particular philosophical framework on the basis of which scholars are guided and reminded of the larger perspective of the discipline. This point

makes it important to understand the relationship between that framework and the practices that are carried out within its boundaries.

## 1.4 The Approach: Hermeneutics and Criticism

Nietzsche says that, at bottom, method is something both traditional and necessary to understanding and judgement because method is the basis upon which both of these activities are carried out. It follows that the careful adherence to method is what qualifies any claim to 'truth' in interpretation. While this may not be a particularly controversial statement in itself, it forms the starting point from which Nietzsche begins a critical analysis of contemporary philology and from which he developed his philosophy of education. For Nietzsche, what this statement lacks is any inclusion of self-criticism and it is that lack which he most strongly opposed. The term 'truth' is to be understood in the context of Nietzsche's definition of education as both a collective and an unending endeavour. The process by which he sees truth created is, at this early stage in his thought: 1. establishing the facts of a given tradition, and 2. the correspondence between understanding and estimation. In this way a phenomenon is provisionally fixed for the purposes of explanation (*KGW* IIiii: 373). This is the point to which Nietzsche has been leading with his hermeneutic considerations. In this introduction to the discipline he is attempting to stress and thereby instigate good and, in his opinion, more coherent scholarly habits. The key to this is the ability to comprehend what one reads, which may sound very facetious, but when it is considered within the larger context of received tradition it becomes an exhortation to become more actively aware of the effect that the tradition within which one has been taught to read has on one's comprehension. This point becomes exceedingly important in the second of Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations*, "Schopenhauer as Educator", where he considers the importance of one's true educators. Just as he considers Schopenhauer among his true educators, so too are the methods and tradition of the discipline in which he was educated because of their formative power. There can be no denying that critical reflection is a fundamental part of the tradition of classical philology, but it normally applies only to subject matter. Nietzsche is expressing the need that he sees to

apply that same critical reflection to the tradition itself. "We must learn to read again: something we, with (under) the superior strength of print (journalism), have forgotten" (ibid.). This statement can sound like a negation of tradition, even as defining interpretation as radical subjectivity which would seem to eliminate the possibility of Nietzsche's holistic view of education, but taking into consideration the fact that the context in which any interpretation takes place is necessarily informed by the precedent of its tradition, it becomes clear that the context is by definition different from all previous contexts. According to Nietzsche tradition should not be seen as developing a fixed set of laws for interpretation, but simply as forming a record of the way things have been interpreted. Tradition therefore represents a corpus of interpretation that can serve as a standard by which distances and differences in knowledge and thought, for example between Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics and scholiasts, or Socrates and Nietzsche, can be gauged. This ever increasing body of information, within a critically self-aware tradition, should then serve not only to maintain the relevance of the object of study, and serve to resist the tendency towards fragmentary practices, but also to avoid the regressive reversals of opinion which Nietzsche felt were characteristic of contemporary scholarship's divisive character. According to Nietzsche it is unlikely that much understanding can arise out of an initial or superficial reading of a text. At the point of initial contact there is an enormous amount of information that affects the reading of every text, whether it is consciously perceived or not, which has been added by tradition. The question then becomes what part is the text and what part the tradition. For example, one could say that Sophocles' Theban plays are about dynastic competition for the throne of Thebes, but equally one can say that they are about "...all the principal constants of conflict in the condition of man...: of men and women; of age and youth; of society and the individual; of the living and the dead; of men and of god(s)" (Steiner in Knox 1993: 360). Both of these interpretations are valid, but each in its own context. With a clear understanding of method and a critical

awareness of tradition, one is better equipped to recognize the various layers of compounded interpretation. "Lastly [comes] the task of close criticism. Everything else falls under the notion of hermeneutics" (ibid.). Philology, in the narrow sense, is a set of intellectual and technical tools used for the identification and explication of the remnants of 'classical' antiquity, but this set of tools can only be useful, according to Nietzsche, in the broader context of philology which is understood as the interpretation of antiquity as a model for the social and cultural development of contemporary society and "So criticism concerns the hermeneutic tradition of tradition" (KGW IIIii: 374). The importance of a foundation of *strenge Methode* can scarcely be overestimated since this is the foundation with which all future scholarship will start. A lack of attention to method at the early stages in the development of scholarly practices is an extremely difficult flaw to correct. "The most learned books are now and again no more than confusing and useless because they lack this sure basis" (ibid.). This point forms the basis of much of Nietzsche's educational and hermeneutic thought. He sees the production of imitators as inherent in the nature of contemporary educational methods and practices. If at any given point the importance of the method and approach is overlooked and the task of identifying fact and truth is placed solely with the student, then they will pass on their imperfectly informed practices to succeeding generations. This is what Nietzsche feels has happened as a result of the rapid development of philological methods and the expansion and restructuring of education in Germany during the first seventy years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The hermeneutic that Nietzsche describes is made up of the principles of building sound foundations and abstractly unified disciplines. Together these define the environment in which the critical tools of the philologist are applied. All criticism for Nietzsche is based on: "1. severe logic 2. individual knowledge of the language 3. a fine sense for the possibilities of the remnants and 4. sufficiently real (i.e. well founded) understanding, in short, hermeneutics" (KGW IIIii: 375). Nietzsche says that criticism alone is

of limited value and must be understood as a tool or set of tools in the service of *Volles Verstandniß* which should be taken as describing full understanding within a specific context. The very beginning of these philosophical and methodological sensibilities is seen by Nietzsche as stemming from one's grasp and understanding of language. As the medium for all thought and scholarship, Nietzsche places the utmost importance on language education, as we shall see in the following section. Let us now turn to the set of public lectures on education that he gave in 1872. In this series Nietzsche concentrated on the role of education in cultural development and the role of language in education. It will be valuable then to consider these lectures with a view to Nietzsche's consideration of these topics as they have informed his overall hermeneutics of education before we set about identifying the ancient precedents and influences on his philosophy of education through their influence on his larger philosophical project.

## 1.5 The Future of Education: Present

*On the Future of our Educational Institutions* was first delivered as a set of public lectures by Nietzsche in 1872, when he was near the end of his active service as a university professor. By this time it is clear that he had become increasingly disillusioned with the state of contemporary education. These lectures were intended to publicly criticize the educational system by analyzing its methods, goals and results. One of the first distinctions that he makes is between the secondary and public schools. It is well to keep in mind that Nietzsche's distinction between the public and secondary schools corresponds to those schools oriented towards the pursuit of university education and those oriented towards technical and practical training. We will later learn that in this distinction Nietzsche is not painting a negative portrait of the secondary school, but rather he criticizes the public schools for adopting the mandate of the secondary school, an issue with particular relevance in our time with the elevation of technical education to that of degree courses and the reduction of the requirements for the traditional Bachelor's degree in universities. This is, however, not his most important distinction. In the introduction the key distinction that Nietzsche makes, and the underlying theme, is between *thinking* and *doing*. This distinction offers him two valuable opportunities. In the first place it allows him to distance the audience from his criticisms since he explains that the Basle community has demonstrated greater thought in this area, and has been more successful in action, concerning their educational institutions and secondly, since he identifies the institutions of the title as the German educational institutions, it provides him with a standard against which he may measure all that he brings to light in the course of his talks. "I presume that I am not mistaken when I assume that where so much is done for these things, people must also think a lot about them" (*KGW* IIIii: 136). This praise comes with a certain responsibility, because in order to be able to claim an understanding of what he says it is necessary that a certain commitment be made to the required action.

In conjunction with this, Nietzsche explains that there is a certain type of audience member/reader who will both listen and understand what is being described. It is to this type of person that his appeal is made. Nietzsche wishes to be heard, and indeed claims that he can only be understood "[by] listeners of one mind, who have thought a great deal about educational questions and who, if they are willing, promote what they believe to be right" (ibid.). In requiring this of his audience he allows himself some intellectual space. He will make the claim that what is wrong with contemporary education may be remedied provided that those who know are willing to come out of the shadows and take the lead.

In so doing Nietzsche does not attempt to encourage the creation of a cult of initiates or cognoscenti since he is well aware of the danger that comes from such a desire. Yet, at the same time, he wants to be clear that he is not talking about reform based on popular demand, in fact he anticipates that what he will explain will be most unpopular, but contends that popularity is not the authority to which he appeals; but culture is. There is a reciprocal relationship between education and culture which runs throughout Nietzsche's philosophy, based on the idea that cultural leaders, his higher type, stand as an example of what society is capable of achieving through the agency of individuals. These leaders serve as archetypes to future generations as a way of ensuring their continued value. Nietzsche warns against the contemporary tendency to consider that "our conditions, in regard to other civilized people, should be seen as the standard and even surpass them" (ibid.), because doing so leads to the arrogance and cynicism he later describes in *The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* at section 3. But of greater danger to the development of the culture of a people than simple arrogance is that such arrogance can create glass ceilings for culture. What Nietzsche warns against is the creation of a belief in so-called golden ages. The danger in this belief is that a society comes to regard some predecessor as a kind of cultural perfection which leads to the desire to imitate. This stifles the creative instinct and facilitates the debasement of culture



since, if a society's cultural objective is to simply imitate that forerunner, it will always fall short of the mark. This process sets each previous imitation as the glass ceiling as the mists of time grow thicker, resulting in the opposite of Nietzsche's true culture. If this is to be avoided it is above all necessary to avoid the attraction of lazy imitation and the blind reception of tradition. The alternative attitude, seeing tradition as a record, shows a people what has been possible through creative struggle and spurs contemporary society on to its own achievements rather than accepting itself as an 'epigone and late-comer.'

The sentiment expressed in the above quotation is also added as a kind of protection against the misuse of his ideas. Anyone who pursues educational reform, if they wish to count themselves as following this programme, must accept the idea that progress is to be seen as an unending process rather than something directed towards some ultimate goal. Nietzsche is adamant that he is not presenting a blueprint for schools of the future and that "the numerous alterations which have recently been introduced into these educational institutions, to make them 'modern', are for the most part only distortions and aberrations of the original sublime tendency in their foundation" (*KGW* IIIii: 137). Put another way, he sees them as poor imitations of another time's educational goals which can never serve to improve contemporary society because of the dissociation of the original impetus for that system from the present. What he hopes to do with these lectures is to indicate to those who may have been ignored or marginalized by contemporary educational reform, but who share in the spirit of his definition of progress, that the time has come to disregard all manner of marginalization. He hopes to replace popularity, or what he calls the democratization of educational policy, with the notion that the goal of education is ultimately to promote cultural development.

The subordination of education to materialist concerns creates, in his opinion, the false belief that what is practical has intrinsic value, which in turn creates the false logic that since culture

is seen as being in some sense less useful, or perhaps even frivolous, it has been abandoned as an educational objective. Yet another of the hopes that Nietzsche has for these lectures is that his audience will come to terms with what he considers the fact of culture's value because of the positive effect that it can have on society.

Having outlined what he desires in an audience, and in an audience's understanding of his title, Nietzsche lays out the purport of what he will say. "Two apparently opposed forces...control our educational institutions...first the desire for the greatest possible *extension of education*, on the other hand a tendency to *decrease and weaken* the same" (KGW IIIii: 139). These forces can be understood as an example of the drive towards efficiency that was growing in Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and which continues today. Against these, Nietzsche will, of necessity, propose their opposites, namely "*limiting* and *concentrating* education...and the *strengthening* and *self-restraint* of education" (ibid.).

The introduction to this set of lectures is used to include a very carefully devised set of instructions, definitions and requirements. One has the impression that Nietzsche has been greatly frustrated in his attempts to come to grips with the educational system that produced him and his contemporaries. In the third lecture of this series, while discussing the state of Greek and Latin education, Nietzsche has his foil, an elderly philosopher, mention that he suspects that "on account of the way in which Latin and Greek are now taught in the schools, the accurate ability to grasp the languages in speech and writing with ease is lost" (KGW IIIii: 197), which is something that he claims was in quite a different state just one generation ago. It is important to take note of this passage now, before the closer analysis begins, because it ought to be remembered that Nietzsche is talking about recent changes in the educational system. By having his foil express the difference between the way he was taught and his abilities concerning the ancient languages and the educational practices of the day, Nietzsche

implies that swift action may still supplant the current reforms before they have done any more serious damage.

## 1.6 The Levelling of Education

For Nietzsche, as these lectures will demonstrate, education is seen in a sense as synonymous with culture. The problem as he sees it, is that there is far too little thinking done in comparison with the amount of activity; what he calls the modern person's desire to throw themselves under the wheels of progress: "One must not only have points of view, but also thoughts!" (*KGW* IIIii: 150). This point foreshadows the lesson that Nietzsche, and so too his audience, are to learn from the ideas he describes in these lectures, and it highlights the underlying message of this series. By the end of this lecture Nietzsche will have introduced the danger of diluting education and culture with the mistaken belief that everyone is fit for it. One of the functions of this lecture, indeed of the whole series, is to point out that popular opinion is a poor guide for educational policy, especially when that sentiment has been instilled in a people by the State.

The main idea of these lectures is that the end of education is culture, and that true culture, while a rare thing at the best of times, is in danger of disappearing altogether because of the lack of educational attitudes and techniques which can promote it. He further equates philosophy with culture and accepts the principle that "no one would strive for culture, if he knew how incredibly small the number of truly cultured people is, and can ever be. And yet even this small number is not even possible unless a great mass of people for reasons that run contrary to their nature and led only by an attractive delusion, did not devote themselves to culture" (*KGW* IIIii: 157). Moreover, he explains that this fact is to be kept from the masses because the pursuit of this relatively unattainable standard justifies the existence of the apparatus which is primarily there for the benefit of the very few whose existence justifies that of the mass of people.

Nietzsche points out that at present there are two contradictory forces in need of recognition and elimination, namely the drive towards the greatest possible expansion of education and a movement towards minimizing the scope of education. These are the result of the fact that "People democratize the rights of genius in order to alleviate the work of acquiring culture and their need of it" (*KGW* IIIii: 158). The formula is fairly simple: genius is highly esteemed, geniuses tend to be educated, people wish to be highly esteemed, and therefore people wish to be educated. Unfortunately not everyone understands the relationship between the effort involved, the capacity required and the goal, nor even the gulf between education and genius. Genius is valued because of its rarity. When the cost is reckoned the majority are unwilling to pay, but because the desire to be esteemed on this level is not reduced, the apparent qualification for genius, namely education, is simplified. The democratization of education has rendered it less useful to everyone. The desire itself is not being counted as irrational, "As much knowledge and culture as possible, therefore as much culture industry—, hence as much happiness as possible—that is the formula" (*KGW* IIIii: 159), but the methods adopted to achieve it are the opposite of how true culture actually comes into being. This model places utility above knowledge as the goal of education, and it does this by presenting itself as democratically authoritative. "The 'union of intelligence and possession' which this view maintains, almost has the force of an ethical principle" (*KGW* IIIii: 160). While Nietzsche is repulsed by contemporary culture, which he says is opposed to anything that sets its sight above *Geld und Erwerb*, what seems abhorrent to the modern man in this context is the time that the pursuit of true culture would demand. He then makes the essential point that just as the concept of genius loses its force when it is conferred on all and sundry, "the most universal culture is just barbarism" (*ibid.*). The desire for material comfort above all else rather than the development of culture is the chief driving force behind the expansion of education.

With the minimizing of education's scope comes the threat of over-specialization. Nietzsche attaches to this idea the notion that success in education is determined by its ability to gain for its adherents material wealth or rather the acquisition of knowledge but only insofar as that knowledge serves material ends. This attitude necessarily places success in education, in the sense of knowledge for its own sake, in the second rank, which is to say that education is seen as conferring access to wealth. But in pursuit of that success a peculiar thing happens. "Now the breadth of the study of academics has been so extended that he who is not extremely talented, though to a degree, will have to pursue a whole special field and will have to ignore all others to succeed" (*KGW* IIIii: 161). This is in part what he later identifies as the will to ignorance. This shift redefines education as the ability to comprehend one particular thing better than anyone else, not only to the exclusion of the rest of one's own discipline, but also to what is described as the best things in life. Until the present epoch, he explains, the adjectives 'educated' and 'cultured' were virtually synonymous, but now they have become antonyms, and where once mentioning a scholar indicated 'a person of culture' it now implies a kind of servitude. This leads Nietzsche to wonder "who still asks what the value of a science is which consumes its servants in this vampire fashion?" (*KGW* IIIii: 162)

The degeneration of education and culture is also accomplished through the rise of the role of journalism in the modern world. The service that this profession, in both senses of the word, claims to provide is a bridging of the gap left by the banishment of culture: "this sticky bridge which has applied itself between the sciences—journalism—believes it has a function to serve here, and does so in accord with its peculiar manner, i.e. as the name says, as a day trader" (*KGW* IIIii: 162-3). The replacement of culture with journalism is imperfect though, because of the fact that journalism promises to deliver that which it does not and cannot possess: knowledge. "In the newspaper the peculiar educational goals of the present are achieved, just

as the journalist, the servant of the moment, has taken the place of the genius, of the leader for all time, of the liberator from the moment" (*KGW* IIIii: 163).

The goal in education is to provide students with the ability to discriminate between true culture and popular culture, not to provide them with a store of knowledge concerning current affairs. Unfortunately the democratization of education has forced the programme to be adjusted so as to accommodate the greatest number of recipients. This has affected the quality of education on two counts. The first is that the assumption that everyone is capable of great learning requires education to reduce its standard to the lowest common denominator. And the second is that it also introduces the tactics of capital market competition into education as a means of valuing individual achievement. This in turn equates material success with the sort of intelligence formerly reserved for those described as cultured. By reducing the scope of education the current system has destroyed what was most noble in education, namely that breadth of learning which fuels a vibrant culture. Over the course of this series of lectures Nietzsche will provide analyses of the origin of the current crisis in education as he sees it, he will seek to place blame and he will suggest ways of repairing the damage done.

## 1.7 Language as Educator

“How long do you believe that the present state of education...will last? I do not want to keep my belief on this point from you: its time is past....The first who will dare to be quite honest in this will hear the response to his honesty from a thousand courageous souls” (*KGW* IIIii: 165). This idea is an attempt to invoke a kind of solidarity among the truly concerned. Here Nietzsche describes the difference between a philosopher’s own noble isolation, and here he is thinking of Schopenhauer, and the isolation which is a refuge for the disheartened. He wishes to stir the spirit of battle rather than pessimistic self-righteousness and dilettantism because at this point he still feels that it is difficult to effect change from without. If there is to be any hope for the future it must come from within the rubble of that which he feels now lays in ruin.

“Let anyone familiarize himself with the pedagogical literature of today; he who is not shocked by its total poverty of spirit and by its clumsy tumbling routine is beyond being helped” (*KGW* IIIii: 166). Pessimism is a prerequisite for action. Implicit in this statement is a rejection of the view championed by some 19<sup>th</sup> century German educational theorists who sought to prescribe what is best without the necessary trial and error of natural development. “Here our philosophy must not begin with wonder but with fright; he who is not at this stage must be asked to keep his hands away from educational matters” (*ibid.*). The reaction of those who actually take the time and effort necessary to see clearly what comprises education would be horror, disgust and retreat. The problem is made worse if those who possess the wherewithal to understand stay away, for in their absence the heavy handed and clumsy teachers will fill the void. These teachers then become the policy makers and designers of education, and this initiates a downward spiral. Their pupils, skilled in the art of mediocre and unoriginal performance, become the teachers and policy makers of the future. The hope is that



eventually there will come a leader of honest character and great skill who will perhaps not succeed in resurrecting the ideals that once existed, but who will at the very least provide something against which the current system may be measured, “then people everywhere will start again to distinguish; then they will see the contrast and think about its causes, whereas now, so many still believe in good faith, that heavy hands are required in pedagogical work” (ibid.).

Nietzsche’s main purpose in this second lecture is an analysis of language education. The objective is to find the root of the problem which he feels lies with the public schools. While the universities are the houses of higher learning, they can do little more than build upon the intellectual and moral foundations laid by the public school system; therefore any change must take place in the latter. But because he considers the entire system of public education flawed, Nietzsche focuses on the one area of teaching that stands as an example of what is wrong with them all. Because language lies at the base of all human cultural interests, Nietzsche chooses to focus on the teaching of the German language. “[Let] us think of one of those school experiences, one that we all had and suffered. Considered with a severe eye, let us ask what the current *tuition of German* in the schools is?” (KGW IIIii: 167) The problem is easily identified: “Today people speak and write the German language so poorly and commonly as possible, as is only natural in an age of newspaper-German” (ibid.). This statement recalls the influence of journalism and the impoverished standard of language that it creates. He says that the youth of the day is in need of strict linguistic training as the foundation for cultural guidance. One may be inclined to think that one’s mother tongue is not really something actively taught, but here the case is being made that the journalistic culture is so all-pervasive that it interferes with the normal, natural process of learning. Before one has had enough experience in one’s mother-tongue to be in a position to think about how it is used, journalistic language percolates down from every quarter and disrupts those self-

reflective considerations which produce careful, thoughtful use and good style. Because journalism can be characterized by its lack of expertise in the areas that it covers, the writers of the articles themselves begin with an insufficient understanding at their disposal. This in turn leads to the coining of new words and phrases which fulfill the fast-paced need for expressing ideas which are foreign to the writer. Although the coining of new terms is not inherently detrimental, when it happens at the pace of modern daily reporting, in a sense each new term dilutes the other words which inhabit the same conceptual space. The task of sorting through the complex of overlapped and leveled meanings is, needless to say, a daunting one. “[The] teacher in a German school would need to point out to his pupils thousands of details and forbid the use of such words with the certainty of good taste, as for example: „beanspruchen“, „verein-nahmen“, „einer Sache Rechnung tragen“, „die Initiative ergreifen“, „selbstverständlich“ — and so on *cum taedio in infinitum*” (KGW IIIii: 168). It is not enough simply to prohibit a pupil’s undisciplined tongue; it is necessary to show students what kind of care and effort the greatest authors of literature use to construct the sentences and ideas they employ. “The same teacher would have to show moreover, in our classic authors, line by line, how carefully and severely every idiom is to be taken if one has the correct artistic sensibility in the heart and the full understanding of everything one writes before their eyes” (ibid.). The contrast is quite clear. If one wishes to write quickly the quality will be poor, as in journalism, but if one takes the time to reflect and consider what one is doing, errors and sloppy usage can be more readily caught and corrected. This point is nowhere made clearer than in Nietzsche’s meditation on David Strauss where, after analyzing the ‘culture’ of Strauss and his followers, he lists dozens of examples of poor grammar and lazy construction in Strauss’ book *The Old Faith and the New*.

The impoverished state of the language will lead to other problems as it becomes accepted. Chief among these is that the purpose of public school education, as Nietzsche sees it, has

been lost. It was pointed out that in these lectures Nietzsche is equating education with high culture and one can see how the careful teaching of language through concerted attention to great literature will nurture the tendency towards what is here being called true culture in the student. Nietzsche points out that the present system of education does not teach for this purpose, "but for the purpose of scholarship and what is more, that of late it is taking the direction as if it no longer teaches for scholarship, but for journalistic purposes" (*KGW* IIIii: 169). He complains that this has come about because the language is being taught in a *gelehrt-historischen* manner, which is to say in the manner in which the ancient or dead languages have traditionally been taught. This makes a sort of museum piece of the language. Nietzsche's distinction between doing and thinking is now brought into the discussion. To simply know the components of a language, vocabulary, grammatical paradigms and so on, does not teach one how to use or appreciate that language. The cultured teacher will draw the pupil's attention to the situation in which "it is above all else important to *do* things properly and not just to *know*" (*ibid.*) Nietzsche makes it clear that thought without some corresponding action is useless where education is concerned. The historico-academic method that he describes has become the norm. "Of course, the historical method seems easier and more comfortable for the teacher, and also suited to a much lower aptitude, or at any rate to an overall lower level of will and ambition" (*ibid.*). This distinction draws upon the opposition between content and method that is of central importance to Nietzsche's philosophy of education. To teach grammar and vocabulary is to ask the student to memorize rather than understand a language. While a great deal easier for the teacher and student alike, the consequences of ignoring style and intention serve only to guarantee much lower abilities and appreciation. This in turn creates a dislocation from the tradition which allows it to gain its 'golden' status and dogmatic authority. As a result, rather than successive generations of study creating deeper appreciation, that which is studied becomes more and more foreign to

the students. One only need consider the difference between Nietzsche's having written his dissertation on the sources of Diogenes Laertius in Latin and the very possibility of such a work being produced in the same way today.

One of the fundamental qualities that characterize Nietzsche's true or higher culture is its rarity. It is only a very few in history that Nietzsche considers truly cultured because, as he sees it, the individuality required is itself exceedingly rare. The type of selfless individuality that he means, and which fuels the type of culture of which he speaks, is rejected by the system that he has been describing. "The last area in which the German teacher in public school is still active and which is often considered the peak of his activity...is the so-called *German composition*" (KGW IIIii: 170). Composition class ought to be a very active vehicle for learning because it asks the individual to confess himself openly, which provides the student with the kind of self-awareness that Nietzsche feels facilitates development. Like the contrast that the presence of the type of honest teacher mentioned earlier reveals to the public concerning the state of education, so too presenting the quality of language of great works will bring to the mind of the student the difference between youthful exuberance and art. The confessions that unhindered composition can bring out accommodate the contrast and comparison of the many facets that make up an individual and the more recognizable those facets become to their owner, the more readily is that owner developed. "Composition is an appeal to the individual: and the more conscious a student is of his particular qualities, the more personally he will produce his composition" (ibid.). But, he goes on, the characteristic of individuality is precisely what the pupil's attention is drawn to as the epitome of flaw.

To what does [the teacher] draw the pupil's attention? To all excess of form and thought, that is, to everything that at his age is characteristic and individual. His actually independent traits which, in response to this premature excitement, can only express themselves in clumsiness, harshness and grotesqueries, and so individuality is reprimanded and rejected by the teacher in favour of an unoriginal mean. Against this,

uniform mediocrity receives his sullen praise: since, indeed, it is just the type of thing to bore the teacher thoroughly. (*KGW* IIIii: 171-2)

There is a reason for this rejection, Nietzsche claims, which is due to a curious alteration of meaning. Towards the beginning of his analysis he sketched two different types of education, one formal and the other material. *Formelle Bildung* is the type of education which serves to develop the mental faculties, or rather teaches the student the art of applying the information that has been observed. *Materielle Bildung* on the other hand is the collection of data which results from the *gelehrt-historischen* method of instruction. It should be noted once again that this method is how one is taught a dead language, but that appreciation of those languages comes about only through application. Applying this method to modern languages has come about not because it is a better method, but because it is the easier method. In the context of the composition class the rejection of the zealous individuality that he describes as characteristic of the young pupil is due to the replacement of the meaning of formal education by that of material education, which effectively denies the development of that type of individuality that he counts as necessary for cultural development.

Who, having seen all these effects at *one* glance, could doubt that all of the flaws of our literary-artistic public were stamped anew on every growing generation, hasty and pretentious production, the disgraceful publishing, lack of style, the crude, characterless or sadly affected expression, the loss of every aesthetic canon, the lust of anarchy and chaos, in short, the literary grotesqueries of both our journalism and our scholarship. (*KGW* IIIii: 173)

Nietzsche then connects this educational oversight to the names that are used to describe it. He says that there are three names that are tossed out whenever the system is questioned. The first of these is classical education, a title which "seems to be an embarrassed excuse, which is applied whenever any question is raised about the ability of the public schools to teach culture or learning. Classical education! It sounds so dignified!" (*KGW* IIIii: 174) This valuation also holds for the other types, the formal and the scientific education. In each case the name has been robbed of meaning because of the lack of attention that has been paid to the foundations

of the educational requirements of each. Even having the three types in the same system demonstrates the lack of thought behind them for, according to Nietzsche, the formal type of education is designed to keep the student from thinking too independently, the classical is for the development of the cultured individual, and the scientific type denies the validity of the other two by its intolerance for that which is not concrete. The whole of this paradoxical situation stems from those lapses in quality that were characteristic of the composition course. "In Summa: the public school up to now has missed the very first and nearest object in which true culture begins: the mother tongue. And in so doing it lacks the natural, fertile ground for all other educational efforts" (*KGW* IIIii: 175).

This second lecture begins to describe the paralysis that Nietzsche feels as a result of this system of education. His objective is to discover the answers he seeks by close analysis of the problems in the hope that this will inspire a feeling of vigor. Central to the problem is the degenerate form of language instruction in the schools. Nietzsche's objective, which seems simple, is to demonstrate that the tools that a student requires are not being provided. How can a culture be asked to develop when the agents of that development can neither distinguish between literature and writing nor appreciate the cultural heritage which has been passed on to them? Pedagogical techniques have been adopted from inappropriate sources. In the instruction of Latin and Greek there is a necessity to use a historico-academic method because these are no longer active languages. Such languages must be built up from the most basic of examples because there is no longer a living culture to draw from. But the application of this method to the mother tongue is detrimental to teaching precisely because it treats the language as dead, as a museum curiosity of sorts. The student, taught by this method, acquires the material but lacks the tools for the development of the material. As a result the standard is lowered. The domino effect of this is easy to see. When the students who were taught in this method come to be teachers, they will pass on the same laziness and lack of appreciation that

they were taught. The result, according to Nietzsche, is the death of culture. From here Nietzsche will investigate some of the causes for the breakdown, namely the State-driven expansion and the loss of a model for education.

## 1.8 The State, Education and Culture

Nietzsche now turns his attention to the influence of the State on the development of education and its relation to culture. His concern here was particularly timely. The reforms in education that had been implemented in the previous 50+ years in Germany were inextricably linked to the State objectives of building a German *Reich*. The drive to create Germany out of the mediaeval duchies and principalities had recently been realized and part of the unification process had been the imposition of the Prussian educational system throughout Germany through the agency of Wilhelm von Humboldt and his reforms, which had been commissioned by the State. These events form the background for Nietzsche's considerations in this lecture. They run parallel to his analysis of the uncritical drive towards modernization which he saw as so detrimental to the type of culture he advocates throughout these lectures. His point now is that, put simply, State driven education is, quite clearly, education not for the sake of culture, but for the sake of the State. Having considered this point, Nietzsche explains that there is yet some clarity of vision that is required. He explains that to take flight is the result of a weakness of resolve, but even once invigorated, great care and attention need to be paid. The motivation behind the reaction to this state of affairs is crucial:

You speak as one who wishes to jump into the water without knowing how to swim and what is more, as one who fears *not* drowning and being laughed at even more than drowning. But being laughed at should be the very last thing for us to fear; for we are in an environment where there are so many truths to be told, so many frightful, painful and unforgivable truths, that in order to avoid hatred, only sincere rage will ever bring a sort of embarrassed laughter. (*KGW* IIIii: 188)

Nietzsche explains that he understands that the very nature of this task is likely to incite the kind of laughter that his ideal audience fears, but that this should be no cause for alarm since it is they, the interested few, who understand the nature of the fight, not the masses for whose



benefit they fight. It is a painful thing that they must do, not just for themselves but painful for everyone, and as such this is perhaps the first of Nietzsche's harsh truths.

Nietzsche then addresses some of the questions that arise from this analysis, namely from where has this army of ham-fisted teachers come and what is to be done with them when the truth is revealed? "Such a large number of higher educational institutions now exist that the constant and unending increase of teachers that will be needed is more than the nature of a people, even a highly gifted people, can produce" (*KGW* IIIii: 189). The surplus of teachers is the result of the idea that education should be equal throughout society, an idea which rests on the perhaps mistaken belief that this will create equality of opportunity. An unprecedented number of institutions have been built for the purpose of educating the great mass of society, and the positions that have been created must be filled. Nietzsche contends that the recruits for these positions are enticed by offers made by the State that will make a career in education an attractive alternative and this is based on the State's need to have loyal servants.

It is here that all of these devices flower, by which as many students as possible are encouraged into public school teaching. Here the State has its most powerful stratagem, the granting of certain privileges regarding military service, with the result that, according to statistical officials, by this, and this alone, is explained the general overstocking of all the Prussian public schools and the pressing and continual need for new ones. (*KGW* IIIii: 199)

The State, having thus created such inordinate numbers of people who demand, on account of their educational experience, fitting reward for such work, is compelled to make such an education the minimum requirement for entry into its own service and for the attainment of military commissions. The result, metaphorically speaking, is an army with no foot soldiers, which is of course no army at all, and a government with no bureaucracy, only ministers, which is ineffectual. Considered from a quality of service point of view, this plan must fail since, as Nietzsche says, this is happening in a place where there is no need to attract people into State service, "where the general acceptance of military service as the State employees'

highest ambition unconsciously draws all the naturally gifted in this direction" (ibid.). The idea that the State is somehow looking for the best people for the position is an illusion, but it is also a very clever justification for the perpetuation of its status as cultural leader. "The State presents itself as a mystagogue of culture and while it promotes its own objectives, it forces each of its servants to appear before it with the torch of universal State education in hand: and in its flickering light they may recognize it as the highest, as the reward for all their educational efforts" (*KGW IIIii*: 199-200).

Nietzsche then points out that in antiquity the culture that is so admired at present was not a tool for the State, but was a partner in existence.

For this reason the profound Greek felt a sense of admiration and gratitude towards the State which is greatly offensive to modern men because he recognized that without such protection as the State can give, not only could his culture not develop, but also his whole inimitable and perpetual culture had flourished so well under the careful and wise protection of the State.... [Not] as supervisor and regulator...but as vigorous and muscular companion and friend...(*KGW IIIii*: 201)

Put simply, the modern State is utilitarian in a manner that runs contrary to the true culture of which Nietzsche speaks because such a State sees culture as a way of conveying its own ideals and values to the populace for its own ends, whereas Nietzsche's true culture co-exists with the State, but maintains a healthy independence from the State. The notion being expressed by Nietzsche in relation to antiquity is one in which culture is thankful for the protection afforded it by the State, but the relationship is necessarily reciprocal.

Where the object is education and culture the matter is far too important to allow it to be subordinated to fashionable modern political ideologies. Were it possible for everyone to be a Goethe or a Shakespeare the world would be no more than banal, without any aesthetic canon. Fortunately not everyone can, and this fact ought to be appreciated and observed with reverence according to Nietzsche's philosophy. He explains that he is suspicious of anyone

who claims to be in the business of educating *the people* “since what they most want, consciously or not, is the general saturnalia of barbarism, itself an unchecked freedom, which the sacred order of nature will never grant them” (*KGW* IIIii: 190).

From the rather dismal point of view held in this lecture, Nietzsche attempts to describe the course by which this may be rectified. Unfortunately the problems of the current situation appear to require the wholesale destruction and rebuilding of education. Invoking the principle that any reform must build on what exists, if only as a faint memory, Nietzsche looks at classical education. This is chosen because although it is clear that he has little faith in the present state of this type of education, he maintains that the name at least holds the latent memory of what it once was and this could be enough to provide a seed or necessary connection for reconstruction. What is now called ‘classical education’ is for Nietzsche not a reference to the type of education he proposes, but it does retain the memory of it. He believed that a truly ‘classical education’ could not be built on the foundations of the current system, but would have to be built on the memory of what the words once meant. For, as he has been analyzing it, modern education was the opposite of what that memory indicates. Clearly then, there is hope that, in what remains of the older ideals, there is the possibility of resurrecting something of greater value to education as cultural foundation. The ancient model for culture has been forgotten, but it is precisely in those forgotten foundations that Nietzsche sees a guide for what needs to be done. “[All] these phenomena in the teaching of German evidence the painful fact that the most salutary forces from classical antiquity are still not present in our public schools, the forces namely that would prepare the students for the battle with the barbarism of the present and which may yet transform the public schools into the armories and workshops of this struggle” (*KGW* IIIii: 185-6). Again, the neglected state of language education is pointed to as the origin of the loss of appreciation of culture, but if that can be reversed then the process of reconstructing both education and culture may begin.

At fault is the competitive and reputation-based nature of current academic culture and teaching. Nietzsche claims that students of antiquity are unable to appreciate ancient culture because they are unable to understand the voice that speaks to them in the same way as the understanding of German has been diluted by the use of inappropriate methods of teaching. “[To] me, the current teachers seem to teach their students in so genetic and historical a manner, that, in the end, they produce no more than little Sanskritists or etymological Spitfires or reckless conjecturers” (*KGW* IIIii: 197).

Nietzsche has opened the question of what is wrong in education in a very bold manner. In the first of the three lectures he identified the problem and its location in the current system. The second analyzed that problem. The third lecture seeks to place blame. Responsibility for the lack of linguistic prowess that he sees in modern culture is placed with the teachers of German. By accepting the methods that were developed for an entirely different topic they have reduced the German language to the status of a dead language. Without an awareness of what the language can do and has done the student of today cannot be expected to have an active role in the development of culture. Both inattention to detail and a lack of enthusiasm seem to characterize the bulk of the problems that were identified. This inattention is due in part to the recruitment of many unfit teachers by the State in an effort to make good on a promise of universal education. But in the process of doing this it has created a demand that would stretch the talents of even the most gifted of teachers. In addition to this is the difficulty that is produced by the mediocrity that accompanies those who seek to instruct with imperfect knowledge. By using such teachers the students are taught this same mediocrity which they in turn teach to the next generation. When Nietzsche looks for ultimate responsibility he can only see the neglect of the model from which the educational institution is supposed to be derived: classical antiquity. Like the neglected statues that crumble in a long forgotten temple, so the education that is built upon that temple’s ancient foundation has likewise crumbled.

Without an understanding of the gravity of the situation, society happily glides along in blissful ignorance. But Nietzsche is confident that there will eventually come a leader or leaders who can set an example against which the status quo will pale.

## 1.9 Reconstruction

Nietzsche opens this lecture with the regret, that, on the basis of the analysis so far, “we have no educational institutions, [but] we must have them. Our public schools apparently created for this higher purpose, have become the nurseries of a dubious culture” (*KGW* IIIii: 204). Having analyzed the institution that is intended to harbour culture, he has found no facility for its development. The present educational system, he says, will either be totally opposed to the true culture of which he speaks on account of its methods and aims or it will be so concerned with the “micrological” that its over-specialization will concern neither the true culture nor the detestable modern culture. The problem is that he feels they need that true culture to counter-balance and eventually rescue society from the increasing barbarity of modern times.

Given the fact that what was then being called culture bore no resemblance to what he calls the true culture, Nietzsche instructs us to be cautious when considering the effect of education in its present state. A distinction must be drawn between the two varieties of culture since they stand in opposition to one another. What this distinction amounts to is the difference between mere existence and that higher form of existence which affords one the leisure to pursue true culture. He does not deny the fact that a person needs to learn and do a great deal for the former, but what is in that case considered a great deal is considered the result of the lack of culture, understanding and ability by the latter. The distinction between the struggle for survival and living in security is a useful image. Nietzsche then draws attention to a difference between knowledge and learning in his sense and knowledge and learning in a materialist world.

The question presents itself, to what extent one values their ego against other egos.... Many, with a stoic confinement of their needs, may very soon and easily forget their ego.... Another stretches its effect and its needs so wide, and builds a mausoleum in vast

proportion, as if he were prepared to overcome that great opponent,  
Time, in the wrestling match. (*KGW* IIIii: 205)

In this passage there is described a desire, irrational though it may be, for immortality. Nietzsche is presenting a popular notion of the time and casting a bright light on it that he may more clearly reveal the flaw in it. That popular notion was the mistaken belief in the nobility of labour, which is in fact not noble in and of itself, but rather labour becomes noble when its end is noble; it is ennobled by its goal. This passage may be interpreted to be saying that those who are cultured need not work, amounting to the advocacy of aristocratic privilege, but such an interpretation would be mistaken. What Nietzsche here wants to point out is that greedy self-preservation and the protection of individual interests, which is embodied by the drive for maximum efficiency, current then as now, have nothing to do with culture. They may be considered culture only in the very general anthropological sense of the word, which is to define culture as the sum of the interactions of members in a society.

Based on this distinction Nietzsche offers a comparison of educational institutions which recalls the distinction drawn in the second lecture between formal and material education. In this instance he warns that there is a necessary relationship between a youth and nature, which builds a kind of understanding of the constant state of becoming, wherein they may learn not only how to be part of nature, but that in essence they are part of nature. This relationship is to be encouraged. One is reminded here of his description of German composition class wherein the excesses of youthful enthusiasm are unnecessarily restricted by the historico-academic method of language instruction. In contrast to this is that other kind of relationship in which they are taught to categorize and account for nature as a way of subduing it and using it to attain that greedy self-preservation previously mentioned. Education in this sense is to the then current educational reforms what *phusis* was to *nomos* in antiquity, in so far as Nietzsche

sees a way that education can benefit culture, or its nature, and a way that society has manipulated education and counted this as correct, or its law or custom.

In practical terms this is the distinction that society has traditionally drawn between secondary schools and Gymnasia or public schools. But lest anyone accuse him of disparaging the former type, Nietzsche says that they are to be praised for their achievement. The secondary schools, where all manner of material education has been developed, have come to be the equal of the public schools. The graduates of these material educational institutions have every right to desire admittance to the universities and government posts which were previously the preserve of public school graduates, as a result. Nietzsche's dissatisfaction is clearly not directed at the secondary system, but at the public schools since if the secondary schools are producing students the equal of those from the public schools then the public schools no longer exist for the purpose of developing culture. "[If] it is true that secondary school and public school are, in their current aims, working so unanimously, and differ so slightly, that they might take full equal rights before the forum of the State, then we lack another type of educational institution entirely: the type that educates for cultural ends!" (*KGW* IIIii: 209) This phenomenon has occurred not only as a result of the increase in standards by the secondary system, but more importantly by the degeneration of the public schools by that mediocrity, that is passed on from teacher to student and which is the result of subordinating education to State interests which was discussed in lectures two and three.

It is important then to note that the definition of the word education and the definition of the word existence or living are what is being examined here:

Every education, however, which promises an office or bread-winning as its goal is no education for the purpose of developing culture as we understand it, but only instructions with which to preserve and protect one's ego in the struggle for existence. Of course, such instruction is for most people of the highest importance: and the more difficult the



struggle is, the more the young must learn to use their strength to best advantage. (*KGW* IIIii: 207)

This passage recalls the understanding of culture as a rare and unique thing. Not everyone may be a cultural leader.

Nietzsche goes on to say that the fault, while it clearly lies with the educator, may be overcome by carefully considering the direction in which the current system moves. He offers the following advice: "Allow yourself time, carry the question with you, but think of it day and night. For you are now at a crossroads, now you know where both roads lead. On one path you will not find your age lacking in wreaths and decorations: enormous parties will carry you, and there will be as many of like mind behind as in front" (*KGW* IIIii: 220). In this rank and file one can expect solidarity. The purpose is simple on this path, the only concern is to insure that everyone follows the lead of the one in front, and to harangue and abuse any who will not join. Nietzsche is emphasizing the lonely nature of the path to true culture, which is once again defined by its rarity and by its small number of representatives. He cannot completely condemn the throng because they too are necessary if culture is to exist at all.

The central point in this fourth lecture is the difference in the goals of the two types of education. On the one hand there is the objective of comfort and material well being. For the exponents of this type of education the function of the institution is to provide the student with a means to achieve the type of comfort that is reckoned in material wealth. This objective is designed to satisfy the individual, or in other words the education serves the individual. The other sense of the word points to a wealth of a very different kind. The exponents of this education are able to see beyond the limits of material comfort to the benefits of selfless cultural development. In this sphere the individual does not exist as the primary beneficiary of education, but rather education serves culture not people, because

ultimately it is culture, or Nietzsche's true culture, that facilitates the society's continued existence and progress.

With the conclusion of the fourth lecture, Nietzsche has completed his analysis of the educational system, identified what he sees as the problems inherent in it, the dangers of continuing with it and has offered the beginnings of its reconstruction. In the fifth lecture he reviews the ideas and concepts that have been outlined and he begins to despair at the enormity of the task he appears to have set for himself. The tone in the fifth lecture becomes increasingly negative and given the fact that there were originally to be six lectures in the series, one gets the impression that the disillusionment that was mentioned at the outset of this chapter had begun to get the better of Nietzsche. Nonetheless, we now have now seen the set of circumstances that gave rise to Nietzsche's abiding concern for the connection between education and culture, and the questions that he felt needed to be addressed. Over the course of his philosophical activity Nietzsche began to see what he originally perceived as affecting classical philology as endemic in education in general and this had become obvious in the impoverished state of the culture of his time. For Nietzsche, the foundations of culture and society are laid out during the crucial period of one's education, but as a result of the materialism of modern society, culture had fallen out of view in educational matters.

We can now see what Nietzsche's primary concerns were during the period of his active service as a university lecturer and teacher. Chief among these, and one moreover that stays with him throughout his philosophy, is the question of method over content. This question is of particular importance and, as we shall see over the course of this dissertation, became the basis of Nietzsche's philosophy of education and stems largely from his conviction that education, and thereby culture and life, is a process that requires the constant creation and re-creation of meaning. In practical terms, Nietzsche saw that content had taken precedence over

method in his chosen discipline of Classical Philology, chiefly as a result of the emphasis on specialization which had been created out of the drive towards professionalization and all that goes with it. His observations concerning this state of affairs formed the basis of his pedagogical thought. And so the focus of this first chapter has been centered on his work up to the de facto end of his activity as a classical philologist which, of course, coincides with the publication of his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, and the controversy surrounding it.<sup>14</sup> And while it is fairly easy to attribute his departure from professional scholarship as a reaction to the public battle that followed, there is a more fundamental and far less personal reason. Over the course of his brief academic career, Nietzsche came to recognize that the concerns he had for his own discipline stemmed from problems that were not unique to it. He came increasingly to understand the problems inherent in Classics as the problems of education in general, and as a result his focus shifted to the much broader questions concerning education and what he saw as its chief contribution to society, culture.

In the inaugural lecture, *Homer and Classical Philology*, Nietzsche criticized the increasingly disparate nature of the study of antiquity and the loss of any abstract unity or philosophical foundation to the discipline which he attributed to the inappropriate application of what he characterized as the academico-historical method of teaching. The basis of this method is the dissection and separation of the various elements that make up an originally unified whole. As such, it precipitates the increasingly narrow scope of each part in a profusion of separate areas of research which had become only loosely associated under the title of Classical Philology. The dissolution of the relationship of each part to the whole stems from the application of a predetermined method which, when found to be less revealing than at first hoped, drives isolated development and the proverbial forest is lost for the focus on the trees, branches and leaves. Nietzsche felt that this ossified the study of history and thereby eliminates its ability to

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14 Gründer Karlfried. *Der Streit um Nietzsches "Geburt der Tragödie"*. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuch-handlung, 1969.

affirm life, which creates what he saw as the distinction between the professional scholar and the truly learned. Moreover, this reification facilitates the tendency to see the tradition from which we stem as an authority which becomes dogma; for if the present is seen as separate from the past, it is in the past that any sense of dynamism or process, which is to say 'Life', is seen to exist. The only way out of this intellectually and culturally crippling situation was, for Nietzsche, to be found in the rejection of the sanitized view of antiquity, to see the ancients as a people possessed of virtue and flaw, rather than as the divine children of the gods which view had more to do with contemporary political objectives than it did with the pursuit of knowledge and the pedagogical character of study.

In his introductory course to Classical Philology, published as the *Encyclopedia*, Nietzsche sought to exhort his students to a view of the discipline based upon a solid foundation of a philosophical world-view or hermeneutic. Part of this foundation is the recognition that any claim to historical 'truth' must be recognized as a matter of context, both within the arbitrary historical limits being discussed and also, perhaps more importantly, within the particular, even peculiar limits of the tradition and life-world, to borrow a later coinage, within which each individual is embedded. This is perhaps best expressed in Nietzsche's exhortation that when we watch an ancient play, we want to do so as a modern, not as an ancient. This is to be done in an effort to move away from the over-specialization he identified in the inaugural. The drive towards any abstract unity, something he felt had been lost, was a way of coming to recognize the multiplicity of drives behind any study. Moreover, this allows more transparent recognition of education as process or what Nietzsche saw as a coherent hermeneutic approach to education and life. This then serves to introduce critical self-awareness as a central part of education and scholarship.

And finally, nearing his departure from university service, Nietzsche gave a series of five public lectures under the title *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, in which he sought to present more specific criticism of education and culture and to indicate a method of overcoming these problems. Here he emphasized the need to take pedagogical thought and turn it into some corresponding action. Part of the reason for this emphasis was that through the over-specialization created by contemporary educational methods, the separation and distance between history and contemporary society further creates a sense that the past is the truly dynamic side of the equation. In an effort to breathe life into the present current methods serve only to produce imitators and what he called walking cultural encyclopedias.

Part of the lost "...sublime tendency in [education's] foundation" (*KGW* IIIii: 137), has to do with the cost of being truly educated. This is not meant in capital terms, but in terms of the time one must commit to education. While the demand for education only increases as a result of its presentation as a fast track to success and material comfort, the commitment to it diminishes. This Nietzsche attributes to the fast paced nature of modern, what he called journalistic society. This in turn has caused a crisis of culture. The seed from which culture grows is given no time to germinate and can only produce a stunted and unhealthy result. This is replaced by the pre-fabricated forms of modern, pseudo-culture. Again, Nietzsche attributes this to the inappropriate application of the academico-historical method of language instruction which, while appropriate to the acquisition of ancient languages on account of the absence of the living culture expressed in them, has a tendency to convert a modern, living language into a museum piece which is viewed by all, but appreciated by none. This was the result of the replacement of intellectual education which focuses on method with the merely technical teaching of content, or what he called the replacement of formal education with material education. This has produced a leveling effect in education for which Nietzsche proposed greater critical awareness of that which produced the culture of the ancient Greeks

on account of the fact that they were not subject to these same problems. He looked back for answers to the culture of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. But before we can go on to consider how Nietzsche saw that culture and what it could offer modern society by way of example, we need to complete the picture of the relationship between education and culture through an understanding of the concomitant relationship between culture and history to which I now turn.

## 2. Theory

### Culture and History

One of the things that marks much of Nietzsche's philosophy is the practice of analyzing the succession of people, events and customs that have given rise to the present. The chief reason that Nietzsche adopts the genealogical method is that although a lot of history has been recorded and written, he felt that the process of history, or rather the effect of history writing, has been poorly accounted. For Nietzsche, it is not in the chains formed by great and marked events, but in the seemingly insignificant and the overlooked, which is to say in the process and effect of history, that the explanation of the present lies, along with the kind of knowledge that can best inform us for our coming decisions. He was highly critical of this lack of attention and in a particularly hostile passage in *Ecce Homo* he says, "these small things—nutrition, place, climate, recreation, the whole casuistry of selfishness—are inconceivably more important than everything one has taken to be important so far. Precisely here one must begin to *relearn*. What mankind has so far considered seriously have not even been realities but mere imaginings—more strictly speaking, *lies* prompted by the bad instincts of sick natures that were harmful in the most profound sense—all these concepts, "God," "soul," "virtue," "sin," "beyond," "truth," "eternal life."—But the greatness of human nature, its "divinity" was sought in them" (*EH*: 256). History, according to Nietzsche, tells us less about the past than it does about the present and our options for the future. There is a kind of stagnation that results from a lack of attention to the living. Culture degenerates under these circumstances and practices. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, Nietzsche placed a great deal of importance on the connection between culture and education, or rather on the view that the objective of education is the maintenance of an environment that is conducive to the nurturing of future cultural leaders. In his inaugural, Nietzsche criticized the fragmentation of the academic disciplines which had resulted from the professionalization of

academic positions. And insofar as history tells us about the present, his analysis demonstrated that a shift in scholarship had occurred from focusing on the object of study and what it has to offer us, to a focus on the egos of individuals and what they can offer us. The effect of this shift was to separate history from the present, and so from having any substantial benefit for the present culture. In his *Encyclopaedia*, Nietzsche argued further that the current fragmentation was the result of the loss of a coherent philosophical foundation or world view. This in turn had caused what he called the historical sickness, or history's domination of the present. In Nietzsche's view this was a great hindrance to the present's creative potential which he felt forms the driving force behind cultural progress. Because of this he argued, in his five lectures on education, for the reform of the tendency in the current system towards democratization and diminishing standards. The expansion of education's scope, coupled with the narrowing of the individual disciplines' focus had resulted in what he called philistine culture or the replacement of true culture with the collage of cultivatedness, encyclopaedic or pseudo-culture. With these things in mind it is necessary to understand Nietzsche's thoughts on the relationship between history and culture before we can move on to coming to an understanding of what Nietzsche considered a healthy culture which he associates with the culture of the late 6<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC in Greece or the tragic age, and the Sophistic movement. And in addition, I want to investigate Nietzsche's position in the context of some of his earlier philosophical works which were written when culture ranked more transparently as chief among his concerns, for as I will argue, there is a sense in which this concern about culture was a driving force behind the development of his educational thought and his larger philosophical project.

The first of Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations: David Strauss Confessor and Writer*, was an aggressive attack on what Nietzsche saw as an example of "an inordinately stupid ease-and-comfort doctrine for the benefit of the 'ego'..." (DS: 28). This, he felt, was the result of a



series of false associations rising out of what he called philistine culture, the expression of which he saw in the mistaken equivocation of German military might with cultural superiority. Nietzsche believed that Strauss' book, *The Old Faith and the New*, was a prime example of the laziness and pretension that seemed to stem from Germany's growing dominance in European affairs, especially since their victory over France. Against this mistaken belief Nietzsche explains that true culture, which he opposes to 'cultivatedness' or the cultural collage created by the assimilation of various elements of foreign cultures, is something that involves endless toil. Culture is not a possession to be owned, like an area of land wrestled from an adversary through brute force, but a quality or characteristic, more like a language defined in Saussurean terms, which is to say that culture exists perfectly in no individual but is the collective property and legacy of the entire community. To believe that it can be possessed in some concrete fashion is to fail to recognize that which is most fundamental to it and therefore not to partake of it. Nietzsche contends that this failure is precisely what is demonstrated in Strauss' book, and so it can be seen as the embodiment or most obvious symptom of the disease of the time or what Nietzsche otherwise calls the 'historical sickness'.

His second meditation, *The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, attempts to diagnose the damage caused by this ailment and to describe its cure. In the simplest terms, the historical sickness comes from an excess of history. Nietzsche asserts that the burden of the weight which is created by an excessive awareness of the past impairs both the individual's and society's ability to live in and appreciate the present, which in turn incapacitates the creative potential of the future. The root of the problem, as Nietzsche defines it, is that the study of history has become, somewhat paradoxically, a set of fragmented ends-in-themselves. The methods used by historians, such as identification, analysis, dissection and categorization, have so fragmented the study of history that history itself can often only be seen as one of

three types: monumental, antiquarian or critical. Where all three of these were formerly the concomitant parts of a single process, they have become isolated entities. Nietzsche maintains that in order for history to be of benefit to Life and culture each of these three must be used in proper proportion. By emphasizing the monumental one loses sight of the motive forces behind those monuments. By emphasizing the antiquarian one learns to feel a sense of contempt for the present. And by emphasizing the critical one sees only the errors of the past, never learns to appreciate its achievements and builds a desire to dissociate from it. To this mixture Nietzsche adds a necessary measure of what he calls healthy forgetfulness. This allows one to accept what now exists rather than forever seeking a kind of deferential justification through comparing the present with the past.

In the third essay, *Schopenhauer as Educator*, Nietzsche returns to the question of culture that was raised in the Strauss essay, but in this work he presents a representative of the cultural philistine's antithesis, which he offers in the form of Arthur Schopenhauer. While it is clear from this piece that Nietzsche is heavily under the influence of Schopenhauer's thought, to impugn the contribution that Nietzsche makes here as somehow derivative of that thought is to fall victim to the over emphasized critical analysis described in *The Uses and Disadvantages* essay. And while it is certainly true, as Nietzsche himself states, that Schopenhauer is one of his true educators, he seems to take his affinity with Schopenhauer as a vindication of his own untimeliness and, indeed, it is often quite easy to read the name Nietzsche in place of Schopenhauer. He holds Schopenhauer up to a very high standard, often comparing him with Plato, and it is precisely in this that one finds Nietzsche's insight. Schopenhauer is the subject of this essay because, at that time, Nietzsche felt that this philosopher embodied the characteristics that were essential for the future of philosophy and culture. And while Nietzsche would later reject Schopenhauer's philosophy, as an archetype he never lost the respect of Nietzsche, and it is as archetype that Nietzsche uses him in this

essay. Against this he attempts to highlight the collage of infamous characteristics of the scholars of his day. The characteristics that he sketches of Schopenhauer and the professional scholar are reminiscent of one of Friedrich Ritschl's ten commandments for classical philologists: "Thou shalt not believe that ten bad reasons equal one good one" (Briggs and Calder III 1990: 392). Ultimately, Schopenhauer serves the same function as Strauss, which is as representative type.

## 2.1 Philistines

Nietzsche begins the *Strauss* meditation with a description of the effect that the German victory over France in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71 had on what he calls the German spirit. He warns against the complacency that the victory appears to have instilled in his countrymen. "Human nature finds it harder to endure a victory than a defeat; indeed, it seems to be easier to achieve a victory than endure it in such a way that it does not in fact turn into a defeat" (*DS*: 3). The defeat comes in the reversal of that which facilitated the victory, namely, knowledge, training and science in the art of war. This reversal arises out of the mistaken belief that the military victory is in some way the result of cultural superiority. Nietzsche contends that the two are not related except in the respect that both military campaigns and culture are characterized by agon, or struggle. But even when they are both recognized as struggles there is a further mistake that is made according to Nietzsche, which is that such struggles are not a zero sum gain affair. Without maintaining the struggle the victories achieved cannot last. Likewise, Nietzsche sees culture as a struggle that must be constantly renewed against the very forces he sees as dominant in contemporary society: pretension, complacency and apathetic nihilism which three characteristics can be contrasted with the three that comprise his philosophy of education: authenticity, competition and sublimation to be discussed in chapter 4 below. Through this constant struggle alone is progress, taken in the sense of cultural refinement rather than as the improvement of material circumstances, and authenticity of living assured, or at the very least made possible. The idea of his true or authentic culture as agonistic runs throughout these meditations, and indeed throughout Nietzsche's writing. A second concept, mentioned above, and one that is equally central to Nietzsche's thought, is that of the reversal of philosophical foundations.

Nietzsche introduced this concept during the set of public lectures titled *On the Future of Our Educational Institution*, delivered in 1872, and which I discussed in chapter 1, sections 5-9

above. In those lectures he describes a process by which a given philosophical view reverses itself in the effort to become known. The example he uses is that of Christianity's founding philosophy. While the Christian faith began on the premise that the eternal salvation of Heaven was more desirable and important than the material comfort of the temporal and perishable, over time and through a desire to spread the 'Word' it became necessary for the faithful to protect themselves from the persecution of more powerful temporal entities such as the Roman Empire. As a result the church fathers pursued and ultimately gained political, military and economic power; or in other words they became focused on the temporal. The point being that in achieving the control of temporal forces that was necessary for the survival and transmission of 'the word,' like everything in that category, Christianity takes on the characteristics of all temporal entities by association and definition, which is to say that it too becomes temporal, mutable and perishable. Put another way, the "truth" of Christianity was revealed to the apostles by God through Jesus. Revelation is by definition not something that can be taught in any conventional sense of the term. In order to spread the word it had to become its opposite, which is to say that it had to become teachable. Similarly, in the case of Germany, those goals and values which led to victory over France were in danger of being reversed. That particular aspect of the German spirit became its own worst enemy: "The delusion (of equating military superiority with cultural superiority) is in the highest degree destructive: not because it is a delusion—for there are very salutary and productive errors—but because it is capable of turning our victory into a defeat: *into the defeat if not the extirpation, of the German spirit for the benefit of the 'German Reich'*" (DS: 3). The agent of this defeat, the product of this delusion and the subject of this part of the chapter is the cultural philistine.

While Nietzsche appears to have been concerned that he not cause Strauss too much pain with this essay, a fact that he expresses in a letter to his friend Gersdorff of 11/2/1874, it is difficult to imagine how it might not have done so. But at the same time his hope can be seen as

sincere if one reads the essay's use of David Strauss not as an individual member of society, but as representative of a certain type of society and culture. Nietzsche's polemic is not directed at David Strauss the man, but at cultural philistinism and the tendency towards the self-satisfaction growing in German culture and society in general, "...for I see how everyone is convinced that struggle and bravery are no longer required, but that, on the contrary, most things are regulated in the finest possible way and that in any case everything that needed doing has long since been done..." (*DS*: 4). This attitude has seen to it that what Nietzsche means by culture, which is epitomized by the likes of Aeschylus, Shakespeare or Goethe, has been replaced by a certain type of cultivatedness, epitomized by the likes of Strauss, but which, though the antithesis of true culture, is mistakenly seen as culture. But for Nietzsche "[culture] is, above all, unity of style in all the expressions of the life of a people. Much knowledge and learning is neither an essential means to culture nor a sign of it..." (*DS*: 5). An awareness of this fact is precisely what the philistine lacks and this, in turn, creates a circular and self referential definition which explains the blindness to the reality of the cultural poverty which is characteristic of the philistine's cultivatedness since "he feels firmly convinced that his 'culture' is the complete expression of true German culture: and since he everywhere discovers cultivated people of his own kind, and finds all public institutions, schools and cultural and artistic bodies organized in accordance with his kind of cultivation and in the service of his requirements, he also bears with him everywhere the triumphant feeling of being the worthy representative of contemporary [seen mistakenly as true] culture, and forms his demands and pretensions accordingly" (*DS*: 7).

The result of this situation is fairly clear, but Nietzsche goes on to explain the effect that this has on the appreciation of the great artists of the past, or in other words, what he counts as the source of a true and truly dynamic culture. In Nietzsche's conception of true culture one fundamental element is the classical literature of that culture. The poets named above

represent some of these classics for Nietzsche. A large part of the essay is given over to gauging to what extent Strauss himself might be considered a classic. The essay is concluded with a very philological and extensive list of examples of poor grammar and usage in Strauss' text. Needless to say, Nietzsche's conclusion is that Strauss may only be considered a 'classic' in the very narrow and isolated sense that he is the epitome of the impoverished state of writing in contemporary society: he is a classic philistine. This he attributes to the rise and proliferation of journalism, which, as the name suggests, is anything but classic. When Nietzsche turns to the philistine's treatment of the real classics he points out that what characterizes these authors is their skill at expressing a sense of seeking rather than of conclusion. Their success or failure in this respect is, for Nietzsche, the element in poetry which makes it attractive. But in the hands of the philistine there is a reversal of this interpretation. "[What] view does our philistine culture take of these seekers? It assumes them to be finders, not seekers, and seems to forget that it was as seekers that they regarded themselves. 'We have our culture, do we not?' they say, 'for we have our classics, do we not?'" (*DS*: 9). The emphasis and the source of the error that Nietzsche is pointing to is the notion mentioned earlier that culture can be a possession.

Through this notion of culture as commodity the philistine understands the opposite of culture proper in so far as culture is the collected result of the activities of individuals and the possession of no one individual, and in so doing "conceives himself alone to be real and treats his reality as the standard of reason in the world. He now permitted everyone, himself included, to reflect, to aestheticise, above all to compose poetry and music, to paint pictures, even create whole philosophies: the sole proviso was that everything must remain as it was before, that nothing should at any price undermine the 'rational' and the 'real', that is to say, the philistine" (*DS*: 11). The reason for this stagnation is an inability to judge anything by, loosely speaking, objective criteria. If the individual philistine is the measure of all things,

and because he encounters and understands only those things that correspond to his version of reality on account of his inability to appreciate anything that does not fit his definitions, the possibility of creativity is strictly limited. His unenlightened norms become *the* norms in a self-perpetuating cycle. Any novelty must be rejected because it does not fit the norm, that is, it is not accessible to the philistine, which is to say that in the final analysis the value of things is determined by the lowest common denominator. It is not being supposed that individuals ought not to have the right to choose for themselves what they wish, but where the standards for culture are being considered in an uncritical manner the highest possible standard will be that of the lowest common denominator. "[They] want to know of an artist only that by which he is suited for their domestic service, and can see no alternative but using him as perfume or burning him. This, of course, they ought to be at liberty to do: the only strange thing about it is that public opinion in aesthetic matters is so insipid, uncertain and easily misled that it beholds such an exhibition of the sorriest philistinism without protest..." (*DS*: 24). Later, in chapter 3, we will consider this phenomenon more closely in the discussion of Protagoras' doctrine of man as the measure of all things, but for now we need only appreciate that this lack of critical self-awareness facilitates the detrimental effect that Nietzsche describes, that of regarding the classical poets as possessions, which in turn perpetuates the fleeting nature of fashion and fad, rather than the more enduring and critically discerning nature of aesthetic sensibility. The result that Nietzsche sees evidenced in his day is the destruction of the vestiges of true culture. Without proper critical understanding art, music and literature become gauged not by aesthetic, but by democratic, or what is worse, economic criteria (something we suffer particularly acutely from in the modern era). The relationship between philistine culture and the democratic/economic realities that were emerging during the 19<sup>th</sup> century lie at the heart of Nietzsche's criticism. As in the democracy of ancient Greece, the increasing weight of public opinion and the importance placed not on high standards but on material comfort bring to the fore those demagogues who seek only to appease the crowd in



all areas. In addition to the direct effect on culture, another area of central concern for Nietzsche, because of its close relation to culture, is history. In this regard, I would like now to turn to his treatment of history and historiography in his second *Untimely Meditation: The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*.

## 2.2 Fragmentation: Negative History

As mentioned in the introduction, Nietzsche felt that the culture of the philistine is accompanied by a certain ailment, the historical sickness, which is characterized by its overemphasis of the past in the formation and development of the present, and in addition, of the fragmentation of history into three types. And while each of these types is necessary, they are necessary in relation to each other as a check and balance of excess. Each of these elements is essential to a healthy historicism, but having become ends in themselves they have grown out of all proportion and further threaten the life of culture. The damage this causes can be seen in what remains: only the outer appearance of a culture but none of the content. "This is precisely why our modern culture is not a living thing...it is not a real culture at all but only a kind of knowledge of culture; it has an idea of and feeling for culture but no true cultural achievement emerges from them" (*UD*: 78). The excess of history has drawn what cultural instincts might have existed away from the task of developing the unique culture characteristic of Nietzsche's "unity of style in all the expressions of the life of a people" (*UD*: 79), with the result that "for we moderns have nothing whatever of our own; only by replenishing and cramming ourselves with the ages, customs, arts, philosophies, religions, discoveries of others do we become anything worthy of notice, that is to say, walking encyclopaedias..." (*ibid.*). Such a culture can show no external evidence of unity for none exists, only collage, whereas what Nietzsche is calling true culture is manifestly unified in its expression because it stems from a fundamental coherence and holism. In order to change this it is necessary to break from what has become the norm, that is the philistine. "He who wants to strive for and promote the culture of a people should strive for and promote this higher unity and join in the destruction of modern bogus cultivatedness for the sake of a true culture; he should venture to reflect how the health of a people undermined by the study of



history may be again restored, how it may rediscover its instincts and therewith its honesty” (UD: 80).

Nietzsche treats first of the monumental view of history. This type of history is driven by an underlying desire to maximize human potential through the emphasis of the greatest exemplars of human culture. The premise being that as we gaze back over history certain individuals stand out in stark contrast against the background of their contemporaries. Each such individual is taken to share in certain characteristics found in others in this category and the thought occurs that “that which in the past was able to expand the concept ‘man’ and make it more beautiful must exist everlastingly, so as to be able to accomplish this everlastingly” (UD: 68). This carries with it an underlying promise or hope, which gives rise to the desire to pursue this type of history; namely that the more we know about the creation of such individuals and what connects each to the other as in a chain, the more likely it is that we too may become such monuments. This is, of course, a false promise and a view from the wrong end of things. When we look at history we tend to divide it into eras, ages and epochs which stand out as such because of the monumental individuals we mistakenly take to be defined by the age rather than the age by them. Our study will reveal one thing for certain, that the difference between a monumental age and our own is the presence of the monument we study and equally the absence of the very desire that drives our study, which is the desire to imitate. This form of history is a detriment to the creative potential of humanity. And so, Nietzsche rightly asks, “[of] what use, then, is the monumentalistic conception of the past, engagement with the classic and rare of earlier times, to the man of the present?” and answers, echoing Cicero, that “[he] learns from it that the greatness that once existed was in any event once *possible* and may thus be possible again” (UD: 69). Of the three types of history that he identifies, it is the monumental which appears the most beneficial to the present and future,

but at the same time is the greatest contributor to the perpetuation of the culture of the philistine.

More overtly harmful to the present is the antiquarian view of history; for in this view one learns to reject everything that is in process of becoming which, as we shall see in the discussion of Heraclitus below, has the most far reaching consequences. It has, not surprisingly, the most limited and restricted vision of the three since here is developed the veneration of the ancient not least because of the mist in which the object of adoration is enveloped by time. "[With] this piety he as it were gives thanks for his existence. By tending with care that which existed from old, he wants to preserve for those who shall come into existence after him the conditions under which he himself came into existence—and thus he serves life. [But the] possession of ancestral goods changes its meaning in such a soul: *they* rather possess *it*" (UD: 72-3).

This historical sense treats the people, events and cultures that make up history as possessions, but as is always the case with such rare treasures, time leaves little of the context of these objects and what is accounts for but a meagre fragment of what was, giving rise to too close analysis, which further obscures what little context remains. Lacking the richness of the original environment, antiquarian history lacks a measure of the object. "There is a lack of that discrimination of value and that sense of proportion which would distinguish between the things of the past in a way that would do true justice to them" (UD: 74), which leaves the historian with the task of inventing the standard, a standard derived from the historian's own veneration for the object and which is unlikely to do justice to it. "This always produces one very immanent danger: everything old and past that enters one's field of vision at all is in the end blandly taken to be equally worthy of reverence, that is to say everything new and evolving, is rejected and persecuted" (ibid.).

Nietzsche says that it is this threat to life, the present and culture that reveals the need for the third type of history, the critical. Critical history serves the periodic need to slough off the weight that can build up. The historian "must possess and from time to time employ the strength to break up and dissolve a part of the past: he does this by bringing it before the tribunal, scrupulously examining it and finally condemning it" (UD: 75-6). But this type too bears a very serious danger. The objective of critical history is to free the present from the past to a certain degree, just as the natural cycle of a forest includes periodic fires which burn off old growth in order to make room for the new. But in so destroying, the critical has a tendency to rise not to freedom and new growth, but to ever more criticism and to burn uncontrollably. It then becomes clear to the historian how unjust and distasteful his origins truly are. "Then [his] past is regarded critically, then [he] takes the knife to its roots, then [he] cruelly tramples over every kind of piety.... It is an attempt to give [himself], as it were *a posteriori*, a past in which [he] would like to originate in opposition to that in which [he] did originate" (UD: 76).

This negative aspect of critical history comes from a weakness in the historian, who must not only have the strength to look directly upon the shabby origins of things, but must also have the much greater strength to accept and abide by the judgments thus achieved. Unfortunately, the historian, faced with the grave implications of these judgments, falls back on the refuge of the disheartened: disinterested objectivity. In an effort to create a distance between observed and observer, and therefore a dissociation between the two, the historian sends his findings to an 'external' court, the court of reason served by the jury of disinterested objectivity. But, as Nietzsche says, "[objectivity] and justice have nothing to do with one other" (UD: 91). If judgement and justice are to play a role in history then the judge-historian must stand higher than that which is judged. This relationship may at first appear to be one of distance and separation, just as Nietzsche condemns the objective, but the opposite is true. A judge can

only be effective in this case and with the required strength if he is possessed of intimate knowledge of the judged. The difference between the two is that distance and separation are for the merely objective historian a means, whereas for Nietzsche's judge-historian they are an end in the service of life and culture. *"If you are to interpret the past you can do so only out of the fullest exertion of the vigour of the present"* (UD: 94). This position is of the utmost import for Nietzsche's understanding of education, culture and progress. One must know in order to innovate and herein lays the remaining hope for the future. Nietzsche chose to analyze historical method because of its obvious role as the transmitter for the present. In his analysis the fragmentation of the discipline of history has served only to overlook its responsibility to its object, and as a result it has done a great disservice to the potential for educating the culture of the present and the culture of the future. The disservice in question is that this type of history renders the past in a very negative light at worst and re-creates it as an object for imitation in the full knowledge that we can never attain such a goal at best, and it is in the latter case that we find the real danger in such practice. In its fragmented form history is subject to the overemphasis that Nietzsche sees as crippling cultural progress. In aiming to identify history as that which is to be imitated it establishes this practice as the norm and coupled with the knowledge that we will always fall short of the mark initiates a kind of downward slide from generation to generation and epoch to epoch. As a result, the imitation can never quite measure up to that which is imitated and so, just as the mediocre teacher creates even more mediocre students who in their turn become worse teachers, the contemporary standard becomes the limit of the possible. The standard is thus perpetually lowered at the level of education which insures the growth and dominance of the most common, philistine culture or barbarism. Having identified the negative aspect of history, I would like to turn now to the positive use to which these three types can be put in the service of Life by considering an example or model historian in this context. These three aspects of

history can be said to come together in Thucydides since, as one of the founders of historical method, his work occurred long before the modern tendency towards fragmentation had begun. As we shall in chapter 3, and as has been noted earlier, Nietzsche found many such examples in the culture of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

## 2.3 Integration: Positive History

As we have seen, Nietzsche placed the notion of history for its own sake to one side, and it is in this context that I would like to investigate his positive answer to the following question: what is the purpose, the reason, or the use of history? As with all critical investigations it is one thing to come up with criticisms of the way things are done (elsewhere Nietzsche notes that the nay-sayers abound in the modern era) but it is quite another to have a model for a solution. According to Nietzsche, criticisms should lead to new and hopefully better interpretations if they are to be anything other than the expression of dissatisfaction or frustration. Thus far we have seen what Nietzsche considered the negative aspect of the three types of history he outlined to be. But his description also includes the notion that these three form a whole that are to be used for the affirmation of Life. I hope to demonstrate, through the analysis of Thucydides in Arnaldo Momigliano's work, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (1990), that the model for Nietzsche's positive description of history is the 5<sup>th</sup> century Greek historian Thucydides. In looking back to Nietzsche's criticisms of the three types of history which he felt define the current fragmented state of history, I will show how these three come together in Thucydides' work.

In the introduction to the *Uses and Disadvantages* essay Nietzsche is categorical in his attitude toward the place of history in human existence: "We need it, that is to say, for the sake of life and action, not so as to turn comfortably away from life and action, let alone for the purpose of extenuating the self-seeking life and the base and cowardly action. We want to serve history only to the extent that history serves life: for it is possible to value the study of history to such a degree that life becomes stunted and degenerate..." (UD: 59). Nietzsche placed a great deal of emphasis on the question of history because of what he felt was the fundamental relationship between it and true culture. Much of Nietzsche's career as a philologist and philosopher was concerned with the question of method and the question of



history, as we have seen, is primarily addressed on this level. Nietzsche proclaims the reason for this a few lines later when he says that, “I believe, indeed, that we are all suffering from a consuming fever of history and ought at least to recognize that we are suffering from it”, because “... a hypertrophied virtue—such as the historical sense of our age appears to be—can ruin a nation just as effectively as a hypertrophied vice...” (UD: 60). This is, of course, what he called the historical sickness, but this statement also implies that history can also be a great benefit, so long as it is not allowed to become hypertrophied. In a sense, this statement can be seen to stem from Nietzsche’s classical education, for it appears to express the same sentiment as the Delphic oracle “all things in moderation.”

Nietzsche’s concern comes from deep reflection on the state of the study and the effect that he saw it as having on the culture, scholarship and education of his time. Arnaldo Momigliano points to the same characteristic in Thucydides when he observes that “Thucydides had the same questioning mind as his contemporaries the Sophists, but he concentrated exclusively on political life” (Momigliano 1990: 41). The association between Thucydides and the Sophists is one of teacher to pupil insofar as the principles behind his method of history writing were derived from the teaching of the Sophists, for it was through the sophistic movement, as we shall see below in chapter 3, that so much of what is considered ‘classical’ about that period is derived. Thucydides takes great pains at the beginning of his history to make clear his objective: “My work is not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last for ever” (Thucydides I.xxii). Regardless of how arrogant we may consider his statement, it speaks of high motivation, and also of a willingness to accept what criticisms may come. Thucydides began writing his *History of the Peloponnesian War* at the war’s outset, “in the belief that it was going to be a great war and more worth writing about than any of those which had taken place in the past. My belief was based on the fact that the two sides were at the very height of their power and preparedness, and I saw, too, that the rest of the Hellenic world was committed to one side or the other” (Thucydides I.i). This is history, not of the victor as has so often been the case in the modern era, but history for its pedagogical value, for the benefit of the present and future.

We saw earlier that Nietzsche begins the body of his essay on history with two definitions. The first of these is that of the unhistorical mind, for which he employs by way of the analogy, that of a cow. Animals, he says, haven't the ability to remember even a few moments ago nor do they possess the ability to look far into the future. Because of this they are neither happy nor unhappy, they simply are. "Thus the animal lives 'unhistorically': for it is contained in the present...it conceals nothing... it can never be anything but honest" (*UD*: 61). Humans, on the other hand, "cannot learn to forget but [cling] relentlessly to the past: however far and fast [they] may run, this chain runs with [them]" (*ibid.*). He notes that it is humanity's ability to ignore this characteristic which is essential to both life and action. "Forgetting is essential to action of any kind, just as not only light but darkness too is essential for the life of everything organic...[for] there is a degree of sleeplessness, of rumination, of the historical sense, which is harmful and ultimately fatal to the living thing..."(*ibid.*: 62). Aside from the obvious Heraclitean tone of this statement, in this passage we are given a sense of the Greek notion of moderation feeding into Nietzsche's analysis. There is a point at which the benefits are maximized and the detriments minimized. This is a common thread in ancient Greek thought and to that extent we can see that it is to this that Nietzsche is directing our attention. "This, precisely, is the proposition the reader is invited to meditate upon: the unhistorical and the historical are necessary in equal measure for the health of an individual, of a people and of a culture" (*ibid.*: 63). Let us keep this in mind as we move on.

I would now like to return to the three types of history in the positive aspect that Nietzsche identified. "History pertains to the living man in three respects: it pertains to him as a being who acts and strives, as a being who preserves and reveres, as a being who suffers and seeks deliverance"(*ibid.*: 67). These aspects of what might be called the human condition correspond to the three types of history that Nietzsche described. But in opposition to the way they are used at present, he states that it is in the relation of each to the other that the service of history for Life is to be found, and within each of the three there is a more fundamental relationship that facilitates this.

Considering once again the monumental, we are called to identify what the motivation for employing this type of history might be. When looking into the past our attention is understandably drawn to those moments in which great deeds occur. These generally have a dramatic effect on the time in which they occur and on subsequent events. Nietzsche points out that these great events happen within the atmosphere of what he calls the unhistorical because they show a healthy disregard for the past which is to say that they belong to the creative spirit in humanity. "If, in a sufficient number of cases, one could scent out and retrospectively breathe this unhistorical atmosphere within which every great event has taken place, he might, as a percipient being, raise himself to a suprahistorical vantage point" (ibid.: 64). This vantage point should in theory allow us to learn from the circumstances and context in which any great event occurred rather than the event itself; from its shroud of mist, as Nietzsche might have put it, rather than from its substance. In answer to the negative question of why one studies monumental history Nietzsche says that, "Mostly there is no reward beckoning him [the monumental historian] on, unless it be fame, that is, the expectation of a place of honour in the temple of history...like a range of human mountain peaks..."(ibid.: 68). This, for Nietzsche, is of course the danger of ignoring the detail that the monumental form of history falls prey to when applied in isolation. His point is that those very individual aspects of a given event are the necessary constituents for that event. To ignore them is to lose the 'organic' nature of the event. And this leads to the conclusion that such historians "act as though their motto were: let the dead bury the living" (ibid.: 72).

Thus, we can see that in order for the monumental view of history to bear its full benefit to humanity there is a certain responsibility to the details, which function is served by antiquarian history. "Here we lived, [the antiquarian] says to himself, for here we are living; and here we shall live, for we are tough and not to be ruined overnight. Thus with this 'we' he looks beyond his own individual transitory existence and feels himself to be the spirit of his house..." (ibid.: 73). The feeling of continuity, that there is something about the present which recalls a by-gone era, is satisfying and strengthening. This is expressed in the positing of a Golden Age, something which no culture has yet abstained from doing in its view of itself.

The details of the past become significant in this view because they let us know that much more about who we are now, who we were and perhaps most importantly what the potential for the future is.

But as was noted above, in this view it is not possible to judge accurately the contribution of the subject of a given history because the only measure of that contribution comes from the microscopic gaze. "The antiquarian sense of man... always possesses an extremely restricted field of vision; [and what] it does see it sees much too close up and isolated; it cannot relate what it sees to anything else..." (ibid.: 74). This nearsightedness comes to ignore what *is* in deference to the minutia of what *was*. But for Nietzsche the antiquarian, while expert at preservation, lacks the ability to engender Life. Its greatest offence is the damage this view does to the creative spirit.

What tempers this tendency is the third and final type of history, the critical. Through this type humanity is afforded the distance necessary to avoid being blinded by the past. It can hold before itself the events of the past in broader perspective and thereby take into account more of what composes the whole. A critical attitude toward the past has the air of the unhistorical atmosphere spoken of earlier. "If he is to live, man must possess and from time to time employ the strength to break up and dissolve a part of the past: he does this by bringing it before the tribunal, scrupulously examining it and finally condemning it" (ibid.: 75).

But so long as we do not fall into the extreme of this critical view there is the potential for progress. If we criticize the past too completely then we fall into the peril of insisting that all that we are is worth nothing; for how else could we view our existence if everything that precipitates it is to us distasteful? This occurs because "[it] is hard to know the limit to denial of the past and because second natures are usually weaker than first" (ibid.: 76). But when what we see in our past is distasteful and repulsive, what then? Is it simply out of our hands to change who we are? Obviously we cannot change our history, so is there any option? Nietzsche notes that it is through struggle and sublimation that a second nature may become a first and "... here and there a victory is nonetheless achieved, and for the combatants, for those

who employ critical history for the sake of life, there is even a noteworthy consolation: that of knowing that this first nature was once a second nature and that every victorious second nature will become a first" (ibid.).

If history is to be of benefit to the present and future, none of the three types of history should be allowed to rule over the other two. Their value lies in the equal use of all three. Let us now look to Arnaldo Momigliano's analysis of Thucydidean historiography as a model for Nietzsche's history.

In the preface to *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides tells us, as mentioned above, his reason for recording the history of the war. Thucydides saw this war as one having implications not only for all of the Greeks, but for non-Greeks as well. Its pedagogical value was not isolated in that sense. This passage is an example of the monumental form of history in that it concerns one of the most significant events in Greek history. His objective is to give to future generations and powers a knowledge of the 'hows' and 'whys' of the war. The remainder of the preface is given over to a description of the origins of the conflict and the origins of the Greeks. Here he reaches into the realm of antiquarian history, but he is careful not to fall into the extreme of it. Thucydides was an Athenian, and it has been noted that he does come out in favour of the Athenian side in the war. But at the same time he was not a democrat and had been exiled from Athens because of his failure to prevent the invasion of Amphipolis by the Spartans when he was serving as an Athenian general. The fact that he went from Athens to Sparta and back allowed him to report the events he observed faithfully, while at the same time being directly involved, which is to say that his interest is made part of the writing.

He believed that history, true history, was political history. "The past was to him the mere beginning of the political situation that existed in the present; and the present was the basis for understanding the past.... Present experiences can be put to future uses...or, alternatively, are the key to the past" (Momigliano 1990: 41). This is the stance that Thucydides takes with regard to the past. It is a tool to be used in the service of coming to understand the present.

The past is subordinated by the present; for "...the present is the only period about which it is possible to have reliable information, and therefore historical research must start with the present and can go into the past only as far as the evidence allows." (ibid.) There was no shortage of information about the past in Greece, but the vast majority of that information had come down in literature and myth. The evidence offered by these is treated as unreliable by Thucydides. "In investigating past history, and in forming the conclusions which I have formed, it must be admitted that one cannot rely on every detail which has come down to us by way of tradition. People are inclined to accept all stories of ancient times in an uncritical way" (Thucydides I.xx). Momigliano notes the difference in the way Thucydides treats ancient and contemporary history with the following: "A method which combines archaeological data, comparative ethnography, and historical interpretation seems so good to us that we wonder why Thucydides used it only in his preface. The answer is obvious. [He] does not describe the past as he describes the present" (Momigliano 1990: 43). He treats the past and the present differently by allowing the object to define the method. Furthermore, "he also seeks to transcend individual happenings and attain to universal truths, by searching beneath the surface of events in order to detect underlying motivations" (Grant 1991: 66). This is the proper stance according to the description given by Nietzsche, if the historian is to remain honest in his work. Being critical of the sources available shows future readers the areas in which care should be taken.

"The past for Thucydides is not interesting or significant in itself. It is only the prelude to the present. The development from past to present is a linear one" (Momigliano 1990: 43). Again it is clear that for Thucydides the past serves the present, or history serves life. It is this point of view that is the key to the high esteem in which he has always been held. "Only Flavius Josephus mentions in passing that there were critics of Thucydides' reliability. On the whole Thucydides remained the model of the truthful historian" (ibid: 45). And for this we owe him a debt of gratitude. Moreover, "It was Thucydides, according to Lucian, who gave history its law- the law of saying what had been done" (ibid: 49). The fact that the work of Thucydides was lauded as so important speaks for itself. The real significance of his work lies in the

combination of prudence and accuracy. He was at one and the same time able to do justice to each side in the conflict and to provide commentary on the events that come both from first-hand experience and an appreciation of the times in which he lived. His history served as the model throughout ancient and more modern times. His combination of the monumental, in his descriptions of the leaders of the two sides and their generals, of the antiquarian, in his provision of the history of the origins of the conflict, and the critical, in his analysis both of the events of the war and the evidence used, show Thucydides to be the model not only of the philosophical historian, but of Nietzsche's use of history for life. Returning once again to the question of culture, I would now like to consider how it was that Nietzsche perceived the negative effects of the historical sickness and the remedy he proposed for it.

## 2.4 Diagnosis and Cure

One of the many topics that occupy Nietzsche's philosophy is the question of the origins and foundations of the modern world's intellectual and cultural make up. In the simplest, though still not uncomplicated terms, he came to see his philosophical project in the light of a transvaluation of values. By this characterization he meant to describe the overcoming of what he increasingly saw as the self-defeating drive towards fragmentation and over-specialization in the modern era as a result of educational and cultural practices. This criticism is by no means restricted to the community of cognoscenti that makes up the academic world. He intended this transvaluation to apply across the board. In *Zarathustra* he writes of the "terrible wars" that will eliminate what we believe we know and our highest values, and that will usher in a "new humanity" in the form of the *Übermensch*. The stimulus behind this call for change is the conviction that the modern world has become a cultural, psychological and intellectual museum of sorts, the guide book for which is long since lost and forgotten. This situation led him to write about the "weight of history" and its damaging effects, and indeed, this topic forms one of the stronger undercurrents in his work. By this phrase Nietzsche signifies two different but ultimately interdependent meanings. He uses it in the sense of physical weight, the idea that there is simply too much history to consider, which is to say that the longer our civilization exists the more history we create and so must bear. It is in part due to this observation that Nietzsche had a great deal of admiration for earlier periods, but above all for the period up to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC in Greece, not least for the levity of their attitude towards history or rather their ability to forget and "slough off" restrictive historicism. He also uses this phrase in the sense in which great concerns weigh on one's mind and impede the ability to make the decisions which allow confident movement into the future. This double meaning of history reflects the reciprocal relationship between the individual and society in Nietzsche's philosophy insofar as the way a society sees itself shapes the way individuals see



themselves and in seeking a place in society the aggregation of individual self-images make up society's self-image. This creates a complicated and somewhat confusing picture, but put more simply, Nietzsche saw the ills of society as mirrored in and perpetuated by those of the individual and vice versa. This situation was for Nietzsche a very real threat to what he saw as the service that can be provided by a healthy sense of history:

The oversaturation of an age with history seems to me to be hostile and dangerous to life in five respects: such an excess creates the contrast between inner and outer which we have just discussed, and thereby weakens the personality; it leads an age to believe that it possesses the rarest of virtues, justice, to a greater degree than any other age; it disrupts the instincts of a people, and hinders the individual no less than the whole in the attainment of maturity; it implants the belief that one is a late comer and epigone; it leads an age into a dangerous mood of irony in regard to itself and subsequently into the even more dangerous mood of cynicism. (UD: 83)

Nietzsche would later formalize the notion that the path to a remedy lies in genealogical analysis. He felt that the best cure for the ills of modernity was to be found in the origin of the ailment, and it is in this that his philosophical and educational projects achieve their ultimate coherence.

In this way Nietzsche hoped to draw our attention to the idea that while we have the artefacts, the traditions and the methods of earlier periods at our disposal, these possessions have become our problem and prison, rather than becoming an avenue to individual liberation and thereby cultural progress. This is the result of our dislocation from the drives and origins behind our history. In order to understand how this occurs it may be useful here to think of the relationship between history and biography. Take, for example, a historian of Thucydides. One normally describes such a person as a historian but this is not strictly correct. If Thucydides is a historian by virtue of his having recorded and described the events of the Peloponnesian war, then someone who studies him is a historian of historians, not history. The methods used by Thucydides will be markedly different from those employed by the

historian of historians. Strictly speaking it is more accurate to call such a scholar an intellectual biographer and only a historian in the limited sense that biography is one technique among many which are used by the historian, which is to say that the biographer is a historian by association. Likewise, for Nietzsche, through modernity's preoccupation with earlier cultures, philosophies and so on, that is, its preoccupation with historicism, it has become a cultural biographer, defining itself in relation only to its understanding of the past, and not a culture in any real sense. It has become a culture only by association. Our modern culture is nothing living, as Nietzsche says, because it cannot be understood without the comparison to earlier cultures, that is: "it is no real culture at all, but only a kind of knowledge about culture," and, as was noted above, this preoccupation with the past causes the modern world to be able to claim a knowledge of culture, but unfortunately this knowledge gives rise to no creation of culture. Nietzsche characterizes this as a symptom of the "historical sickness," the effects of which have long been felt but always the symptom is treated, never the disease. This creates an over complicated picture in which traditional categories of valuation and preservation, of utility and curiosity become hopelessly confused with one another. Nietzsche felt that the only way out of this situation was to question the past in an effort to determine the origin, nature and course of the disease in order the better to understand the present situation. Only then, he believed, would the modern world be in a position to re-establish itself as the pilot of its own future, for as things are it has lost sight of who and what it is. Nietzsche recognized that this situation was not unique in history. We can see much the same thing at work in the categorization of epochs such as the Mediaeval, Renaissance and Enlightenment, but above all Nietzsche saw a parallel to this situation in (pre)classical Greece. Although the specifics of that period are quite different from those of the modern world, the problem is virtually identical. This explains why Nietzsche appears less interested in the taxonomy of this disease than he was in its nature. The disease seemed to him

to be characterized by its increasingly metastatic behaviour insofar as, having started in each epoch in some localized aspect or organ of society, it spread with such inappreciable slowness that it is not recognized for what it is. The nature of the disease, because it has become so all-pervasive, comes to be mistaken for the nature of things, and in a similar fashion to the philistine's mistaken assumption that his interpretation is the only reality, the disease is seen quite simply as Nature or the way things are 'in reality'. This is, for Nietzsche, the problem of history. The answer to this problem lay in the roots of the present and so he looked to ancient Greece in search of answers.

What Nietzsche hoped to find in Greek antiquity was an example of how a culture might deal with the stifling effects of such dislocation. The crisis that Nietzsche saw in the modern world was much like what lay at the origins of classical antiquity; for as he says "There were centuries during which the Greeks found themselves faced by a danger similar to that which faces us: the danger of being overwhelmed by what was past and foreign, of perishing through history" (*UD*: 122). In the case of the Greeks, what had become foreign were their origins, or what Tracy B. Strong (1975) calls the 'Asiatic chaos,' from which they had emerged. In the case of the modern world its origins likewise have become foreign. For Nietzsche this is the result of the dogmatic reception of intellectual, religious, and cultural tradition. This is called foreign because the modern world has ceased to identify with, and has become dissociated from, the needs and drives behind its own history. For generations the modern world has inherited the concerns of its ancestors out of context. Nietzsche believed that this loss of context is what creates the conditions that perpetuate the disease. Greece had managed to "organize the chaos" and learned to reflect upon itself and so begin a new era in which it began to see and define itself without reference to the foreign: "Thus they again took possession of themselves; they did not long remain the overburdened heirs and epigones of the entire Orient..." (*UD*: 122). The modern world, on the other hand, has yet to free itself in

this way. It is the principle behind this repossession that Nietzsche sought to understand as a way of overcoming the negative effects of historical consciousness. Greece's struggle culminated in what is known as the Golden Age which is to this day widely recognized as one of the highlights, if not the high point, in cultural and intellectual history in the West. Nietzsche felt, albeit at times more strongly than others, that just such a thing could happen again. Ultimately though, principles and abstractions alone are not enough to motivate a people or a culture, there is always a need for what Nietzsche, in his public lectures on education discussed in the first chapter, called the strong, solitary leaders who animate these principles. In looking back Nietzsche saw a different picture from the one normally offered of classical Greece. In Nietzsche's analysis that age was intellectually dominated by a group of itinerant teachers who had been marginalized at the hands of the mainstream thought of Plato and Aristotle and who are collectively known as the Sophists, to whom we shall now turn.

### 3. Philosophy

#### Background to the Sophists

Having chosen Classical philology as his profession, Nietzsche spent his early years studying the language, literature, history and philosophy of the ancient Greeks, and while his affinity for certain of the Greeks, and his aversion to certain others is well known and generally accepted, there has been surprisingly little work done on the specific influences that this area of his activity had on his philosophical project. Appreciation of this has usually been directed towards the works that have the Greeks at the centre of the discussion, notably *The Birth of Tragedy*, and to a lesser extent the *Problem of Socrates* in *Twilight of the Idols* and *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. In this area of research work focuses on Socrates and the so-called culture of hyper-rationalism. This is, of course, set against the Sophistic culture of practical and subjective thought which is less overtly discussed in Nietzsche's work. In previous chapters we have discussed the role Nietzsche assigned to the study of antiquity in modern culture and education. This, in part, led him to his critical view of modern culture, represented by David Strauss, and to Nietzsche's appreciation of the philistine's antithesis represented by Arthur Schopenhauer. Both of these figures were for Nietzsche representative types: examples of what to avoid in the case of the former and what to contemplate in the case of the latter. The notion of representative type is one that Nietzsche first employed in his analysis of Socrates in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and while he is often charged with excessive use of the *ad hominem* argument, the charge is often inappropriate insofar as his use of historical figures is usually as representative type. He uses these figures to represent a certain current or trend in a particular historical period. In his analysis of history Nietzsche condemned the practice of dissecting and categorizing such exemplars into sets of characteristics to be imitated because of the tendency to reverse the relationship between the individual and the epoch in the process, which is to say that they come to be taken as the

producers of the epoch rather than as product. His condemnation of the fragmented view of history led him to the development of the notion of the historical sickness which he held responsible for the degeneration of education, culture and society into a collage of largely independent characteristics and specializations. Against this he offers the method of analysing the representative type as a way of understanding the results of a given age. Returning again to Socrates, Nietzsche saw him as representative of the decadence that had resulted from the Athenian domination of the Hellenic world, something he saw as paralleled in his own time in Germany. Socrates did not, of course, occur in a vacuum, and so as representative type he can be seen as a reaction to the so-called Sophistic movement

In Nietzsche's thoughts and analyses concerning the ills of culture, he looked to the thinkers of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC because of their manifest rejection of the foreign influences of the time in an effort to define their world on their own terms. In one sense both Socrates and the Sophists were the result of this, but they were results of very different types. Nietzsche was ambivalent towards Socrates and the type of culture he represents. Against this ambivalence he held a strong affinity towards the Heraclitean interpretation of the world which can be said to culminate in thinkers such as Protagoras of Abdera and Gorgias of Leontini. But these two have been subject to a peculiar process which lets them stand out in a slightly incongruous, but for Nietzsche's thought, particularly beneficial way. As I said, Socrates is a representative type and as with the relationship that Nietzsche draws on between Strauss and Schopenhauer, one might expect Nietzsche to have identified an individual as Socrates' antithesis, but this is not the case for the following reason. In a number of places Nietzsche mentions the mists created by history or the dense atmosphere of the past that obscures our vision and this is precisely the peculiar process I mentioned above. One of the things, as we shall see, that has hindered a deeper appreciation of the role of the Sophists and the sophistic movement in Nietzsche's thought is the circumstances of the time of their

activity. Without going into it deeply, for we have more pressing concerns, suffice it to say that the xenophobia which attended the Athenian defeat in the war with Sparta is largely responsible for our lack of primary source material on or by the Sophists. They exist, for the modern world, only as scattered fragments and obscure references. As a result we have little to go on, but this is in fact the benefit I mentioned where Nietzsche's philosophy is concerned. While he did undoubtedly see the Sophists as the antitheses of Socrates, there remains so little of their work that in order to make sense of their position relative to the hyper-rational position of Socrates, Nietzsche was put in a position where he had to develop their ideas from the fragments that remain. And in so doing he developed his own philosophical perspective and world-view in a unique direction which might explain why it little resembles the tradition. In this chapter I wish to uncover some of these deeper connections between Nietzsche, Heraclitus, Protagoras and Gorgias since part of my point in this work is that it is through them that his philosophy is best read and since it is in Nietzsche's philosophy of education that his larger philosophical project becomes a coherent whole.

As a parallel to the analysis of the disposition of society and the motive forces behind the creation of the golden age in Greece, we shall that see the Sophists play a similar role in the development of Nietzsche's philosophy of education and so it is well to focus on Nietzsche's analysis of these same things on a more intimate and individual scale, which is to say that before any sense can be made of the connection between them we must first place the Sophists in Nietzsche's philosophy in order to understand the foundational nature of their contribution to his educational thought. Just as the individual circumstances of any given period of history create the mark of that period, "In his heart every man knows quite well that, being unique, he will be in the world only once and that no imaginable chance will for a second time gather together into a unity so strangely variegated an assortment as he is..." (SE:

127). Nietzsche's incorporation of this idea and his acceptance of it as the basis of his analysis of history indicate its importance in any analysis of the individual. One of the chief causes of the disease whose course he sought to alter was precisely the fragmentation that precipitates the lack of responsibility taken not only for the products of Western thought and culture but for their effects and consequences as well. Nietzsche believed that for all the advances in the scholarly investigation of the past, a healthy sense of humility was still lacking. The fragmentation and specialization that characterizes much of modern scholarship is what creates the gaps that represent our history as something altogether distinct and separate from our existence, as if looking at history were like gazing at a painting rather than peering into a mirror. "We are responsible for our own existence; consequently we want to be the true helmsman of this existence and refuse to allow our existence to resemble a mindless act of chance" (*SE*, 128). In seeing history as distinct from us the present appears as just such an act of chance, but this need not be the case since we are the architects and builders of our history and because, as Nietzsche put it, history must serve life. For Nietzsche we are the authors of history, but sometimes we are good at our job and sometimes not. Nietzsche meant to point out that we have become very bad at it, thus the need for the pathology that his genealogical method provides, but at the same time he is aware of just what the limitations of such a project are since "man can slough off seventy times seven [skins] and still not be able to say: 'this is really you, this is no longer outer shell'." (*SE*: 129).

This would appear to place a great obstacle in the way of our success. Nietzsche feels that we must search for the source of the modern problem while maintaining that there is no discrete body to look at, but he is not appealing here to any fixed notion of identity either for societies or individuals. Such an idea is as incompatible with Nietzsche's abiding sense of becoming as the idea of a reality behind the one we perceive is to his mature philosophy. Nonetheless, it would appear that he is asking us to find a single location in something for which the concept



of location is more or less meaningless. It is necessary to remind ourselves that just as his method requires us to consider things in a way that is different from traditional interpretative approaches, so too we must think of the terms of the investigation in a different way. What Nietzsche is not looking for is location in the singular sense that the word normally implies. To see it in this way is to perpetuate the practice that was responsible for the spread of the disease in the first place. What he seeks is the principle or habit which is mistakenly taken to be nature, and this is not something that is found in *a* place but is evidenced at each stage of the process of development, acting against the thrust of progress in Nietzsche's sense of the term. This is why maintaining an adjusted form of the same process is inadequate and thus the need for transvaluation. That we may never be able to say "this is no longer outer shell" does not deny self as such, it simply denies the conception of a self-in-itself, fixed, categorical and definitive. "[Your] true nature lies, not concealed deep within you, but immeasurably high above you, or at least above what you usually take yourself to be" (ibid.). This raises the questions of where and in what are we to search for the correction of this all pervasive nature from which we must construct "the bridge upon which precisely [we] must cross the stream of life" (ibid.). The search for the motive forces which allow this construction should lead us, according to Nietzsche, to our "true educators." Here he does not mean the school teachers and university lecturers from whom we receive lessons and for whom we take examinations, but rather to those foundational influences that speak directly to our becoming-of-self. "Your true educators and formative teachers reveal to you what the basic material of your being is, something in itself ineducable and in any case difficult of access, bound and paralyzed: your educators can only be your liberators" (ibid.: 130). With this statement in mind I would like now to concentrate on demonstrating why and how the Sophists play just such a role in Nietzsche's philosophy.

Returning once again to Greece, its true educator can be seen as the Delphic oracle 'know thyself,' not because the Greeks were fumbling blind and directionless until handed the tools and materials with which to construct their bridge, but because the imperative the oracle offered was the precise articulation of their unique nature. The Greeks could not have been in search of something, or felt something missing, unless that something had already been present to mind, however ineffably. What the oracle gave was expression to those qualities and characteristics which were present, though perhaps only dimly so; it provided a method of self-definition which applies equally to the individual and society. True educators cause one to reflect upon oneself, to see history as a mirror rather than as a painting. "Certainly there may be other means of finding oneself, of coming to oneself out of the bewilderment in which one usually wanders as in a dark cloud, but I know of none better than to think of one's true educators" (ibid.: 130). As is well known, Nietzsche attributed a great deal of influence to the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer, and until 1876 when he officially broke with that philosophy, his work reflects that influence. But all the while, before, during and after that period, there remains the influence of classical antiquity. Let us now turn our attention to those other 'true educators' of Nietzsche's, the Sophists. The importance of their place in Nietzsche's thought can be summed up in one line from the meditation on Schopenhauer where he writes: "I discovered how wretched we modern men appear when compared with the Greeks and Romans even merely in the matter of a serious understanding of the tasks of education" (ibid.). In the ancient world, and in Athens in particular, the task of education was the special domain of those professional thinkers and educators, the Sophists.

As with so much of Nietzsche's thought, his view and understanding of the Greeks inhabits the vast wilderness which lies outside of mainstream academic and philosophical thought. In part, this is due to his analysis of historicism and its close concomitant *Altertumswissenschaft*. As was stated above, by the time Nietzsche took up the chair of Classical Philology at Basle

in 1869 he appears to have tired of Classics. His occupation of that post took place with anything but the enthusiasm one would expect towards such an honour at such an age. His experience of professional scholarship, above all at Bonn, sparked his distaste for the competitiveness and superficiality of the new professionalism of the academy. But it is important to note that it was classical scholarship rather than classical antiquity itself of which he had tired. The intellectual freedom that the post in Basle afforded him was crucial to his pedagogical and philosophical development. In becoming a professor of classics rather than the student of classicists, Nietzsche found his intellect and imagination re-invigorated; for he could now study antiquity on his own terms. These terms were drawn from what is still generally ignored about classical antiquity, what was considered less than classical by his contemporaries, for as he later remarked, "there is a very small number of ancient books that count for anything in my life; the most famous are not among them" (*TI*: X.1).

Once again, we must be careful in our interpretation of his words. Any research into Nietzsche will reveal an intimate knowledge of the 'problem' of Socrates which implies at least an equal knowledge of Plato. He was no stranger to ancient drama and comedy, lyric and epic, and it was certain of the best Roman authors who were the major influence on his prose style. So when Nietzsche speaks of the most famous ancient books counting for little in his life, what he means is influence in the sense attributed to his concept of 'true educators.' Having written his doctoral thesis on the sources of Diogenes Laertius and standing in Leipzig as he did as "the idol of the whole young philological world" (Ritschl quoted in Lea 1957: 30), his familiarity with the less than famous works of antiquity can hardly be denied. What one finds, as we shall see over the remainder of this chapter, is that the ancient influences on Nietzsche's thought are difficult to discern since he tends to discuss those he disagrees with more than those with which he did agree and subsequently wrote little about. It seems clear though, that Nietzsche sided with the Sophists and sophistic culture, which I will argue should

be considered integral in this context to what is known as the classical, much more than he did with Socrates and the culture of hyper-rationalism. For the remainder of this section of the chapter I intend to describe the Sophists, their movement and their contribution to the history of Western philosophy in order to set the background for the close comparison of Nietzsche's philosophical and educational project taking as the central consideration the thought of Protagoras and Gorgias. It is my contention here that Nietzsche's educational philosophy should be read within the context of a coherent understanding of his larger philosophical project and that this project must be understood within the tradition of which it is an extension, the sophistic tradition of subjective and practical philosophy.

When we turn to the history of Sophistic reception we are met with two conflicting traditions. The older and more persistent tradition concerning the Sophists of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC identifies them as itinerant teachers who charged fees for lessons and claimed to be able to teach virtue. The other more recent interpretation attempts to identify the Sophists' positive contribution to the history of thought. The former version, though simplified, is representative of the majority opinion on the Sophists. This view of the Sophists, even in the simplified form, is replete with the rhetoric which maintains the deprecation of these thinkers and their contribution. Against this view we may look to J.B. Bury's *History of Greece* where he notes that "this haze of contempt which hung about the sophistic profession did not imply the idea that the professors were impostors, who deliberately sought to hoodwink the public by arguments in which they did not believe themselves. That suggestion—which has determined the modern meaning of "sophist" and "sophistry"—was first made by the philosopher Plato, and it is entirely unhistorical" (Bury 1913: 370). They were indeed itinerant and taught in no one fixed place, which, in the literature, is of course contrasted with the greater apparent stability and unity of Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum. It is also interesting to note that among the ancients it is from these two that the greatest opposition to the Sophists stems,

as Bury noted and contrary to Herman Diels' introductory remarks to the fragments of the Sophists in *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*.<sup>15</sup> They did charge fees for their lessons and they did use public lectures as advertising for their services, but this charge against the Sophists stems largely from the transition of an aristocratic society to a democratic one that was taking place in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Plato and Socrates represent the old aristocratic educational ideal which was based on the noble preparation of the well-heeled youth of society for positions as political and military leaders and indeed this was the impetus for Plato's inauguration of the Academy (Marrou 1956: 58).<sup>16</sup> There is the sense that because the Sophists taught in exchange for money, for their livelihood, what they taught was of less purely educational and intellectual merit and was tainted by the idea that they somehow pandered to their audience, which is to say that they taught what their students wanted to hear rather than what was of intellectual value. This is the dominant image presented in Plato's dialogues on the Sophists. The idea that one's hands have been dirtied with money is the perennial charge against any encroachment on what is traditionally taken to be the exclusive domain or prerogative of the wealthy, in spite of the absurdity of supposing that there is a contradiction between teaching and earning money.

Moreover, that the Sophists claimed that virtue could be taught also infringes on a prerogative of the noble. For Plato, and for most aristocrats both then and now, the idea that just anyone can become virtuous undermines the claims of the nobility of blood. What this amounts to is that the traditional view of the Sophists has more to do with the resistance to change and to the preservation of a dying aristocracy than it does with intellectual contributions, logic, reason and the like. The great obstacle that this creates for interpreters of the Sophists is that

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<sup>15</sup>"Sophistes originally meant 'skilled craftsman' or 'wise man'. The specialised meaning 'professional teacher' did not come into use until the end of the fifth century B.C., the period of the traveling teacher. The bad sense of the word developed immediately." *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966) p.125.

<sup>16</sup>"Socrates appears as the mouthpiece of the old aristocratic tradition; politically, he seems to be "the centre of an anti-democratic clique"..." in H.I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press) 1956, p.58.

the inertia of opinion has kept them in the backwater of academic and philosophical interest. But in spite of this there is no legitimate basis for denying that the intellectual and educational position of the Sophists became the dominant one in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, not only as a result of the quality of their thought, but also because of the maturation of Greek culture that took place at the time, a process that was largely fuelled by the activity of the Sophists. Their appearance and proliferation coincides with the zenith of Athens' imperial power and its subsequent downfall. But regardless of any importance that we may now be able to attribute to them, by the close of the classical period the reputation of the Sophists had suffered greatly and their contribution to the flowering of Greek intellectual life, primarily at Athens, had been relegated to the domain of derivative teaching and their fate more or less sealed in the history of Western thought. But against this image of false philosophers we can now find a more charitable attitude toward them as a result of the close analysis of the role played by these thinkers in the birth and development of the Golden Age in Greece.

Among the results of the negative attitude towards the Sophists is that scholarly attention to their work is lacking. "It is a real misfortune that so little of those older philosophic masters has come down to us and that all complete works of theirs are withheld from us. Involuntarily, on account of that loss, we measure them according to wrong standards and allow ourselves to be influenced unfavourably towards them by the mere accidental fact that Plato and Aristotle never lacked appreciators and copyists" (*PTA*: 2). While the paucity of material that remains of their work is in part responsible for this, they are sufficiently represented in extant fragments to allow for deeper appreciation, but coupled with the negative attitude of the received tradition they have been deemed unworthy in some sense and so analyses and reconstructions are few. In addition, their absence from the tradition of philosophical scholarship has further held them outside of academic purview. Over the last half century this has begun to change, but they are still far from being considered a mainstream topic in

scholarly discussions of the history of philosophy. Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century the most significant attempt to include them in this history was made by Hegel with his inclusion of their place as the antitheses of Socratic and Platonic thought, but since this has more to do with Hegel's need to demonstrate the verity of his logical system than it does with an attempt to assess their positive contribution, the inclusion of the Sophists in his history of philosophy only perpetuates the negative view of Sophistic thought. The two Sophists of particular interest to us in the current investigation, Protagoras and Gorgias, were contemporaries of Socrates and there is some evidence to show that what is called the Socratic method was in fact first developed by Protagoras as a tool in his consideration concerning antilogic arguments as a way of demonstrating the validity of the *dissoi logoi* which I shall discuss below.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, there is good reason to believe that their philosophical position was a reaction to the position of Parmenides and the Eleatic school and that their contributions can be read as an extension and development of certain other Pre-Socratic philosophers, above all Heraclitus, in the context of the practical reality of the relationship between a world in a perpetual state of flux and the needs of the democratic society in which they were active. Ultimately, they were no less important to the Greek Enlightenment than Socrates and Plato, for just "[as] the Germans would scarcely have had Kant without the period of the Enlightenment so the Greeks would scarcely have had Socrates and the Socratic philosophy without the Sophists" (Kerferd 1981: 10).

When we look at the scope of topics on which the Sophists taught, quite a different image of them emerges. They were contributors to many of the perennial debates of Greek philosophy as well as the authors of a great deal of original thought ranging, as it did, from the problems of competing theories of knowledge and perception, the nature of truth and the distinction

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<sup>17</sup>"... Diogenes Laertius records the tradition that Protagoras was the first to develop the Socratic method of argument. The attempt, as it was seen, to rob Socrates of the credit for this achievement, perhaps inevitably aroused strong partisanship." in *The Sophistic Movement*, G.B. Kerferd (Cambridge: CUP) 1981, p. 33.

between appearance and reality, the relationships between language, thought and reality, the problem of gaining positive knowledge of the gods and the possibility that they were nothing more than the product of human imagination and further, whether the gods had their origin in human invention to serve social needs, the question of what constitutes justice and the function of punishment, the nature of education and the role of teachers and, perhaps most famously (or infamously) the question of whether virtue can be taught and the subjective nature of valuation. When this list is thus compiled, without regard for the legacy of the traditional interpretation of the Sophists, it becomes a great deal more difficult to dismiss them without closer attention. Again, the fragmentary nature of the textual evidence is lamentable, but there is no reason why they should receive shorter shrift than the Pre-Socratics. But before I move on to the discussion and reinterpretation of their work, I will turn to the question of the so-called sophistic movement and its role in ancient Greek society and the culture of the classical period.

Unlike the intellectual contribution that the Sophists made to Greek thought their contribution to society and culture has been better received. As was mentioned above, they appear on the scene in the greatest numbers and with great influence during the rise and peak of Athens' imperial and cultural power. With regard to the former they were a direct influence by virtue of their role in the education of Pericles and the proliferation of the instrument of Greek democratic politics, oratory. And in terms of the latter they were of central importance due to their influence of the poets of the day. They were as much a part of the blossoming of Greek culture as were any of Athens' great artists such as Phidias, its writers such as Euripides and Aristophanes, and the birth of modern historical technique with Thucydides, since what binds all of these people together is the fact that they were largely the product of the so-called sophistic movement. It is for these reasons that we should regard the Sophists as an integral



part of what we know as the classical. Quite apart from the intellectual signification that the word 'sophistic' has today, in antiquity it was representative in a very real sense of what might be called the spirit of the age. The inauguration of Athenian democracy, the proliferation of the cultural festivals and the development of a real sense of the Hellenic can only be fully understood in the context of the self-definition mentioned in the introduction to this chapter; for it was precisely during this period as well that the Greeks managed to assert themselves as an autonomous, even autochthonous and distinct culture and people that was the equal of those powers that lay to the east and who dominated the Greek world until the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. In essence, Greece became the measure of itself and the spirit behind this sentiment received its greatest expression not in the religious and political institutions but in the doctrine of that sophist who once and for all defined the *credo* for humanism. This was of course the Protagorean doctrine that man is the measure of all things.

Protagoras' doctrine was a challenge to one of the more deeply held beliefs of the noble class, for it questions the validity of their concept of the origin and nature of virtue. The doctrine does not hold that it is mankind that is the measure of all things, but each individual. This presents a direct challenge to the notion that one is or can be born virtuous. For the Greeks of the late 6<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, virtue was a quality inherited from one's ancestors. Since noble ancestry was normally traced to a god, the idea appears perfectly reasonable. In this context, to be virtuous is to imitate one's ancestors, and to be able to imitate them, one must have them. Virtue was not considered a characteristic that could be developed *ex nihilo*. The new education that was offered by the Sophists largely dispensed with this notion since they held that virtue was the result of reason, learning, practical experience and the dispensation of one's judgment in choosing one course of action over another. It was this sense of virtue that the Sophists claimed they could teach. In a democratic society where one's political success depends on public accountability, the capacity to act with virtue served

the very practical function of securing position in both society and government. This is the democratic equivalent of the Homeric epithet of shepherd of the people.

The question of the teachability of virtue was central to the transition that took place during the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC because it placed the individual at the centre of his fate rendering both politicians and private citizens responsible for their actions in a manner that was entirely new. This was, understandably, a shocking assertion and it rekindled the debate concerning the relationship between nature and convention which has come up repeatedly in discussions of education ever since. I believe that it is accurate to say that the Sophists' answer to this question appealed directly to the spirit of the classical period. This appeal was the condition which allowed the Sophists to place new emphasis on the place and function of formal education in society. And it is this new educational function which allows Jacqueline de Romilly to claim that "Protagoras' new teaching truly leads to Isocrates, from Isocrates to Cicero, and from Cicero straight to us. We have Protagoras and his friends to thank for the fact that our own societies provide teaching for secondary schools, for students, and for those who, even in later life, are anxious to learn more about ideas and to make use of them" (de Romilly 1992: 56).

During the archaic period education consisted in the noble preparation for war. During the mid to late 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, Greece was in the process of defining herself without reference to the foreign as mentioned above. The education of the early classical period consisted of little more than a formalized version of the noble preparation for war, but it had become largely athletic as opposed to martial. Intellectually speaking there was concentration on the lessons of Homer and all of the arts of the Muses because "the pure and noble figure of Achilles...embodies the moral ideal of the perfect Homeric knight. This ideal can be defined in one phrase: it was an heroic morality of honour.... The shortness of life, the haunting fear of

death, the small hope of consolation in the life beyond the grave!" (Marrou 1956: 10). This form of education was essentially the preserve of the aristocratic class which is attested by the etymological root of the word school which is *scholei* or leisure. Originally this leisure was something secured by family position in society and wealth, but the term comes to apply to the society at large and by the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century, Athens had achieved the security necessary to allow a system of formal education to emerge and the Sophists filled the space created by the thirst for that education. The inclusion in the curriculum of the cultural components of Homer and the Muses represents the early part of the transition from the warrior culture of archaic Greece to the literary culture that would characterize Greece until the fall of Byzantium. The development of democratic institutions during the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC and the relative peace prior to the Peloponnesian war had altered the function of education in Greece in general and in its cultural epicenter, Athens, specifically. The necessary physical training for war had been replaced by the competitive athletics of the games and this transformed aspect of archaic education helped maintain its popularity during the democratic period. But in spite of these factors education stuck close to its original social strata until late in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, for "at the height of the democratic era Isocrates could still remember a time when it had been a special privilege of an aristocracy wealthy enough to be able to enjoy its leisure. Indeed, as Plato insisted, it would always tend to remain the privilege of an elite, since few were prepared to suffer the sacrifices it entailed and few could appreciate its advantages" (ibid.: 38). When the transition finally happened it brought with it the Homeric ideal of valour and the culture that this inspired and the more formal version of teaching became the standard type of education. Even Pindar, although an aristocratic poet himself, was concerned with the question of virtue's teachability, there were enough examples that blood alone was not enough, and so it was absurd, he felt, to ignore the development of one's natural gifts through education.

More than anything the Greek ideal of education and personal development was characterized by the term *kalokagathos*. *Agathos* or 'good' refers to the moral aspect of one's character and was originally associated with the noble. *Kalos* or 'beautiful' refers to physical beauty and its attendant charismatic aura which the Greeks so idealized in art and poetry. This ideal is something that has exercised an enormous amount of influence on the interpretation of antiquity especially of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, and it is essentially this that gained the ancient Greeks the reputation of having been somehow derived from the divine, the noble children of the gods, in Romantic and 19<sup>th</sup> century interpretations, which is, of course, something that Nietzsche sought to dispel. And as Marrou has said, we "must try to explode the modern myth that Greek civilization achieved a harmonious synthesis between "racial beauty, the highest artistic perfection, and the most elevated flights of speculative thought"...the ideal in itself is perfectly valid—but how brutal and uncomplicated, compared with the marvellous picture presented by Nietzsche and Burkhardt" (ibid.: 44). Marrou's sentiment here comes from the recognition of the error in the 'classicized' view of antiquity which dominated in Nietzsche's day and to a certain extent remains even today. That this image of divine repose in antiquity still exists is evidence of the enormous power of tradition taken as authority which Nietzsche strongly opposed. His view was fuelled by the greater sense of holism which he advocates in our understanding of the ancient Greeks which is to say that rather than concentrating solely on those aspects that we consider admirable, or worthy of imitation, something which characterizes the practice of exclusion that served the 19<sup>th</sup> century German and British political objective of presenting a purely noble image to society in which it might re-cast itself, Nietzsche sought to demonstrate that the much admired beauty of Greek culture was the result of the struggle between the serenity and brutality which attends every society, rather than an earnest, even divine predisposition to the beautiful. The 5<sup>th</sup> century BC was revolutionary, not only in politics, philosophy and culture

but also in education and teaching. For it was during that century that the Greeks managed to organize themselves above the relative chaos of the archaic period. And while this organization was due to a great many different factors it is not an overestimation to attribute the Sophists with a key role in this development.

In the history of philosophy the Sophists occupy a place which has been very difficult to explain satisfactorily. On the one hand, they have been unfairly treated as interlopers and charlatans in much of the literature that deals with them, but on the other hand Protagoras' thought was certainly an extension of Heraclitean philosophy and Gorgias devised his ideas about Being and Not-being as counter arguments for those of the Eleatics and Empedocles. But what appears to stand in the way of their proper inclusion in the history of philosophy is the fact that they appear not as seekers after the truth but as men with ideas too heterogeneous to be neatly categorized under one school of thought, although they are hardly unique in this respect. Their influence cannot be put down to the fashion of the day since the results of that influence encompass the names of the figures with whom that age is identified: Thucydides, Euripides, Pericles and even Socrates. Even if one reads the Sophists only from the largely negative point of view of the Platonic dialogues, Kerferd's point, that without the Sophists there would have been no Socrates or Socratic philosophy, becomes all the more clear since in the Platonic dialogues Socrates is regularly presented as arguing against what appear to be an established point of view; which is to say, the sophistic view. It is certainly true that the Sophists did not seek truth for its own sake but as something relevant and relative to life, and the thing that was especially important in the life of an educated 5<sup>th</sup> century Athenian was the ability to have one's voice heard above the throng of democratic opinions: witness Pericles. The result of this need was that sophistic education developed in the direction of relativistic humanism, whose champion was of course Protagoras.

### 3.1 Protagorean Relativism: Man as the Measure

There are some obvious and perhaps superficial reasons for including Protagoras in a reading of Nietzsche's philosophical and educational project. For instance, Nietzsche's ambivalence toward the figures of Socrates and Plato is well known. He counted these two as the chief opponents of what he took to be the creator of the golden age of Athenian culture, what he called the tragic age of the Greeks. One glance at the titles of Plato's dialogues, not to mention their content, makes it clear that Plato placed a great deal of importance on the activities of the Sophists, which he saw as a danger to the practice and development of philosophy, particularly his own. Plato portrays, in quite broad strokes, the thought and character of many of the Sophists in a singularly negative light. Given Nietzsche's ambivalence towards Socrates and Plato, it is not surprising that he might side with the Sophists and their culture, rather than that of Socrates and his hyper-rational culture. But beyond this level of interpretation there is another more significant reason for associating Nietzsche with the sophistic movement. As Scott Consigny has put it, "Nietzsche situates his reading [of the Sophists] within a project of cultural renewal designed to affirm "Life" and provide an alternative to what he saw as the "motley" and "merely decorative" culture of his own time (UH, 10). Nietzsche portrays the tragic culture of Greece as a model for such a cultural renewal" (Consigny 1994: 6). What marks the tragic culture of which he speaks is the centrality of competition or agon. This same characteristic is one which Nietzsche highlighted in his own philosophical project and it is one of his greatest contributions to our understanding of ancient Greece including their art, their politics and ultimately their philosophy. One of the first places that the agonistic nature of ancient Greek culture is explicated as a philosophical concept is in Protagoras' consideration of the *dissos logos*, which was so maligned by Plato. This topic, which is normally taken as a technique in the repertoire of the underhanded rhetor, was central to Protagoras' epistemological investigation.

By questioning the nature of knowledge Protagoras sought to identify the danger in basing philosophical investigations on concepts initially derived from opinion, which is to say assertions of truth based on individual observation and directed toward the discovery of essences. A cultural example of the idea of the 'two *logoi*' manifesting its influence comes in Attic drama. From cultural and social observations, the Greek awareness of conflict and contradiction became almost all pervasive. There was the problem of Zeus issuing contradictory commands in the poetry of Homer and Archilochus, and above all in Aeschylean tragedy. Indeed, the idea of resolving conflict can be said to lie at the heart of tragedy's function and place in society. Thus the idea of two *logoi*, or arguments, in opposition to each other was not the discovery of Protagoras, but it became a topic of central importance for him because of its implications for philosophy. Art had begun to imitate life in order to become philosophy. This idea is also of great import for Nietzsche's philosophy since, as mentioned above, his philosophy is centrally concerned with "Life" and culture for its ability to affirm or deny life.

Nietzsche counted the Sophists as his "co-workers and precursors," because, "the Sophists verge upon the first *critique of morality*, the first *insight* into morality:—they juxtapose the multiplicity of the moral value judgements;—they let it be known that every morality can be dialectically justified" (*WP*: 428). Nietzsche observed that it is in the Sophists and Protagoras in particular, that we find prescriptive morality criticized for its foundation in opinion and unfavourably compared with a more descriptive form of investigation, which I hope to show is a direct consequence of Protagoras' epistemological investigations. And from this Nietzsche concludes that "every advance in epistemological and moral knowledge reinstated the Sophists, [because] our contemporary way of thinking is to a great extent Heraclitean, Democritean, and Protagorean: it suffices to say it is Protagorean, because Protagoras represented a synthesis of Heraclitus and Democritus" (*WP*: 464). It has been noted that

Nietzsche's account of the Sophists' contribution is "aggressively partisan and egregiously selective" (Consigny 1994: 7), but that it is so by design rather than overestimation. Echoing the sentiments of Protagoras' denial of absolute essences and the reality of there being two arguments for every position or the *dissoi logoi*, Nietzsche characterizes his work "as [that which] becomes a positive spirit, to replace the improbable with the more probable, possibly one error with another" (*GM*: pref. 4). In the light of this remark it seems almost negligent to read Nietzsche without taking the Sophists as our guide. But before they can provide this assistance we must understand Nietzsche's model, for as he says "the Greek culture of the Sophists had developed out of all the Greek instincts; it belongs to the culture of the Periclean age as necessarily as Plato does *not*..." (*WP*: 464). So let us now turn our attention to the explication of Protagoras' epistemological investigations in order to provide ourselves with greater access to the relationship between Nietzsche's educational thought and his larger philosophical project.

As has already been mentioned there are cultural and mythological precedents for the Protagorean idea that in any position there are two opposing *logoi*, or arguments contained. This notion was also maintained by Pythagoras who held that everything is composed of opposites, and that because nothing exists as singular and unmixed, two opposing arguments can be maintained in the relation  $x$  and not- $x$ . More famous still is the Heraclitean expression of the simultaneous existence of opposites, each depending on the existence of the other as a differentiating principle which allows for its identification. This can also be expressed as  $x$  and not- $x$ . For Heraclitus each was part of a process of universal exchange. Every element in turn is always becoming another in a ceaseless cycle. This continual process implies that for any  $x$  there is a necessary and corresponding not- $x$ , as in light and dark, death and life or dry and wet. This raised, for Heraclitus, the very serious question of truth. His answer to this was to subsume existence in its perceptual manifestation under the governance of the *Logos*, or



universal rule by which all things are and remain in a perpetual state of flux. This *Logos* is not part of sensory reality in spite of its presence in all exchange because for Heraclitus individual reason somehow resists the universal Reason: "Of the Logos which is as I describe it men always prove to be uncomprehending, both before they have heard it and once they have heard it" (Kirk and Raven 1957: 187, from Sextus Empiricus, *adv. math.* VII, 132). In Heraclitus' philosophy the individual, on account of his resistant nature and the tendency to insist on fixity where there is only change, is the source of falsehood. Instead, "Heraclitus asserts, then, that the common and divine reason [logos], by participating in which we become rational, is the criterion of truth. Hence that which appears to all men as a shared experience is trustworthy, inasmuch as it is perceived by the common and divine Reason; but what affects only a single individual is, on the contrary, untrustworthy" (ibid: 207 Sext. Emp. *adv. math.* VII, 131 and 134). This, of course, raises the question of how we might gain access either to the common or the divine reason, since as individuals resisting it there is no reason for this fact to change when in a group. In a trivial sense we are likely to agree on things such as day and night, but when the question is raised to a higher level, when it concerns knowledge, any similar consensus is unlikely if not impossible. The answer lies in epistemology, which was not specifically treated by the Pre-Socratic philosophers, but one which marks the Protagorean and sophistic development of their tradition.

During the period up to the activity of the Sophists, the Greek contribution to philosophy rested with the *phusikoi* or natural philosophers. The inquiries of the Pre-Socratics came about as the result of the many questions raised by poetic abstractions with regard to the origins and cosmogony of the world along with the explanation of the origin and order of the gods. We have already mentioned two of these: Pythagoras, who held a notion of *harmonia* that was tied in representation and cognition to mathematical or numerical order and function, and Heraclitus, who maintained on the one hand the divine reason, which "escapes men's notice

because of their incredulity" (DK86a) and the supervenience of the *Logos*, which, although intimately connected with them, "men keep setting themselves against" (ibid.), and the fact that "they pray to images, much as if they were to talk to houses; for they do not know what gods and heroes are," on the other (ibid.). As with these two, so with a majority of the Pre-Socratics, religion, myth and the gods played a very strong supporting role in the development of their philosophy. We can imagine that the very first attempts by men to explain the world took on a purely religious or mythic character as the activity of the natural world came into purview followed by a quasi-rationalistic, though still largely religious explanation, when the question of the place of mankind was raised within that world. These relations would have given rise to the more rigorous application of reason, but nonetheless continued to bear a religious flavour, due in all probability to the constraints of vocabulary and usage. The move away from the fantastic is unmistakable, and it is in keeping with this that Protagoras makes the move to human independence from the divine.

Arguably, the Sophistic departure from the religious and poetic traditions begins with the critique of epistemology and this is nowhere more clear than in Protagoras' statement that "Concerning the gods, I am not in a position to experience their phenomenal existence or otherwise, nor their nature with regard to their external manifestation; for the difficulties are many, which prevent this experience: not only the impossibility of having a sense-experience of the gods, but also the brevity of human life" (DK80b4). In this passage the proposition of central importance is the question of the phenomenal existence of gods, and of humanity's access to knowledge of that existence. For the Greeks, Theognis had explained to them that the gods inhabit a different plane of existence from that of man and so there are different rules and laws which govern that existence. In the quotation above, although not explicitly denying the existence of the gods, Protagoras is nonetheless pointing out that regardless of their existence or non-existence, the difference between their type of existence and ours raises the

question of how we might come to have any actual knowledge of their existence based on the capacities at our disposal. Those capacities are the same as those which allow people to have any knowledge of objects in the world, which is to say, the considered sense-experience of an individual nature, which is, in turn, the thing that defines the plane of mankind's existence as the one dominated by opinion. Of course there is no particular obstacle to understanding Theognis' logic where it identifies a simple difference between the world of man and that of the gods. There would be little point in having gods who exist only in this realm because they would then be subject to the same flaws and virtues as man, which is to say that they would be no better than man. But this logic raises a very difficult obstacle, which is that "the gods don't manifest themselves in human experience in a way suited to the corresponding perceptive capacity" (Untersteiner 1954: 27). Even if the gods did manifest themselves in this plane of existence, mankind simply lacks any adequate foundation upon which to make sense of such manifestation. It may be argued that mankind would always have recourse in such instances to the designation 'that instantiation is a god,' but that can be no more than opinion, not knowledge, and that is as far as it may go. For Protagoras then, man is tied to phenomenal experience or sense-experience as the basis for knowledge, and this renders the concept of god, such as it is normally understood, an opinion which can never be known to be the truth. Following his own statement Protagoras must remain agnostic if not atheistic on the grounds that any positive knowledge or 'truth' concerning the gods must of necessity be opinion. Protagoras' question is no longer one of a *belief* in the gods, as may fairly be said about his predecessors, but is a question rather about the possibility of the *cognition* of the gods. The purpose for this initial inquiry, as will become clear, is to establish a basis for the Protagorean epistemology. In identifying the limiting nature of the world of opinion with regard to the transcendental notion of divine beings, Protagoras was able to underline the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of mankind's ability to identify and comprehend essences. He did this

through his famous proposition "that in every experience there are two *logoi* in opposition to each other" (DK80a1), so let us consider this idea in greater detail.

Having established the opaqueness of the cognizability of the gods and by implication all transcendental essences and truths, Protagoras focused his investigation on what remains, that is, the physical universe and the reality of Being as that is identified according to the Eleatic stranger's reckoning of the Sophists' profession in Plato's *Sophist* (232c), raising once again the problem of perception versus propositions of universal character concerning Becoming and Being. Protagoras' epistemology takes as its antithesis the Eleatic notion that being is one and continuous, unchangeable and perfect (Kirk and Raven 1957: 273, Parmenides in Simplicius, *Phys.* 145.1). This notion is attacked for two reasons. Firstly, and somewhat trivially, Being as one, continuous and perfect cannot hold if Protagoras' first proposition concerning the gods holds. Parmenides' concept of Being came to him through divine revelation; by his own admission the truth was revealed to him. And so, as a revelation Parmenides' position may only be regarded as opinion which does not attain to truth. He must convince those who were not privy to this revelation through argument. But as opinion Parmenides' position becomes prescriptive rather than descriptive because of the valuation 'true' which is the absolute presupposition of his argument. For Protagoras, all such revealed truth will be of this nature and it is away from this, the world of opinion-based truth, that he sought to move with his epistemology. The idea that the truth is revealed has its origins in the religious and poetic traditions of the Greeks in so far as these traditions served as the explanation of the world until the enlightenment of the late 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. The word 'truth' in ancient Greek is *aletheia*, literally meaning that which is unveiled or uncovered and until the age of the Sophists it retained the full passive nature implied as can be seen in Parmenides' account of Being. What Protagoras wished to replace this with was reason which was dependent on nothing other than the human agent fed by that which he can know: sense-

experience. Furthermore, because of its valuative nature, opinion proves itself to be an insufficient basis for the confirmation of knowledge. As a consequence, revelation concerning essences and perfection, what was traditionally said to be *aletheia*, also comes into question. The fundamental reason for this, according to Protagoras, is that for any  $x$  there is the competing not- $x$  which can always be argued. Moreover, he maintained that both sides of any argument can be maintained equally in a single argument rendering certain knowledge of the kind sought before him in Parmenides and after him in Plato, an impossibility, which brings us to the second point, the question of judgement. Protagoras' logic runs as follows.

When a judgement of some opinion is sought, that judgement may come from one of two possible types of judge, both of which create irresolvable problems. On the one hand, the judge may have no knowledge of the object that is to be judged in order to lend independence and therefore a sense of impartiality or objectivity to the judgement. On the other hand, the judge may have specific knowledge of the object that is to be judged in order that the judgement be the best informed. Clearly no one judge can meet both criteria; he must be  $x$  or not- $x$  but cannot be both. The problem arises when the merits of each type of judge are weighed against their respective demerits. With the first type of judge the resulting judgement may be impartial or objective, but must come from a position of ignorance which is not desirable where knowledge is in question. Alternatively, the second type of judge may be the best informed concerning the object to be judged, but his judgement will be based on definitions which originate in the object that is to be judged and therefore lack what is ultimately sought in any judgement, namely justice. This demonstrates the difficulty involved in deciding which of the possible *logoi* is correct. In fact the decision is impossible and this is precisely the point to which Protagoras sought to draw attention. In the dialogues of Plato, Socrates often argues that just such a division of wholes into parts and decisions about which parts are essential is necessary in order to achieve positive knowledge of essences. But this

should make it clear that a knowledge of essences is thus impossible. And this is due in no small part to the inappropriate mixing of the ontological and metaphysical questions concerning essences and the epistemological question of what the object of knowledge is or can be which results from this dissection. Following Socrates' arguments, that division is a necessary condition for knowledge, knowledge as such becomes impossible, at least it is impossible to gain a knowledge of anything other than one's self and one's experiences which is of course solipsism. The only thing to be discovered, according to Protagoras' logic, in the realm of opinion based knowledge, is the fact that there are two positions for every argument, and from this he makes the deduction that, as opinion does not, as I said, attain to truth, nor does it or can it give the real object of sense-experience. When considered in the larger context of the metaphysics of essences, on which we can at best only speculate, the possibility of their attainment and definition is outside of the range of possibility for us, which is to say that the part is ill-equipped to define the whole. We may conclude that *x* or *y* is a characteristic of Virtue or Truth but these will themselves remain forever elusive and subject to the multiplicity of opinions of men who, once again, are only capable of discovering that there is no one answer, only two arguments in opposition to each other.

This will, of course, have a profoundly sceptical appearance, and this would certainly be true were Protagoras to leave it there, but he does not. He considered this conclusion tragic: a tragedy for the human intellect, because he maintained that the *logoi* are a form of the intelligible. But, like any good tragedy, its completion comes only when reconciliation is attained. "To achieve this end, Protagoras leaves on one side the opinions Man can form regarding all that is not perceptible and that presupposes essences.... Protagoras, in fact, when dealing with every problem of knowledge, leaves the sphere of opinion which has been subjected to the disintegration of the 'logoi in opposition' in order to set over against it the claim of sense-phenomena" (Untersteiner 1954: 35). To this end Protagoras moves from the

dissolution of opinion in the *logoi* in opposition, what is called the negative or critical part of his investigation, to its positive or constructive aspect, the man/measure doctrine and the realm of description.

Protagoras posits the idea that man is the measure of all things which is to say that concerning the things that can be said to be it is man that determines that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not. Among the fragments of ancient philosophers this proposition has caused a great deal of speculation and debate mostly centred on the word man (*anthropos*) because of how much depends on its interpretation. The question is, as may seem obvious, how 'man' is to be taken in this proposition, either as the individual or collective. Indeed, in antiquity, the majority of opinion sided with the latter interpretation, but I suspect that, on the surface, this has a lot to do with the negative light in which Protagoras and the Sophists were cast from the time of Plato onward. There is, I believe, little or no reason to maintain this interpretation in light of the arguments laid out so far, because it now seems clear that in this proposition Protagoras sought to oppose revelation and opinion, which he has shown to be ineffective in the pursuit of knowledge, to a more inclusive perspective and one that is less susceptible to the appearance of absolute valuation, that is, man in general. This is achieved for Protagoras by relying on the descriptive approach to what man, in general, can know.

The initial difficulty in this position is that 'man in general' must in some sense be a conglomeration of individual interpretations, but if those interpretations are based on opinion it would appear that no combination of them could alleviate the inherent flaws of each. What keeps any combination from having the epistemological weight that Protagoras seeks is the tendency of individual interpretations to pretend to absolute valuation insofar as the valuation, which is personal, claims to correspond to some objective, that is impersonal, state of affairs. It would seem then that the obstacle is the valuation itself, which is taken as an intrinsic

quality of every opinion. But for Protagoras valuation is a characteristic of individual sense-experiences which can be removed without destroying the experience itself because he does not take it as intrinsic to the experience, but rather as appended to the experience. As was mentioned in the introduction, Protagoras moved from prescriptive morality to descriptive morality in his epistemological investigations, and it is precisely this move, from the prescriptive to the descriptive, which effects the necessary change in experience with regard to knowledge. The whole question of knowledge becomes one of degrees rather than absolutes. It is possible for a given individual's experiences to attain to reality, either externally as sense-perceptions or internally as intellectual concepts, insofar as they have the possibility of becoming apparent to others through description and this 'becoming-apparent' can only attain to validity within an epistemology which rejects categorical or absolute valuation as tenable because of the impossibility of reaching a totality of possible perspectives. Protagoras comes to this conclusion in an effort to understand the vast scope of experiences and in recognition of that scope. Any experience, as experienced by an individual, cannot be an object of interpretation for anyone else if it incorporates the valuation of the initial perceiver as an intrinsic quality or characteristic. Experiences cannot be "real until the moment when 'experiences' [are] freed from those contradictions (the individual valuations) which could nullify all their value. This moment [coincides] exactly with that of their realization as phenomena, which involve the corresponding certain knowledge" (Untersteiner 1954: 42). From this we may understand a key distinction in Protagoras' epistemology, between phenomena or sense-experience and the opinion concerning that sense-experience. This leads to what is perhaps the most central component Protagoras' thought, the art of rhetoric or persuasion.

"For one man some things have reality and appear to him, for another other things. I am very far from saying that wisdom and a wise man do not exist, but the man I call wise is he who,



for anyone of us to whom experiences seem and are without value, causes them by means of a change to seem and be [endowed] with value" (ibid.: 52). It should be noted that we have in this passage what is the essentially educative nature of Protagoras' thought. The statement 'causes them by means of a change' is meant to recall the shift from prescription to description which should recall the exchange of the lesser probability for the greater. Protagoras does not mean to rob the individual of his or her propriety over individual interpretations of sense-experiences, but he does wish to define them according to the criteria of private and public presentation. They are not objects of knowledge but matters of opinion. It follows that a matter of opinion, the prescriptive, will be the less probable and the object of knowledge, the descriptive, the more probable. Let us look now to the explanation of this point offered by Socrates in Plato's *Theaetetus*.

Socrates, speaking for Protagoras, makes the case which speaks to the truly constructive nature of Protagoras' proposition. Often, the chief claim against the perceived relativism of the man/measure doctrine is that it cannot attain to truth or wisdom because of its apparent denial of absolutes and essences, and in the *Theaetetus* Socrates makes the point for Protagoras that truth and wisdom are two separate things in the following manner.

Protagoras holds that individuals are the measure of what is and what is not *for them* and that there is a great difference between one individual and another on precisely the level of their peculiar measure or interpretation. For instance, standing next to another person I may consider myself to be in good health and so far as I am concerned this is the truth, but, as I am a smoker, the person next to me, a non-smoker, may consider me to be in a poor state of health, both physically and mentally, and so far as that person is concerned, this is the truth. Clearly, I cannot be both in a state of health and in a state of illness at the same time as these are contradictory states, so we must conclude that either I am in neither or that the word

'truth' is an incorrect description where more than one point of view is considered. Protagoras chooses the latter option. "By a wise man I mean precisely a man who can change anyone of us, when what is bad appears and is to him, and make what is good appear and be to him.... To the sick man his food appears sour and is so; to the healthy man it is and appears the opposite" (*Theatetus*: 166d). One of these two is not, according to Protagoras, to be considered wise and the other unwise because the one thinks falsely and the other does not, which, according to the man/measure doctrine, cannot be the case. "What is wanted is a change to the opposite condition, because the other is better" (ibid.: 167a). And so, rather than true and false, which in Protagoras' epistemology are restricted to the level of individual opinion, he has introduced the notions of a better and worse interpretation attended by reason. Put another way, when the man in the man/measure doctrine is taken as the individual, judgements can only be true in a prescriptive way because of the value placed on them and when these are asserted in the public sphere the only thing that will be discovered is that there are two *logoi* in opposition to each other. But when 'man' is taken as inclusive, interpretation will be descriptive because the object of discourse and inquiry at this level is the discovery of the better state or that which is more probable, over the worse state or that which is less probable. This is what is meant by "to change the lesser possibility of knowledge into the greater possibility of knowledge" (DK80a21). In this way the better argument remains abstract, flexible and in a sense universal when placed next to a lesser argument, but this only occurs when the opinion of an individual seeks acceptance not as truth, but as knowledge. This means that for Protagoras "only man as a member of a group, man in general, is in a position to perfect the power to apprehend experiences in the interest of the human individual, abstractly understood without regard to his internal history as a person..." (Untersteiner 1954: 55).

This conclusion raises the question as to whether it is legitimate, within this epistemological scheme, to make the claim that the better argument with respect to its ability to bring about a more desirable state is then the right or correct argument. This is a particularly important question because the affirmative answer would send Protagoras' position back to that which it tried to dispel; for if one argument is right then the other must be wrong, one correct and the other incorrect. In that case Protagoras will have done little more than occupy some time with clever, that is sophistic, arguments only to collapse into the realm of the metaphysics of essences. Fortunately, for the present discussion and the connection I wish to draw between Protagoras and Nietzsche, the answer is no: there is no right or correct argument in absolute terms for Protagoras because the discussion must remain firmly embedded within the discussion of what we can know, as I intend to show holds for Nietzsche as well. As I have said, the better interpretation will always replace the worse interpretation, but for Protagoras "there does not in fact exist an absolute orthotes [correctness]; from the logos orthos [right argument] there can always be subtracted the value, in the realm of opinion, of a logos orthoteros [best argument], orthon [better] is therefore that which at any time, by means of reason, can be rendered more probable than anything else..." (ibid. 56). And so to sum up, for Protagoras, that which is said to be true is necessarily prescriptive, but prescriptive statements are the result of opinions which will always contain some valuation from the perspective of the individual making the claim and so the prescription thus obtained cannot be true for anyone other than its author, or at least will be subject to equally valid, opinion-based counter arguments. On the other hand there is reason, which attends to the better argument becoming apparent from an original position of lower probability, and through reason the elimination of valuation is effected and the descriptive function changes the less probable to the more probable. And so for Protagoras the possibility of a metaphysical reality of black and white is of little concern, just as the existence or not of the gods is, because of the impossibility of

direct access. And so "Metaphysics is superseded by anthropology.... We may therefore, speaking more precisely, say that the traditional metaphysics is dethroned—like the Titanic element, which cannot be annihilated, but can be robbed of its prestige..." (Untersteiner 1954: 62).

### 3.2 The Point of View: Nietzsche's Perspectivism

He who has come only in part to a freedom of reason cannot feel on earth otherwise than as a wanderer - though not as a traveller *towards* a final goal, for this does not exist. But he does want to observe, and keep his eyes open for everything that actually occurs in the world; therefore he must not attach his heart too firmly to any individual thing; there must be something wandering within him, which takes its joy in change and transitoriness (*HAH*: I 638).

Much has been written about Nietzsche's styles, strategies and methods of inquiry. It is perhaps due to the manner in which Nietzsche composed and formulated his thought, using many different styles, often appearing to assert contradictory points of view and avoiding the seduction of truth as one and unified, that has kept it at the centre of discussions on interpretation. While Nietzsche does seem to assert the truth of his own ideas and while many of them appear to require the statements to be objectively true if any sense is to be made of what they communicate, at the same time, such assertions appear to contradict the very essence of the philosophy in which they figure. The variety and range of the ways in which his works have been used would seem to bear this out. The ability to answer all questions in one systematic and self-contained effort was not part of Nietzsche's conception of philosophy because, as in his pedagogical programme, philosophy has no telos, it is not made up of a finite set of problems, but rather, philosophy and education are processes which, as the passage quoted above suggests, wander without a final destination. It is the going, not the getting there, that's good. But this is not to say that Nietzsche felt that philosophy and education were to be engaged in for their own sake. As I mentioned earlier with regard to history, philosophy and education too must serve Life, which is to say that they are tools in the process of improving or enhancing life; of the individual, of the society and of the culture. As a result, Nietzsche left to posterity a very sticky and, at the same time, a very slippery legacy. At the centre of this legacy is the thesis that "facts are precisely what there is not, only interpretations" (*WP*: 481). This statement informs his discussions of good and evil, history

and science, morality and ethics, culture and education. Those who choose to take him up on this point are faced with what appear to be three equally unsatisfying options. If it is taken as a statement of objective fact it refutes itself, and if it is taken merely as an interpretation it can have no binding force. The third, even less satisfying option, is that its validity must not be considered; it is a confession of faith and therefore not subject to scrutiny as if it were the necessary Nietzschean noble lie. It is difficult to escape these explanations since their supporters come from all quarters, as do their detractors. I think that all of these versions are misguided as a result of the presuppositions and prejudices which inform them, and that the best approach to this question comes from Nietzsche himself.

In this chapter I want to separate the metaphysical and ontological arguments that stem from Nietzsche's statement about facts in order to concentrate on the epistemological argument that informs it. Just as Protagoras suspended judgement concerning the existence or not of the gods, so I want to suspend judgement concerning Nietzsche's metaphysical claims. The reason for this is twofold. In the first place there is a dramatic shift in Nietzsche's thought on the metaphysics of reality from the early to the late periods of his philosophical development. As has often been noted, Nietzsche began his philosophical activity while under the influence of Arthur Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*. Nietzsche himself came to assess that influence as the result of a personal rather than a philosophical affinity. In his youth, Nietzsche's experience of academia's 'great men' had left him with a melancholic pessimism. This mood coincided with his chance discovery of Schopenhauer's book, which presented a familiar image of existence to him and as a result he was willing to accept the possibility of an objective reality beyond or outside of the reality we experience, and this is apparent from his work of that period in *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Truth and Lying in an Extramoral Sense* and other writings. Later, as his analysis of morality, good and evil deepened, he ceased to consider that world as possibility and came to see it in terms of the

concept of the will to power; the positing of it being a tool used to draw attention and emphasis away from the phenomenal world as part of the struggle for survival and dominance. This occurred, at least in part, as a result of another, earlier, shift in his thought. It was during the so-called positivist period that Nietzsche began to look to the natural sciences, biology and physics in particular, for a more accurate description of the world, marking a shift in emphasis, as was the case with Protagoras, from the prescriptive to the descriptive. Ultimately though, the sciences fell out of favour in his analysis as he began to realize that they too suffered from intractable presuppositions. It was at this point that he began to reject metaphysics as a viable option in the search for an explanation.

In the second place, the nature and validity of any claims about metaphysics that Nietzsche may be said to make have little bearing on our primary concern here which is his philosophy of education. The shift that he made during that middle period, on the other hand, is of paramount importance. I mean of course, the shift from the prescriptive to the descriptive, for it is this which allows us to focus on what is the central concern of education: what we can know. It might be said that metaphysics and epistemology form two sides of the same coin, and we have seen how Protagoras certainly appears to have felt this way, but even in that case, to extend the metaphor, we can still know the coin with great profit without knowing both sides of it. Having thus set the context for this chapter I will concentrate on Nietzsche's epistemological observations as a development of Protagoras' position. Furthermore, I hope to demonstrate that it is only by applying the kind of critical rigour and openness to the possibility of error that Nietzsche so frequently exhorted his audience to, that we can make sense of his thesis. "The will to truth requires a critique - let us thus define our own task - the value of truth must for once be experimentally *called into question*" (GM: III 24). In the following pages I will outline Nietzsche's thesis regarding interpretation and perspectivism

and how this position is best read within the context of, and as a development of, the Protagorean epistemology discussed in the previous chapter.

Before we can move on to the closer analysis of Nietzsche's thesis, it will be helpful to clean up a distinction which has often been the source of confusion surrounding this discussion. Just as with Protagoras, depending on the aspect of this thesis to which weight is given, it can be taken to discuss both metaphysical concerns about a mind independent reality and epistemological claims concerning what we can know. For my purposes, weight will be given to the reading that Nietzsche's statements about facts and interpretation are not to be taken as metaphysical claims about the nature of reality and the possibility of a so-called 'real' world, independent of our sense-perceptions, but as an epistemological claim that none of our beliefs about the world attain to certain and objective knowledge. Insofar as our chief concern here is education, Nietzsche thesis is best read as a statement of, or call to, epistemic humility.

One of the chief difficulties in dealing with Nietzsche's perspectivism is the idea that his thesis resists the kind of fixity which is normally considered a basic criterion of truth. But here also is part of the key to understanding the thesis: as with Protagoras the fixity of absolutes is what is being abandoned, or rather he is unveiling what he appears to have taken to be the myth of fixity because of the limits that such a view places on knowledge and creativity and thereby education and culture. It is certainly easier when one can point to something, define it, turn away and then return to it and find it in exactly the same state as when it was left, but as Nietzsche pointed out in *On Truth and Lies in an Extramoral Sense*, "When someone hides something behind a bush and looks for it again in the same place and finds it there as well, there is not much to praise in such seeking and finding." For Nietzsche, as for Protagoras and Heraclitus before him, the belief in such fixity is what lies at the heart of folly and produces only worse interpretations. The overall impression of flux that Nietzsche



instils throughout his writing is central to understanding this interpretative strategy. In his early years, as a philologist and classicist, he was a vehement opponent of excessive criticism, his point being that at some point the criticism, textual in the case of philology but the point applies equally to philosophy, must end and interpretation must begin. Such a notion was understandably distasteful to his contemporaries and colleagues, since it implies that their expressed goal is misguided.

Nietzsche asked that we accept the limitations of existence along with the necessary fictions and simplifications which he believes make life possible, thereby releasing the illimitable nature of creativity, for "the individual... has to interpret in a quite individual way even the words it has inherited. Its interpretation of a formula at least is personal, even if it does not create a formula; as an interpreter, the individual is still creative" (*WP*: 767). This would seem to indicate a crippling form of subjectivity, but to interpret his point in this way would be to over-emphasize what is being removed to the detriment of what is being offered. This point is perhaps better expressed as a modification of the point made about *telos*. The fictions and simplifications we create through our interpretations of the world provide us with provisional ends which serve to make things stand out or become interesting to us. We need a contextual belief in some *telos* in order to give us a reason to choose "A" over "B", but Nietzsche wants to emphasize that we must not attach our hearts too firmly to any individual thing. This recalls Protagoras' assessment of man as a member of a dynamic aggregation of individual descriptions. What is being taken away is precisely the fixity that is anathema to creativity, and what is being offered is a way validating, and therefore emphasizing, the relation of each individual to the world. "The perspective...decides the character of the "appearance"! As if a world would still remain over after one deducted the perspective!...Reality consists precisely in this particular action and reaction of every individual part to the whole" (*WP*: 567). For Nietzsche, truth is something created by subjects as opposed to something that is out there,

waiting to be discovered, uncovered, or revealed. Nietzsche's thesis emphasizes the creative and dynamic over the banal and fixed. And while perspectivism may seem ambiguous because of its apparent lack of any criteria for deciding what makes one interpretation better than another, this difficulty is overcome by taking into account his criterion of life-promotion, by which I take him to mean that which promotes creative progress beyond whatever state of affairs exists in the present, or put another way, the ascendancy of a better interpretation over a worse interpretation. This can also be understood in the light of Socrates' explanation of the Protagorean position of exchanging an interpretation that serves to limit one's life for one that enhances it. Better still, we should think of Gorgias' analogy (*Gorgias*: 456b) of his brother, the doctor, being unable to have a patient take the medicine which will restore his health. In his state of poor health medicine tastes and *is* bitter to him, perpetuating his state. But that same medicine is the thing that will alter this state. Once he is convinced or persuaded of this view of reality the man's life is promoted – and this is the better interpretation. Of course, one may argue, that no present can be the same as any other on account of the fact that no two presents can coexist in the same space and time and this accounts for the sophistic contention that interpretations are incorrigible; what the sick man thinks about his state is true, but that 'truth' can be replaced. What is required is the replacement of the worse interpretation by the better, neither of which can claim absolute validity, and this is fundamental to Nietzsche's understanding of progress. I believe that Nietzsche would argue that if our efforts are not directed towards the promotion of change, but towards the reification of understanding and interpretation, then a judgement is being made that some state of affairs is more desirable than *any* other which, as was the case with the definition of the 'real' for the philistine, that only his view of the world is correct, has the effect of making that state of affairs the only acceptable state of affairs not because of its utility or validity, but because of the dogmatic reception of it as tradition which is entirely circular.

Nietzsche's philosophical thought has specifically to do with this business of life, and the part to whole relationship of the philosophical endeavour is represented by those who create individual truths, what he calls the scientific and philosophical labourers, but this idea applies equally to societies and cultures. "It may be necessary for the education of a genuine philosopher that he himself has stood on all these steps... in order to be able to pass through the whole range of human values and value feelings and to be *able* to see with many eyes and consciences, from a height and into every distance, from the depths into every height, from a nook into every expanse" (*BGE*: 211). The emphasis here is on the incorporation of as many perspectives as possible without ever attempting to eliminate the individual perspective's origin and explanation, for in this way the resulting interpretation is a better representation of the whole, which is not to say that it is equal to that whole, since this is for Nietzsche an impossibility due to the ever-changing nature of reality. Protagoras had arrived at the same conclusion and Nietzsche's development of this comes when he points out that it is how we deal with that nature which is the objective. The philosopher must be someone who embraces that creativity which makes the more encompassing view possible or one who emphasizes the incorporation of many descriptions rather than one who asserts one prescription. They must take the ever increasing body of valuations and interpretations and fit them into models that can be dealt with in such a way that not every individual is required to go through the same process, but at the same time is kept mindful of the circumstances that make any given interpretation of reality valid; philosophy, like life and education, is an ongoing and ever renewing process. In essence they must distil any present universe of 'truths' into a palatable and beneficial elixir. "With a creative hand they reach for the future, and all that is and has been becomes a means for them, an instrument, a hammer. Their "knowing" is *creating*, their creating a legislation, their will to truth is - *will to power*" (*ibid.*).

The question of the many eyes being incorporated into a philosophy raises the question of the status and nature of the concept of objectivity. If the possibility of fixity is eliminated then surely there can be no room for a concept of objectivity which makes a claim to universal applicability and duration. Any encounter with an object in the world creates an impression on the observer which is then expressed in language, if knowledge is to be passed on to other observers and subjects. The difficulty lies in our access to the impression prior to the mediation of language which can perhaps be seen as the point at which the valuation is imposed, rendering the impression an opinion. Here lies another key component of Nietzsche's thesis. The standard interpretations of that thesis, both pro and con, take the denial of facts to be a metaphysical claim about the composition of reality. But I think that it is better understood as saying that what we call a fact is no more than the perspectival impression of an object made on a subject, and so constitutes the subject's 'knowledge'. Seen in this way, the only thing in this relationship which can firmly be said to exist is the interpretation *of facts*, that is, impressions. This more clearly explains the role of language in the thesis which, as we have seen, is something that Nietzsche places specific emphasis on in education. We simply have no access to those pre-linguistic impressions and so, for us, there can only be interpretations of them. Speaking epistemologically, the question of whether or not there is a world out there which exists, independent of our interpretations, is not a particular concern here because without any access to it, discussions of it become moot. It is in the context of this observation that Nietzsche makes the statement that "Our apparatus for acquiring knowledge is not *designed* for 'knowledge'" (WP: 496), where 'knowledge' is knowledge of a world that does not change and our apparatus is our linguistic predisposition. Nietzsche would have us accept this as one of the limitations of existence, one of his harsh truths. We are linguistic beings and our knowledge is mediated by language. Echoing Protagoras' point about the descriptive function, Nietzsche alters the meaning of the objective

such that it is inclusive rather than exclusive. "There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity' be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to suspend each and every affect, supposing we were capable of this - what would that mean but to *castrate* the intellect" (GM: III 12). Objectivity too is an interpretation, one of Nietzsche's necessary simplifications. Nietzsche makes this move because the standard conception of objectivity as disinterested is anathema to creative existence. Objectivity is for Nietzsche, as it was for Protagoras, an important part of critical reason in so far as it denotes a conception of objects from multiple perspectives – it is essentially descriptive in a non-exclusive and dynamic sense.

As with many standard philosophical concepts, Nietzsche designates his peculiar use of the word 'objectivity' with quotation marks, because in his analysis "[objectivity] is not contemplation without interest (which is a nonsensical absurdity), but...the ability to *control* one's Pro and Con and to dispose of them, so that one knows how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge" (ibid.), and we should perhaps add to this the idea of it serving life as well. Objectivity is thus for Nietzsche not the tool of the sterile, unaffected, disinterested and atemporal knowing subject. Objectivity is a perspectival interpretation that has been appropriately arrived at and applied to the attainment of certain human purposes. Western philosophy has sought the truth, defined by Nietzsche in this context as "a world that is not self-contradictory, not deceptive, does not change, a *true* world in which one does not suffer..." (WP: 585). The opposite world, the one we inhabit and know, contains contradiction, suffering and change which is seen as undesirable. The belief that is created in this thought is that if we can conceive of a world which meets these criteria for happiness, the only thing lacking is a method of achieving it. In order to achieve it, what is

necessary is the denial of contradiction, deception and change, or what both Nietzsche, and Gorgias and Heraclitus before him, call becoming. Once again the traditional emphasis is placed on fixity which is here construed as happiness, or being as opposed to becoming. "Contempt, hatred for all that perishes, changes, varies - whence comes this valuation of that which remains constant? Obviously, the will to truth is here merely the desire for a world of the constant" (ibid.). Since the version of the world that is derived from our senses is defined as undesirable, one that is dissociated from them, and allegedly based on reason alone, is deemed desirable. In this way a kind of contempt not only for the senses, but also for the way things are perceived, is constructed. Nietzsche says that this has to do with one's level of strength of will. The desire for a world that does not change comes from a lack of strength, or more specifically, a lack of creative strength. "How much one needs a *faith* in order to flourish, how much that is "firm" and that one does not wish to be shaken because one *clings* to it, that is the measure of the degree of one's strength (or to put it more clearly, of one's weakness)..." (GS: 347).

On another level is the nihilist who not only desires a world of fixity, but who also lacks the strength even to conceive of that world. The nihilist is limited to the knowledge that he doesn't want this world. "A nihilist is a man who judges of the world as it is that it ought not to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist" (WP: 585), which should be seen as little more than the specific abrogation of the individual's responsibility in the creation of meaning, of knowledge and therefore of the passing on of that knowledge through education and culture. Each of these categories of knowledge, objectivity, nihilism and perspectivism, are based in valuations, but the only one of these that is willing to accept the practical and subjective nature of all valuation is the latter. It seems paradoxical that a claim to disinterested objective truth can be based on a valuation since any valuation is necessarily perspectival; it is a reckoning of *x* over *y*, and therefore to a certain degree it is subject to

choice. This basis in values and subjective choice is the reason that Nietzsche defines the concept of objectivity as the disposing of one's Pro and Con, which is to say as choice on a subjective and interested level.

It is certainly not the case that Nietzsche seeks to deny any party's right to choose, and here we may return to the criteria for judging choice. "The falseness of a judgement is not for us necessarily an objection to a judgement....The question is to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating..." (BGE: 4). This passage alludes to a very important aspect of Nietzsche's thesis which is the notion of necessary fictions and simplifications or illusions which can be seen as the ever-changing nature of knowledge. Once the concept of objectivity is understood in perspectivist terms then a new epistemological standard is required. For Nietzsche, since even the very notion of 'the truth' applies to a mediated impression rather than something fixed and eternal, it can be described as a kind of *reductio ad menem* in that he considered truth to be something created. "The view that *truth is found* and that ignorance and error are at an end is one of the most potent seductions there is. Supposing it is believed, then the will to examination, investigation, caution, experiment is paralyzed: it can even count as criminal, namely as *doubt* concerning truth" (WP: 452). The will that he describes here is at one and the same time the origin of both that disinterested form of objectivity and perspectivism, the difference being that in the former it will eventually become 'paralyzed' while the latter is a guarantee that it will not. That it will not re-introduces Nietzsche's categories of fictions and necessary simplifications into the discussion. I will now turn to the corollary of Nietzsche's considerations of objectivity and perspectivism, what he called the will to ignorance, which should be seen as an important contribution to the development of Protagoras' epistemology. That epistemology essentially ends with the identification of what we can know, whereas Nietzsche takes this farther by showing us the conditions for such knowledge.

Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to ignorance rises out of his analysis of the foundations of truth and knowledge. For Nietzsche, underlying the traditional understanding of objectivity is the notions of fiction, or myth and the necessary simplifications which are the necessary conditions for any given point of view, for any life. This is to say that even in the quest for 'the truth' there are certain presuppositions and inherited prejudices that inform the approach to any object in the world. The assumption of fixity as a necessary and sufficient condition for truth can be seen as the foreground of the notion of objective reality, and understanding this *as* foreground makes an understanding of what is not being considered in such formulations very important; for "[what] is familiar is what we are used to; and what we are used to is most difficult to 'know' - that is, to see as a problem; that is, to see as strange, and distant, as 'outside us'" (GS: 355). Here, Nietzsche speaks of something far less philosophical than personal. By adhering to the notion of objectivity which rejects the evidence of the senses, we are valuing objectivity against any of its rivals. Our notion of objectivity is difficult to see as outside us because of the intellectual and epistemological investment in it. Once again, Nietzsche sees a paradoxical reversal in this. Objectivity, which is supposed to be a method of achieving the world as it is in reality, requires as a condition for its validity, the rejection of the perspectival world, the only one we 'know', *our* world. But because the truth in or through objectivity is placed at the top of the epistemological hierarchy it is placed in the position of privilege. This placing is arbitrary, it begins only as a provisional *telos* which makes the search for its 'proof' interesting to us, it is a valuation of *x* over *y* which comes to be tacitly assumed to be 'true' in precisely the same way as the nature of the 'disease' discussed at the opening of this chapter comes to be taken as the nature of 'things' and then simply as Nature. To drop the idea of objectivity would be to drop what is held in highest regard and what is most distinctly associated with us. This is something very difficult to do since we have for a long time based the whole idea of our understanding of the world on it.



And here is the reversal: in order to maintain our objective knowledge of the world we must internalize and prize that which is supposed to be independent, external and not subject to arbitrary valuation. In order to maintain objectivity we must ignore, in a semiconscious way, why it is so important *to us*. "It's not enough that you understand in what ignorance humans as well as animals live; you must also have and acquire the *will* to ignorance. You need to grasp that without this kind of ignorance life itself would be impossible, that it is a condition under which alone the living thing can preserve itself and prosper: a great, firm dome of ignorance must encompass you" (*WP*: 609). Ignorance is a necessary condition for the concept of truth in its traditional form, for without it there would be nothing to 'discover' and nothing to discuss. At the same time though, this realization puts us in the difficult situation of needing to deceive ourselves. We must continue to *believe* that the truth is out there, outside us, in order to continue to create it, and here we can begin to grasp the notion that what Nietzsche is discussing is not opposition, but complement:

...from the beginning we have contrived to retain our ignorance in order to enjoy an almost inconceivable freedom, lack of scruple and caution, heartiness and gaiety of life - in order to enjoy life! And only on this solid, granite foundation of ignorance could knowledge rise so far - the will to knowledge on the foundation of a far more powerful will: will to ignorance, to the uncertain, to the untrue! Not as its opposite, but—as its refinement! (*BGE*: 24).

Once understood as complements, many of the apparent oppositions that Nietzsche discusses can be more clearly apprehended. Objectivity requires perspective, the will to truth requires the will to ignorance and good requires evil just as life requires death, growth requires degeneration and destruction and light requires dark. The work that is encompassed by his thesis about facts and interpretations has to do with the softening of the various camps. He is neither asserting a dogmatic interpretation of knowledge nor trying to replace the hitherto established approaches with his own, rather, he is attempting to more fully explain the

relationships that exist in the questions that have confronted Western philosophical thought throughout its history.

### 3.3 On Being and Becoming

Among ancient philosophers, Nietzsche's affinity for the thought of Heraclitus is perhaps the best known. He is as complimentary towards Heraclitus as he is critical of Plato and Socrates for one reason in particular: Heraclitus' conclusion that becoming rather than being is the fundamental state of the world. When philosophy broke away from the religious and poetic traditions of archaic Greek culture, what Nietzsche called the tragic age, it did so in an effort to clarify the abstractions that had been generated from those traditions. Unsurprisingly, religion and the poetry that it inspired dealt primarily with the relationship between the world of the gods and that of man, the world of the senses. In most, if not all ancient cultures, the divine serves the function of representing a kind of perfection to mankind. The desire for clarification came from the intellectual dissatisfaction with those religious and poetic abstractions as explanations of the way things are. The distinction between *Cosmos* and *Chaos* ceased to adequately explain order in the universe. The first philosophers, known in antiquity as the *phusikoi* or inquirers into nature, sought to explain order and chaos with reference to meteorological observations and the evidence of the natural world because of the apparent dominance of order in that world with only periodic lapses into chaos. But when the inquiry turned to the origin of these two forces, there simply was no answer and recourse was taken to the *apeiron*, the infinite or indefinite. Such an answer was unlikely to satisfy the growing desire for explanation and it is with Parmenides that the first attempt is made at definitive explanation. Placing a positive valuation on existence over non-existence, Parmenides explained the make up of the world by positing not an element, as his predecessors had done, but a concept as that which underlies all existence, be it ordered or chaotic. Everything must have being in order to exist and further, being "is unborn and imperishable, entire, alone of its kind, unshaken, and complete...single and continuous" (DK28b8). And while the association between being and existence is logical in the sense that

anything that can be said to exist must do so for some period of time and is therefore in a process of 'being,' this is really the misapplication of the tense aspect, continuous and repeated, of the verb in the present to an object. In strictly perceptual terms this idea is slightly counter-intuitive in that its derivation cannot come from the world we know. Indeed, according to Parmenides, it came from "the limits of [his] heart's desire" and was explained to him by the goddess Justice. And so for Parmenides, what constitutes the world shares none of the characteristics of 'Being' in Parmenides' sense. The simplest explanation of the counter-intuitive nature of Parmenides' explanation is that while the world is full of things that exist, they do so only for relatively short periods of time. Of greater constancy in the world is the idea that that which exists came into being at one point and at another will cease to be. Being thus seems fleeting, rather than primary, and this is where Nietzsche's affinity for Heraclitus arises. Heraclitus was the first philosopher to make the attempt to explain the world in its own terms and context rather than taking refuge behind 'pure reason' or concepts derived from abstractions based on the denial of the reality of the world presented to the senses. Heraclitus is the philosopher of change and transitoriness, of becoming, but not as the opposite of being, rather as the necessary neutral condition for existence. Heraclitus' philosophy is based on the ancient Greek ideal of harmony, but unlike his predecessors and their followers, his harmony is the result of strife, struggle and tension rather than an idyllic divine repose. In this section I want to investigate why the concept of being provides an inadequate explanation of why things are as they are through an analysis of Gorgias of Leontini's challenge to it in the work *On What Is Not*. I will then explicate the similarities and association between Heraclitus' and Nietzsche's use of the concept of becoming, for as Nietzsche says in *Ecce Homo*, "The affirmation of passing away and destroying, which in the decisive feature of a Dionysian philosophy; saying yes to opposition and war; becoming,

along with the repudiation of the very concept of being—all this is clearly more closely related to me than anything else thought to date” (*EH*: 273).

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter above, Protagoras and Gorgias can be seen, philosophically speaking, as a reaction to Parmenides and the Eleatic school. Protagoras’ position as described through his doctrine of the man as the measure of all things clearly dispenses with the notion that there is some thing or entity which underlies the world and he champions the notion that what there is, what is real, is what the individual takes it to be. Of course, this is not meant as any sort of totalizing theory since any such theory must of necessity include all possible perspectives or descriptions, and as such no sum of the parts can be accounted since they are infinite. And while Nietzsche certainly has sympathy for this position he is much more critical of the Parmenidean position. In the introduction to this chapter I mentioned that the development of philosophy was part and parcel of a desire to explain the world and account for its structure, but Nietzsche draws a distinction here. In *Gay Science* he says that ““Explanation” is what we call it, but it is “description” that distinguishes us from older stages of knowledge and science. Our descriptions are better—we do not explain any more than our predecessors” (*GS*: 112). And by this he simply means that the questions philosophy considers have not changed, but how much we can say about each “thing” has increased through specialized, or rather over-specialized in Nietzsche’s opinion, study. This recalls Nietzsche’s criticism of the philologists who become stuck in the rut of criticism, which is to say that in philosophy, while we do know more in a quantitative sense, we know no more in the qualitative sense: we know a great deal more about a great deal less. We can easily see that this relates to his criticism of modern education insofar as he indicts it for developing the specialization which tells us a great deal more about a great deal less. And this is the result of what he sees as the fundamental error which stems from the positing of stability and fixity as the state of the so-called real world, because this positing raises the

question of “how [we can] possibly explain anything? We operate only with things that do not exist; lines, planes, bodies, atoms, divisible time spans, divisible spaces. How should explanations be at all possible when we first turn everything into an *image*, our image!” (ibid.). If we consider that what Nietzsche means here by image it becomes clear what philosophical tradition he is criticizing. These images are of objects derived not from sense experience but from extrapolations of the data of sense experience. All of these ‘images’ are based on an independently existing reality outside of human experience which we can only imagine because we cannot have direct access to it. These concepts also bear a striking resemblance to Nietzsche’s definition of the nihilist who says of “the world as it is that it ought not to be and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist” (*WP*: 585). This positing of such an external reality, or rather this imagining, is for Nietzsche no more than a dangerous belief because to the questions “What is a belief?” and “How does it originate?” he gives the answer that “Every belief is a considering-something-true” (*WP*: 15). The danger in this considering-true is that everything that results from it appears to confirm its verity, but there is a serious error in judgement here because the considering-true is a valuation imposed on what was originally a privately held opinion in the manner discussed in the section on Protagoras above. In asserting this opinion as provisionally true, those conclusions which follow from it cannot do other than confirm it and those things that deny it will be counted as error. This is the problem raised by the presentation of opinion as fact, which is to say that the valuation “true/good” which is a necessary part of opinion, goes unnoticed and the hypothesis “all is being” ceases to be a hypothesis or provisional description and becomes a prescription, the questioning of which “can even count as criminal, namely *doubt* concerning truth” and moreover, “Truth is therefore more fateful than error and ignorance, because it cuts off the forces that work toward enlightenment and knowledge” (*WP*: 452). Again, this recalls Nietzsche’s notion that the will to truth, as something fixed, unified and independent of

experience requires the ability to ignore what is present because "In this moment of [considering-true] there is an infinite number of processes that evade us" (GS: 112). One way of testing Nietzsche's hypothesis here is to consider Gorgias' counter argument concerning Parmenides' position on what there is, which has come down to us as *On What Is Not* or *On Nature*, to which we must now turn before considering the positive analysis of becoming in Heraclitus and Nietzsche.

### 3.4 Gorgias: On What Is Not

The objective in raising the issue of Gorgias' contribution to the debate over the concept of being is to demonstrate the validity of the idea of becoming as a neutral and necessary condition for existence. Gorgias is not primarily making the claim that becoming rather than being constitutes the nature of reality, but, as we shall see, he presents us with an argument that is designed to treat being without the positive valuation and privilege afforded it by Parmenides and in so doing he demonstrates the untenability of Parmenides' position. Ultimately, Gorgias' argument, considering that his profession was that of *rhetor*, is one of the first discussions of the nature of the relationship between language, thought and world. In presenting his argument here I hope to show Gorgias to be an important figure in the tradition of uncovering or laying bare the presuppositions of Western philosophical thought not as a 'nay sayer' and iconoclast but as someone who deepened our understanding of the nature and structure of philosophical inquiry. In this respect he is a direct link between the ancient philosophical and pedagogical tradition and Nietzsche. Solving philosophical problems was less important to Gorgias than discovering why they had become problems in the first place and *On What Is Not* falls under the category of overcoming or dissolving philosophical problems as does, of course, much of Nietzsche's own philosophical project.

The argument that Gorgias presents contains three propositions. First he states "that nothing has being, second that if it did have being it would be unknowable, and third that even if it did have being and was knowable, it could not be communicated to others" (DK82b3a). On the face of it this argument appears to have all the hallmarks of sophistic argument, understood in the negative sense of the word. It appears to present a patently absurd first premise—that nothing has being; and it has often been treated as if it were "all, of course, engaging nonsense" (Guthrie 1967: 197 n.2). This does not seem an unreasonable interpretation at first,



but considered more closely we can see a number of possible interpretations that result from the ambiguity of the proposition. Gorgias could be claiming that there is some thing called “nothing” that has being, he could be claiming that of the things that are said to ‘exist’ none is possessed of being or he could be making a statement about the correct use of language and predication. Reminding ourselves of his profession and his concern for the positive and negative use of language, that it can be used to persuade one to accept a better interpretation of a given state that will be of greater benefit to him, and it can be used to deceive the hearer to their detriment, it would seem that the charitable way of reading this argument is to consider it as saying something not just about the words used but also about the definitions given them and the things to which they refer. Now we can read in this argument a direct attack on the Parmenidean position discussed above, in which case saying that nothing has being means that in the world of plurality and discrete objects, if being is, as Parmenides maintains, unified, eternal and immutable, then it is not possible to say that any of the objects in the world have it since all of them are generated and perishable, therefore not unified and they all change over time. Thus if being is anything it is something that no thing can be possessed of.

The second part of the argument, that even if something had being it would nonetheless be unknowable, can be read as pointing out the difference between things and the manner in which they come to be known, which is to say the difference between objects and language. Here Gorgias is attempting to point out the error, or rather the over-simplification, that Parmenides’ notion that thoughts and the things of which they are thoughts are one and the same thing. He is compelled by his conception of being to this conclusion since the idea of being as that which constitutes all that there is means that thought cannot be distinguished from being. But this cannot be the case, according to Gorgias, since it would mean that thinking of a unicorn would be all that is required in order to prove its existence, which is

clearly not the case. Read this way it seems that what Gorgias is pointing out is “the gulf between “cognitive mental acts” and the things of which they are acts” (Kerferd 1981: 99).

The argument, perhaps, is this: in everyday usage, when someone contemplates a particular object, a chair for example, the response to the question “what are you thinking about?” is “a chair,” but this is an over-simplification. Strictly speaking, the thought is about the impression made on the senses by the object. This can be seen in that the characteristics of the chair, its texture, hardness, colour, age etc., are not characteristics shared by the thought. The thought may be of the representation of the chair constructed by the mind, but it cannot be of the chair itself. And while this may seem a trivial point, it does show that if it can be said that there are things, i.e. with being, these things cannot be known, only the mental representation of them can be known, which can also be put as the idea that a thought can only be a thought about no thing.

This brings us to the final proposition, that even if there are things and they can be known, they cannot be communicated to others. This part of the argument takes up the linguistic aspect of the second proposition in that it considers the manner in which knowledge is transmitted: *logos* or speech. At this stage Gorgias seeks only to clarify what has been covered by emphasizing the problem of the location of the object in relation to the knowledge (*logos*) of it and the transmission of that knowledge from one mind to another. Since the object and the thought or knowledge of it are separated by the lack of shared characteristics, what is communicated or transmitted to someone else will not be the object but the *logos* or explanation formed from the impression made and as such only the speech which now represents the impression is communicated. When this impression is considered in the light of the Protagorean doctrine of man as the measure and the Nietzschean doctrine of perspectivism, we can begin to understand just how great the gulf between the world and a

knowledge of it may be. In addition, this also reveals something of Nietzsche's related concept of objectivity as the communion of the many eyes. The impression each individual has of a given object will be unique, but through the description of each individual *logos* the similarities and differences can be enumerated and then incorporated into a richer knowledge of the object. Turning back to Parmenides, we can say that in forming the impression that being is all that there is, he attempted to communicate it to others, indeed he was commanded to do so by the goddess. But in taking his impression, or perspective to be the only perspective he becomes susceptible to the insolubility of the *dissos logos* or double arguments because of the prescriptive nature imposed by privileging his view over all others. When presented or communicated to others, the differences will outweigh the similarities causing, among other things, the argument raised by Gorgias as the opposing *logos*. Moreover, the exclusivity of Parmenides' view ultimately predetermines what can be counted as true and so as a starting point, being as all that there is proves itself not to be a way to truth but the curtailing of understanding and enlightenment.

As George Kerferd put it, "Gorgias is raising...the whole question of meaning and reference. Let us not worry too much about the inadequacies of his treatment of the question, the important thing is that he was beginning to see that there was a question and a very serious one" (Kerferd 1981: 99). This question was not overcome though, because of the exclusion of the Sophists from the tradition, but Nietzsche, through his affinity to Heraclitus' position concerning becoming, should be seen as having raised the issue as well. Let us now turn to the relationship between Nietzsche and Heraclitus in the context of a corollary to the above argument, which Nietzsche put as the notion that "Becoming must be explained without recourse to final intentions; becoming must appear justified at every moment..." and insofar as Heraclitus sought such justification, Nietzsche considered that "Heraclitus will remain eternally right with his assertion that being is an empty fiction" (*WP*: 708 and *TI*: 2).

### 3.5 Nietzsche and Heraclitus on Becoming

At the beginning of section 3.3 I began with a quotation from *Human, All Too Human* referring to the wandering state that is, or should be, according to Nietzsche, the result of the developed desire for explanation. The wanderer is warned against attaching his heart too firmly to anything as this will create the mistaken impression that inquiry is at an end. He is also told that he has no final destination or goal other than the wandering itself because one does not and cannot exist. Like many of Nietzsche's other pivotal statements such as the demon's announcement of the eternal return of the same or Zarathustra's announcements of the will to power and the *Übermensch*, this declaration of the philosopher's task is meant to appear initially unattractive and to shock the reader in an effort to make him pause and reconsider his position. Nietzsche felt and often wrote that one of the biggest problems with modern intellectual culture was that it had begun to imitate material and technological culture in that it was moving too fast and in this case chasing goals head-long that, in Nietzsche's opinion, simply do not exist. By using such shock tactics Nietzsche attempts to persuade us that more care needs to be taken and that our current path leads to error. The image of the wanderer and its message applies to everyone, but it should be of particular concern to scholars and students for, according to Nietzsche, it is here that the higher culture he so desired would find its footing. The more care taken, the stronger that footing. In the slowness he describes, the inquirer comes to realize that it is the inquiry itself, or the process, that is the objective. Elsewhere in Nietzsche's work this process is called self-overcoming and self-mastery. An integral part of the process is that, because the individual is ultimately a part of nature, his activity should seek to emulate Nature and for Nietzsche this means a holistic understanding of the interdependence of parts and wholes which are in a perpetual state of becoming. The wanderer must take pleasure in change and transitoriness because this is the nature of everything. The world and every part of it is in a constant state of flux, struggle and

strife because this is the exact expression of Nature. To delight in permanence and fixity can only bring dissatisfaction because to pursue these is to pursue phantoms who promise everything, but who can deliver nothing. In philosophical terms this latter position is characterized by the belief in *teloi*, seeing existence and each participant in it as having an ultimate purpose. As was mentioned earlier, a certain type of belief in *teloi* is indeed necessary in that it is this that makes things stand out from the blur of flux and become interesting to us, but this sense of *teloi* maintains the continuous and repeated aspect of the 'considering-true' and never seeks the completed aspect of 'Truth'. "The sole fundamental fact, however, is that [the world] does not aim at a final state; and every philosophy and every scientific hypothesis which necessitates such a final state is refuted by this fundamental fact" (*WP*: 708). The similarities between Nietzsche and Heraclitus on this point are fairly obvious, so I would like now to look at Nietzsche's consideration and development of the concept of becoming with reference to its Pre-Socratic founder.

The overall impression of flux in the world that Heraclitus inaugurated sets itself against the permanence and fixity that are preferred in the Parmenidean concept of being. He took this position on the basis that "The things I rate highly are those which are accessible to sight, hearing, apprehension" (*DK*22b55), which naturalistic view comes from the observation that in nature nothing is fixed or permanent. Given the option of seeing the world, philosophically speaking, in a manner for which there is no evidence or one that is supported by all considered observation, it does not seem unreasonable to follow the latter. In *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche says, "I shall set apart, with great respect, the name of Heraclitus. If the rest of the philosophical populace rejected the evidence of the senses because they showed multiplicity and change, he rejected their evidence because they showed things as if they had duration and unity.... 'Reason' is what causes us to falsify the evidence of the senses. If the senses show becoming, passing away, change, they do not lie" (*TI*: III, 2). Nietzsche

attributed the philosophical preference for permanence and fixity to observation as well, but a type of observation that has not been carried out with sufficient care or attention. The permanence that philosophy, from Nietzsche's point of view, seems to desire so strongly is the result of a lack of concentration, the mistaking of the almost inappreciable slowness mentioned above in chapter 2 for the nature of things. "'Species' expresses only the fact that a number of similar creatures appear at the same time and that the tempo of their further growth and change is for a long time slowed down, so actual small continuations and increases are not very much noticed" (*WP*: 521). The lack of attention that causes this categorizing is the process by which 'considering-true' becomes 'true,' and thus the preference for fixity, while based on observation, comes as a result of over-hastiness. The point ought not to be overstated though, because there are good and practical reasons for seeing the world as persistent and enduring, that of communication for example, but at the same time these reasons do not justify applying the same convenience to all existence. Nietzsche and Heraclitus are reminding us not to overstep the boundaries of our conveniences.

Chief among the consequences of seeing the world as fixed is the creation of one of Nietzsche's favourite targets: the will to truth. This particular form of the will comes up again and again in Nietzsche's work. It stands in the way of appreciating and understanding perspective and leads to the view that there are universal moral values. But far more dangerous are the cultural and intellectual consequences of the will to truth because in these areas it can, as Nietzsche says in *The Uses and Disadvantages* meditation, lead a people to believe that it possesses the rarest of virtues, justice, which can lead to the even more dangerous position that one's culture is the 'true' culture, inducing the arrogance and superiority which Nietzsche loathed among the Germans of his day and who he attacked in the meditation on David Strauss. Curiously though, this will to truth comes from the same relationship of opposites that Heraclitus used as the basis of his proof of becoming. This is a

prime example of the inattention that Nietzsche mentions for, “[the] Will to truth is a *making* firm, a *making* true and durable” (WP: 552, my italics). And in this a process is revealed which is normally taken as the opposite of truth. “‘Truth’ is therefore not something there, that might be found or discovered—but something that must be created and that gives a name to a process, or rather to a will to overcome that has in itself no end—introducing truth, as a *processus in infinitum*, an active determining—not a becoming-conscious of something that is in itself firm and determined. It is a word for the “will to power”” (WP: 552). And so this will to truth, on a certain level, is part of an entirely perspectival existence which must embrace as part of its ‘truth’ becoming and creativity rather than being. Here again we see one of Nietzsche’s observations of philosophical reversal on the basis of an interpretation that proves itself mismatched with the evidence, or what Protagoras and Gorgias would have called a worse interpretation and of which Heraclitus says, “one ought to follow what is common. Although the principle (*logos*) is common, the majority of people live as if they had private understanding” (DK22b2). The private understanding of which he speaks is opinion, which, from the Protagorean perspective, is based on a valuation which, although true for the individual, is inappropriately presented as universally true. It is a form of hubris since it leads to the belief that the truth is out there, waiting to be uncovered, in the ‘knowledge’ that we lack only the appropriate means. The dominance of this private understanding in society creates the situation that “From the values attributed to being proceed the condemnation of and discontent with becoming” (WP: 617). Nietzsche notes that the consequence of this condemnation is that “Knowledge-in-itself in a world of becoming is impossible,” and asks, “how...knowledge [is] possible?” And his answer is that what constitutes ‘knowledge’ is little more than, “[an] error concerning oneself, as will to power, as will to deception” (ibid.). And so, the analysis of the notion of being has brought us full circle in the sense that its resolution into the will to truth gives us a *telos* once again.

As we have seen, both sides of this argument give importance to the idea of *telos*, but for very different reasons. For Nietzsche and Heraclitus, *telos* is and can only be provisional so as to make things stand out, because in a world of becoming there are no ultimate goals. This reveals one of the most important aspects of becoming. As I mentioned earlier, the concept of being arises out of the opposition with not-being, and is regarded, naturally enough, as preferable to it. But if being is opposed to or paired with, not-being, then becoming is not the opposite of being. In this way we might relate being to the nature of tempo in Nietzsche's 'species'. The problem that this creates though, is that becoming appears to have no opposite; it is neutral and thus it can have no value. This gives rise to the thought that "The feeling of valuelessness was reached with the realization that the overall character of existence may not be interpreted by means of the concept "aim," the concept of "unity," the concept of "truth..." Moreover, "the [very] categories "aim," "unity," "being," which we used to project some value into the world—we *pull out* again; so the world looks valueless" (*WP*: 12A). But the reason for which Nietzsche draws our attention to this point is to refocus that attention on the creative aspect that the world of becoming provides. When once we realize the valuelessness of the world "in-itself" we may come to realize that we projected its meaning on it in the first place, with those concepts that 'explained' it. If we once again take possession of our responsibility and role in the creation of meaning we can give the world meaning again. In a sense, this is what Nietzsche means when he says that "to impose on becoming the character of being—that is the supreme will to power" (*WP*: 617). In asserting 'becoming' over 'being' Nietzsche is trying to dispense with the false opposition that gives 'being' its meaning. The reason that this is a false opposition is that being as primary is essentially the result of a valuation of the fixed and constant over the transitory. But as opposed to not-being, being can give rise to no struggle or contest, and so if Heraclitus is to be believed when he says that "It is necessary to realize that war is common, and strife justice, and that everything happens in



accordance with strife and necessity" (DK22b80), then we must have something that can facilitate such strife and necessity. For Nietzsche, "the strife of opposites gives birth to all that becomes" (*PTA*: 54), which is the very point that he noted about culture itself, that it grows and develops in contest and struggle. Creativity lies in the struggle of contest that is produced by perpetual becoming. In his analysis, because becoming has no aim, no goal, it also has no value and so needn't be opposed to any thing or state, but can be the context in which opposition and strife can flourish. This is a good example of what is meant by overcoming and dissolving philosophical problems as opposed to seeing them as requiring solutions. In all opposition "the definite qualities which look permanent to us express the momentary ascendancy of one partner. But this by no means signifies the end of war; the contest endures to all eternity" (*ibid.*) and "complexes of events apparently durable in comparison with other complexes—e.g., through the difference in tempo of the event—rest-motion, firm-loose: opposites that do not exist in themselves and that actually express only variations in degree that form a certain perspective appear to be opposites" (*WP*: 552C). From this perspective what we normally perceive as opposites are better represented and provide a better interpretation, if they are seen to be necessary compliments of one another, allowing us to differentiate, appreciate and value the role, or rather meaning, that we assign them. And with this comes the elimination of the tension between Being and becoming since Being is then the necessary compliment of not-Being in a context which imposes no value itself, that is a context of becoming.

At this point we can now see how it is that Nietzsche hoped to undermine the negative form of competition which he saw as a great detriment to culture and education. Read as an extension and development of Heraclitus' philosophy of becoming through its practical and subjective interpretation by Protagoras and Gorgias, Nietzsche's philosophical project can be seen to have a more coherent objective; that of bringing together the various, apparently

disparate concerns of philosophy as those bear on education and culture. His understanding of the Protagorean doctrine of man as the measure of all things, expressed in his own epistemology of perspectivism, provides him with a way of relating objects and subjects in such a way that neither requires precedence in order to be comprehensible. Perspectivism embraces the notion of the sovereign individual as the primary producer or creator of meaning in its capacity as an interpreter "even of the words it has inherited" (*WP*: 767). This sovereignty is entirely appropriate within the context of the individual's interpretation, for it is precisely here that a foundation of responsibility is formed. The individual's understanding is based on its interpretation which is then assigned a value in terms of its life-affirming (better interpretation), or life-negating (worse interpretation) capacity, and so it is incorrigible; it is 'true' for that individual. Its truth is a function of that valuation. The better the individual is at interpreting its own perspective, the better or more integrated and holistic the individual will be. At this level one can see more clearly how the dispensation of one's Pro and Con (cf. *GM*: III 12) becomes all important because, of course, the individual does not exist in isolation which leads to the next level of interpretation.

The individual is the origin of meaning for Protagoras and Nietzsche and as such one key feature of meaning-creation is the value which is imposed on a given interpretation, but in order to be shared with the larger community, with the impersonal, that which is personal about it, the valuation, must be removed. Because our individual interpretations are what we know best, and because we tend to see them as extensions of our selves, they are most difficult to see as outside us and here is where the responsibility comes into play. As an individual, our interpretations, valuations and meanings are our own, but with the change in context from the personal to the public, so a change, not in the interpretation, but in the value assigned must occur. Just as the integrated individual is a function of the ability to reconcile various interpretations of things from one particular perspective (psychological rather than

spatial), so too when those interpretations are brought to the public sphere, there is a certain responsibility to reconcile them with others in that same sphere. If this is to happen then it is important to recognize that one's valuations are necessary only for that individual life, this is what Nietzsche means by the necessary simplifications and fictions that are the condition for life, but where the perspective is broadened they become inappropriate and stand in the way of community and communication. By suspending the valuation the sovereign individual retains their right to their interpretation, but also makes that interpretation available to the larger community. What was a necessary condition and a prescription for that individual's life, becomes one perspective among many, one description among many, that can be assessed and integrated into or rejected from the life of the community. In this way a real fusing of horizons is accomplished, widening the perspective or, as Nietzsche put it, improving our objectivity, through increasing our knowledge of the object, whatever it may be. Comparing the individual and society as equals, we can see that Nietzsche held the multiplicity of interpretations that are formed on the personal level as corresponding to the individual on the level of community in a fractal-like relationship. This recalls the reciprocal relationship between the individual and society mentioned in chapter 2 above and understanding of the part to whole relationship that Nietzsche considered fundamental to his epistemological analytic.

One obvious point, and a potential stumbling block for this view, is that the resulting perspective can never be said to be 'true' with respect to the essence of things, since it could never be the case that all possible perspectives and descriptions are included. This can be seen as a stumbling block in the sense that the knowledge gained at any particular time is unlikely to hold for any other time, but this is to the point of Nietzsche's development of the Heraclitean and Gorgian position concerning becoming. If knowledge can always be called into question, or added to, then the project will be an ever evolving process of more and less

certainty. Recognizing this point we can see that Nietzsche has identified the manner in which creativity is placed at the centre of human activity. As he said, any given 'truth' can only be a description of a momentarily ascendant interpretation as is the case with anything in the world of sense perception, rendering our pursuit of knowledge more congruous with the context in which it occurs.

We have seen how Nietzsche privileges the concept of creativity in his cultural and education thought up to now and this relates to what can be read in Nietzsche as the pursuit of authenticity. Nietzsche's perspectival epistemology seeks to allow for no fixed interpretations in an effort to avoid the attachment that he saw as a great detriment to progress and human understanding and knowledge. Moreover, competition has a fundamental role to play in this pursuit since whatever the current 'considered-true' may be, there will always be new information and new perspectives that will challenge this interpretation. The instability that appears to be an inherent feature of this system undermines both the inappropriate belief in *teloi* that Nietzsche and Protagoras both challenged and it, in a sense, grants becoming the force that has up until now been reserved for Being, it is an expression of a heightened will to power. In addition, the embracing of these two notions facilitates, indeed encourages, the replacement of the concept of tradition which is held to be authoritative, with a conception of it as a record of previous interpretations which can forever be brought into the present in order to provide information on a given object which may be relevant yet overlooked by the current ethos. In overcoming the dogmatic reception of previous interpretations, the 'horizon of infinite perspectives' is brought to the fore. The process by which this occurs is the same as that by which a second nature may become a first, which is sublimation. With these three elements in mind, authenticity, competition and sublimation, we are now in a position to lay out the definition of Nietzsche's philosophy of education.

#### 4. Education

##### Nietzsche's Philosophy of Education

In preceding chapters I have sought to identify Nietzsche's early thoughts on and criticism of contemporary education. He identified three serious failures in the system: the impoverished nature of language education, the lack of appreciation for the relationship between education and culture and the preoccupation with material gain as the objective of education in the present system. Throughout these considerations Nietzsche points to classical antiquity, either the study of it or its actual development of culture. I identify the origin of the type of education that Nietzsche wishes to criticize with Plato for the following reasons. As is well known, Nietzsche sought to ground his philosophy in life, which is to say that he was interested in the process of life, in coming to be, becoming and renewing. He chose this as his ground because no matter what other concerns or agendas we may have, living is the primitive or primordial and necessary condition for everything we will or wish to do. As a result Nietzsche needed to take his analysis back to beyond the point at which these other concerns become of primary interest. Plato may be seen as that point because it is with his interpretation and development of Socrates' hyper-rationalism that philosophy in the West acquired its subsequent course and concentration. Put another way, before Plato philosophy had been carried out by the *phusikoi*, or those who were concerned with nature, and the *Sophistes*, or the wise sages. This latter group of thinkers can be seen as an extension and application of the first. Until the time of Plato the day to day content of human living held a particular position of privilege or interest in their thought. But, as Nietzsche put it, "Something quite new begins with Plato; or it might be said with equal justice that in comparison with that Republic of Geniuses from Thales to Socrates, the philosophers since Plato lack something essential" (*PTA*: 4). What was lacking was a method for the practical application of philosophy in life. Briefly then, before Plato philosophy was concerned with

the process and nature of living as regards change in the world of flux, the development of man's place in the universe and the nature of being, and after him philosophy, although concerned with the same notions, became a thoroughly academic endeavour concerned more with the foundations of ethics, politics and the 'good' life than with how these things affected life through application. In a way, Plato represents the separation of philosophy from Life. Since in Nietzsche's thought content is considered more or less useless without some underlying method for its application, he sought as an example a culture, or philosophical context in which process and method took precedence. This is precisely what I believe can be taken as the meaning of Nietzsche's carefully named category the "Pre-Platonic" philosophers.

This distinction can also be used to identify what was, in Nietzsche's interpretation, the initial negative phase or misdirection of philosophy, art and culture. The second phase of this transition, and the more malignant as far as Nietzsche is concerned, has to do with the grounding of reality and explanations of the world, which is demonstrably in a state of perpetual and universal flux, in immutable metaphysical entities of which we can have no direct knowledge or experience. It is during this second phase that creative attention, or what can be seen as Nietzsche's 'value positing eye', is drawn away from the empirical world of sense data, or the locus of the process of life, and directed towards that which shares none of the characteristics of life and experience. It is here, for Nietzsche, that truth became the illusion that we have since forgotten is an illusion and so it became something fixed, forever beyond or behind the world of sense perception. In this way truth acquired its capital "T" which confronts human understanding with the insurmountable task of trying to explain Truths as such, for which Nietzsche felt we have no example and no mechanism—or 'organ', as he calls it—with which to identify them. For Nietzsche 'Truth', the object of knowledge, became an abstraction, presenting us with the problem that "Our apparatus for acquiring

knowledge is not designed for 'knowledge'" (*WP*: 496). In this quotation Nietzsche is drawing a distinction between the phenomenal world of sense-experience and the abstract world that is constructed out of our impressions of that world. Nietzsche wished to focus on the process of acquiring these impressions and the impressions themselves, in an effort to focus our attention on these and away from whatever we may produce out of them. In other words, Nietzsche sought to dethrone metaphysics and emphasize epistemology on account of the observation that in terms of knowledge it is the phenomenal world that constitutes the only real world. Rather than ignoring the complexity and difficulty of understanding that world, perhaps here is to be found the birth of metaphysics, he wished to push philosophy back into it.

Ultimately, what is being criticized here is the notion that truth and knowledge represent a kind of perfection, because for Nietzsche this notion of perfection is misguided and misleading. He sought another type of perfection, not divine, but human: the perfectibility of man. This perfection is a function of the individual's ability to recognize his potential as something ever-changing, not unlike the horizon. What this requires is to have one eye focused on oneself, critically aware of what is continually being incorporated into this, a second eye focused on the synchronic or present horizon, which will eventually be incorporated into the first, and a third eye focused on the new horizon, which is always emerging as a function of the individual's activity and which eventually merges with the second. This is what Nietzsche means by the horizon of infinite perspectives and it was one of his central concerns to instill a commitment to this. If this sounds a difficult task, all to the good, for it requires constant activity. New horizons never emerge if there is no activity and if one remains stagnant the focus is on one fixed point. The desire to do so renders activity meaningless, and so too Nietzsche's understanding of progress which is grounded in cultural development rather than material comfort.

Although it may not be particularly novel to say that Nietzsche's philosophy sought to strip the static definition of Truth of its supremacy, saying that this needs to be done is quite different from providing a means or method of achieving it. I believe that Nietzsche provided such a method and that the best way to understand that method is an explication of his philosophy of education because, as he said in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, what is really important about a philosophy is how well it educates. Moreover, I will use Nietzsche's philosophy of education as a way of demonstrating that it is in this that his larger philosophical project achieves a sense of unity and coherence, which is to say that his philosophical thought comes together in its educative capacity. One of the features of that philosophical project is Nietzsche's consistent use of provocative descriptions, criticisms and concepts. Often referred to as his doctrines, the main concepts developed in Nietzsche's philosophy have had an admittedly profound influence not only on the development of philosophical thought over the past century, but also on our understanding of the past, of culture and of society. In this respect, Nietzsche's observation of the fundamentally agonistic nature of ancient Greek culture made possible a much deeper understanding of that culture and, perhaps more importantly, an understanding of competition as one of the constants in human culture in general.

At this point, before the explication of Nietzsche's philosophy of education and the role it plays in understanding his larger philosophical project as a coherent one begins, it will serve us well to bear in mind some of the distinctive Nietzschean notions that come from the development of his pedagogical thought as this has been explicated over the previous 3 chapters. This will be particularly helpful insofar as Nietzsche saw the production or 'breeding' of certain characteristics as the provisional goal of his observations concerning the "elevation and enhancement of man" (*WP*: 1041). As I have argued, Nietzsche saw contemporary education and culture as 'decadent,' 'in decline,' and 'ill'. The notions that I



will explicate over the next few pages can be seen as his remedy or cure for this illness and so they should be seen as promoting a return to health, rather than each as a particular goal in itself. Once again, it is well to remind ourselves of the sort of integration and holism that Nietzsche calls for throughout his philosophical development. In this context then, I identify the notions of 'will to power,' 'immoralism,' and 'the eternal return of the same' as the result of Nietzsche's diagnosis of modern education and its relation to culture and thus it is through these that his philosophy of education can be read as that which gives his larger philosophical project its overall coherence.

Nietzsche's analysis of the will to power borrowed from the world of physics the idea of quanta of energy as a way of explaining the relationship between individuals. Each quantum of energy has only one function, one desire, which is to exercise its influence over as large a sphere as possible. As a result it will 'reach out' until it runs into one of two limiting factors, either the outer extent of its effective force or a quantum of energy of equal power. At a higher level, this is a fundamental feature of the individual at first and of society as well in Nietzsche's analysis: just as two quanta of energy exert greater influence when combined than the simple sum of their individual influence, so individuals manage to have greater influence when combined, forming a more effective community. In this way Nietzsche saw the individual as the primary unit of power in the human world, but limited in its sphere unless a contributor to a larger entity or community which Nietzsche saw as the necessary context for the individual. Through such community the individual finds its greatest influence, its highest will to power in a qualitative sense. The height of this expression, at least the highest so far imaginable, is of course the *Übermensch* who achieves this status through the seemingly contradictory process of isolation. I say 'seemingly' on account of the fact that Nietzsche saw the *Übermenschen* as the inauguration or initial phase of a new humanity which would rise out of the destruction of everything we are and know. Eventually, when such individuals

come across others of equal will to power, compromise rather than mutual destruction would result, creating that new humanity, a new society and ultimately a higher form of his 'true' culture.

One of the features of such creatures is their ability to abide by meanings they create for themselves which is recognized as having its source in the individual. The person who exercises this ability is the free spirit, higher type of humanity or sovereign individual who is capable of continually creating the necessary illusions and fictions which they understand to be the necessary condition of their life. These are the 'yea-sayers' in Nietzsche's philosophy who have achieved the ability to affirm life as a result of having freed themselves from the constraints of external definitions and systems of self-governance which they have found to be a hindrance to their growth and development. They achieve this life-affirmation by focusing on the knowledge gleaned from the world of sense-perception, which is not to say that life-affirmation is concerned solely with the moment, but with the understanding of the importance of the process of life and living as the locus of affirmation or rejection of creative potential. In this way they embrace the concept of self-overcoming, of becoming what they are, which is a function of the necessary fictions and illusions being recognized as such, and in so doing develop the ability to create new ones that will continue their life affirmation. This is the kind of thing that Nietzsche saw as exemplified by the ancient Greeks' having 'organized the chaos' of their origins and given a central place in life to the tragedy that created the need for this organization. Nietzsche saw this point in their history, the so-called tragic age, as the point at which they released themselves from the burden of history and thereby the more powerful groups that had controlled their fate until then. The result: the Greeks ceased to see their existence as a matter of chance and took control of their destiny.

The self-overcoming and separation that Nietzsche identified in the history of the Greeks is related to his philosophy on two counts. First, he was able to understand the damage that the weight of history can and was causing in contemporary education and culture as discussed above in chapters 1 and 2. Understanding this effect, he was able to diagnose the 'historical sickness' of contemporary society, its fascination with the past in order to fill the void left by its loss of any coherence in its own existence, and to describe a method by which humanity might 'slough off' the yoke of this burden. And second, he recognized that the history from which the modern world derived its sense of self had in fact become foreign to it through the opaqueness of time. If contemporary society was to overcome itself, it would have to exercise a healthy forgetfulness and re-evaluate its values. Chief among the value systems of the past that Nietzsche felt had ceased to have use was the moral system or what he called the slave morality. He called the position that must replace slave morality "immoralism", by which he does not mean the absence of all morals, but the creation of a system of morals that more closely fits the individuals that make up society for which it is to serve as a guide. This understandably raises alarm bells since it implies a leap into what might be considered an abyss because, having existed for so long by the slave system, it has become a first nature and as primary it is believed to represent the basic instincts of humanity. But through his genealogical analysis, Nietzsche demonstrates that this first nature was originally a second nature and that a victorious second nature can thus become a first through internal competition or self-overcoming, and sublimation or the control of one set of instincts in order to allow a new set to grow. The system that now dominates does so from the historical circumstances of a society that little resembles our own. In pursuit of authenticity this past must be overcome and this overcoming must, if it is to take root, be appreciated as necessary, as something that, given the same circumstance anew, we would wish to do again in the same way. This, Nietzsche identified the eternal return of the same.

In an aphorism titled "The Greatest Weight" from *Gay Science*, Nietzsche describes the basis of the concept of eternal return:

What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you 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 more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to 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 upside down 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 how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal? (GS: 341)

I have quoted the passage at length in order to avoid taking away from the gravity with which Nietzsche intends this idea to be taken. His philosophy, above all else, is a philosophy of life and living. It takes these as the central objectives of thought and activity and attempts to emphasize the virtue of the "Yes" over the "No". But this is not done in any teleological sense; it is unending and must be so if it is to be of any value to us. In the case of education I will describe the process by which the student becomes the teacher and how the leaders of Nietzsche's true culture must be facilitated by this process. The student does not seek a diploma, degree or certificate, but seeks to supercede the teacher in knowledge, in wisdom and in life affirmation. Nietzsche's philosophy of education shifts the focus of attention in an effort to let us see what the inevitable outcome of the current system is: the leveling of knowledge, over-specialization and ultimately the nihilism that results from the fragmentation that he felt had pervaded society in his day and continues to in ours. The individual, just as much as the society, must be able to answer the question of whether they could accept their life again and again in every detail with the "Yes". And so, the doctrine of the eternal return is best understood not as an activity, but as a psychological disposition or willingness to repeat life as it was and is. The objection may then be raised that it is simply not practical, indeed

not even possible to live a life wherein every aspect is seen as positive and affirmative and so the doctrine is empty, but this would be an over-literal interpretation of it. Nietzsche does not say that everything in life should be excellent, that only happiness and no pain should rule; quite the reverse. For Nietzsche, and again he is echoing the sentiments of Heraclitus here, there can be no pleasure without pain just as there can be no light without dark. His point is that you must be willing not only to accept, but also to affirm, the pain that exists as necessary and an integral part of life and therefore a positive aspect of it.

If we look back to Nietzsche's description of the German composition class in the Gymnasium as discussed in chapter 1, he explains that whereas now the exuberance of youth produces all manner of grotesque language which is then thwarted by the mediocrity of the ham fisted teacher, leveling the students' ability to express their emotions as individuals, he sees the need not for categorical correction, but for guidance through the development of strict discipline. The individual who fails to write a sonnet of Shakespearean quality on the first attempt requires the guidance of examples from 'classical' literature in order to come to terms with their over-exuberance and to understand why that has betrayed their emotions and expression. The lessons learned through such a process of trial, self-criticism and reworking are what the student will eventually see as the work of the genius, cultural leader and higher type. By shifting the focus from the students' own productions they are afforded a new vantage point on the basis of which they can begin to develop the sense of comparison and valuation which, in its turn, is the beginning of their journey towards authenticity. "I want to teach the idea that gives many the right to erase themselves—the great cultivating idea..." (*WP*: 1056). This erasure is not a desire to annihilate, but to improve and replace. In this way the process of life becomes one of improvement and development rather than one of diagnosis and repair. The concept of eternal return points to the desire to see this constant improvement ad infinitum. This should strike as strange since the idea of an eternal return appears to imply

some kind of fixed cycle that we ride out, but this again would be over-literal interpretation. Looking back at what one has done ought, in Nietzsche's view, to result in affirmation, but this is an affirmation on balance. That one regrets something is not to say that they reject the whole of their life and so looking back allows one to adjust their activity. Regretting the result of some previous decision provides the individual with a certain liberty for the future: a liberty that Nietzsche saw as necessary to slough of restrictive historicism and enhance the creative potential of the future. This is why I identified eternal return not as an activity, but as a willingness, that willingness is the result of the affirmation on balance. "To endure the idea of recurrence one needs: freedom from morality; new means against the fact of pain (pain conceived as a tool, as the father of pleasure...); the enjoyment of all kinds of uncertainty, experimentalism, as a counterweight to this extreme fatalism; abolition of the concept of necessity; abolition of the "will"; abolition of "knowledge-in-itself" (*WP*: 1058). Bearing these things in mind I would now like to move on to the explication and definition of Nietzsche's philosophy of education and its relation to the concerns and concepts discussed thus far.

In the remainder of this final chapter I will outline what I take to be the terms of Nietzsche's philosophy of education as consisting in three interdependent activities which I have identified as key to Nietzsche's larger philosophical project. These three are the pursuit of authenticity or authentic living, the continual desire to engage in contest and struggle, and the necessary sublimation of certain desires as a means of redirecting one's drives in order to facilitate the creation of meaning and perspectival truth. Furthermore, I take these three activities to occur under the rubric of an essentially critical and interpretative approach to life and knowledge. It is in this context that the pedagogical aspect of Nietzsche's philosophical project can be brought to the fore. What follows then is the articulation of Nietzsche's

philosophy of education based on the combination of his early concerns described above and their consistency with his later thought.

## 4.1 Authenticity

In *Authenticity and Learning*, David Cooper (1983a) identifies Nietzsche's tripartite method as consisting in criticism, genealogy and reconstruction, and while I believe this assessment to be accurate, there is also a sense in which this may be put as interpretation, interpretation, interpretation. In his inaugural lecture at Basle Nietzsche offers the sentiment that at some point learned criticism must end and interpretation must begin if our work is to have anything more than technical value to us. Within the sphere of Nietzsche's philosophy of education it seems best to see the first interpretation as the responsibility of the scholars from whom we receive the picture of whatever it is that we teach and are taught. The second interpretation is carried out by the teachers who bear the responsibility of presenting scholars' work to the student. And the third interpretation is carried out by the students, who, if they are to follow this mandate, will seek not only to assimilate the information, but will do so in order that they might eventually surpass the teacher, so that they may in their turn become the scholars in order to start the process anew. It may be objected that this is how things stand at present, but as Nietzsche notes in *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, there are many things that stand in the way of this. According to Nietzsche this is not how things are because the aims of scholars, teachers, and students have undergone significant and detrimental change. Not only have the values changed, which is to say the horizons, but so too have the methods as was noted in chapter 3. It may then be asked whether such change has not resulted in progress being made. And here the answer may be yes, but the kind of progress that has been made is of a chimerical sort because in spite of the expressed desire to uncover truth, education and scholarship have worked against any notion of unity and breadth due to the fragmented view they take of knowledge with the result that what we now know amounts to little more than a great deal more about a great deal less.



A second objection to this triple call for interpretation may be that every stage in this process is incredibly unstable and fraught with potential for error; it is rife with danger, but that, I will argue, is as Nietzsche would have it. Stability, comfort and certainty are anathema to what Nietzsche understands as progress. Nietzsche argues that modern education produces what he called the 'bread winners' and 'old maids,' or unhealthy material acquisitiveness and overspecialization, precisely because of its concern for 'safety,' as he said of the philistine: nothing must at any cost threaten (cf. *SE*: 11). Where we have become satisfied with our effort we make the statement that this is enough. But enough it can never be because 'it' is not a 'thing' to be had. To be comfortable means that struggle is at an end, and the great sacrifice required by satisfaction is the creative spirit and drive, which are necessary conditions for Nietzsche's definition of progress, leaving only complacency and what he called "an inordinately stupid ease-and-comfort doctrine for the benefit of the ego..." (*SE*: 28).

As has been mentioned, Nietzsche's philosophical project centers itself on life, its process and improvement. His philosophy of education only dealt with the specific content of educational programs during his very earliest forays into philosophy. After 1872 the specific content of education accounts for very little of his writing because the problem had ceased to be one suffered by a specific discipline, but by all education, and even when he does make reference to content it is only when making reference to the topics of the earlier work and lectures given during his time as chair at Basle. Nonetheless, Nietzsche maintained a concern for education throughout his philosophical activity under the headings of *Bildung* or formation in the holistic sense, *discipline* as the chief characteristic of the higher type, and the often misinterpreted *breeding*, indicating as it did for Nietzsche the critical awareness of one's true educators and personal presuppositions. Moreover, as I hope to show in this chapter, Nietzsche's philosophical project is best read through the eyes of its educational import because it is out of his concern for this that his whole philosophy developed. As was noted in

the first chapters of this dissertation, chief among those early works are Nietzsche's inaugural, *Homer and Classical Philology*, his introductory course titled *Encyclopaedia of Philology and Introduction to the Study of the Same*, and the five public lectures given just prior to the watershed of his philosophical activity titled *On the Future of our Educational Institutions*. Each of these works is particularly significant for two reasons. First, although they deal largely with the subject of classical education, it is in these works that we find the pedagogical concerns and criticisms which were to evolve not only into his mature philosophy of education, but which, perhaps more significantly, formed the foundation of his larger philosophical project; notions such as critical self-awareness, creativity and spirit, the importance of culture and the role of discipline and power. And second, because they were written at a time when Nietzsche was still academically and professionally tied to the discipline of classical philology, the ancient Greek, or rather the Pre-Platonic, influences on his thought can more readily be discerned. Moreover, I take it to be the case that it is during this period of practical experience as an educator and university lecturer that he became more acutely aware of the themes that would occupy his philosophical activity until his breakdown in 1889 because of their relation to his pedagogical thought. Chief among the concerns in his pedagogical thought are the perspectival relationships between the individual and society or culture and the relationship between appearance and reality which he maintained throughout his work. And in this connection 'perspective' and 'world' can be seen as synonymous for as he was to assert toward the end of his activity: "The perspective...decides the character of the 'appearance'! As if a world would still remain over after one deducted the perspective!... Reality consists precisely in this particular action and reaction of every individual part to the whole" (*WP*: 567).

Nietzsche's observations during this period with regard to what he perceived as the crisis in education receive further philosophical treatment in the four published *Untimely Meditations*,

which can be broken down into four interdependent ideas. First is the influence of scholarship on society at large. Second is the rejection of overspecialization in scholarship because of the detrimental effect that this has on both scholarship and education. Third is the idea that the exemplars who influence the student in the most significant manner combine intellectual depth and authenticity in life in the manner in which they conduct their lives or as Nietzsche puts it, "...when I subsequently analyze that impression I discover it to be compounded of three elements, the elements of his honesty, his cheerfulness and his steadfastness.... I profit from a philosopher only insofar as he can be an example" (*SE*: 136). This contributes a sense of unity and consistency to the formation of the free, strong and independent individual, and so "...this example must be supplied by his outward life and not merely in his books" (*SE*: 137). And fourth is the idea that not only intellectual or academic examples are important, but also the kind and quality of the cultural examples one comes into contact with. All four of these can be grouped under that most famous of 19<sup>th</sup> century German educational ideals, the concept of *Bildung*. Nietzsche's philosophy of education is an attempt to break with the prevailing and by then fragmented approach to *Bildung*, that of dissecting and categorizing the component parts of the *well formed* individual, because he saw this as motivated by the mistaken belief that a knowledge of the parts is the same as a knowledge of the whole. Instead, he sought to relate each of these parts to the others and more importantly, to relate each of the parts to the whole. One of the chief interests of Nietzsche's philosophy of education, which he maintains over and against the fragmented conception of the individual, is the role of authenticity and authentic living in the formation of a "unity of artistic style in all the expressions of the life of a people" (*UD*: 79).

The concept of authenticity has, in the history of thought, been an understandably elusive notion. One of the factors that makes it difficult to explicate is its inherent resistance to positive definition. That said, it is nonetheless possible and useful to describe some of the

practical aspects of authenticity, because, although Nietzsche does not use the term specifically, the concepts that underlie it in the later use of *eigentlich* in the work of Heidegger and *authenticity* in other existentialist writers, are present in Nietzsche's work as well. And so, let us turn our attention to these concepts. The concept of authenticity is integral to Nietzsche's concept of the cultural leader or the higher type and *Übermensch*, primarily because they are capable of accepting the illusions and necessary fictions that are the condition of their lives in the full understanding that these are suited only to them as individuals; they understand that they alone are capable of choosing their path. This will also apply to each individual in society, the difference between them being their degree of will to power and the ability to create meaning, or in other words, to be "faithful to the scripts [of life] they have written themselves" (Golomb 1995: 3). This authorship must be something unique and original. There are, as we shall see, certain things that constrain this scripting, but in the pursuit of authenticity these constraints must be overcome as a central part of the writing in order to "attain a personal subjective pathos...which expresses their individuality as human beings who become what they singularly are" (ibid.). Traditionally, among existentialist writers and thinkers, this has been brought out in the description of extreme situations where there is little option but to take some original, occasionally counterintuitive tack, and Nietzsche too uses this descriptive method in his five lectures *On the Future of Our Educational Institution*, but he uses a situation that is anything but extreme to achieve the same end, and so emphasizes the individual over the context. The reason for this is, I believe, to demonstrate that in extreme situations decisions are somewhat easier to come by simply because of the lack of options, but for Nietzsche they are not the only, nor best way to reveal the nature of authenticity, because authenticity is something that can and should be achieved in the everyday decisions and practices of each individual. Once again we are confronted with the peculiarity of authenticity in that rendering "any definition [of it is] self-nullifying," (ibid.

7) or as Jean-Paul Sartre has put it, we know authenticity when we flee it.<sup>18</sup> Authenticity does not comprise a set of objective qualities to be achieved as a predetermined process nor can it be rationally argued for, as a result, there can be no positive definition of it. One who seeks authenticity must be convinced by themselves that authentic living is better than the alternatives of blind mechanical obedience to some external set of rules or codes be they devised by another individual or a society. Authenticity must therefore question the traditional authority of concepts such as truth and logic, and values such as morality, honesty and sincerity. As a result of this, authenticity requires acceptance of the world as the incessant movement of becoming, self-transcendence or overcoming, and self-creation. It is ultimately a question of freedom, of rejecting the current ethic if only to re-evaluate that ethic and so to attempt to define it and oneself in one's own terms. This should not be taken as an imperative, moral or otherwise, because any attempt to prescribe or universalize any such set of descriptions or practices runs contrary to the nature of the concept. Authenticity is descriptive rather than prescriptive. In this sense it is very close to the thought of Protagoras and Gorgias as we saw in chapter 3. It focuses on the origin and constitution of creativity and therefore is also concerned with spontaneity and originality. Because authenticity denies the validity of a priori essences there can be nothing that an individual essentially is. To do otherwise is to accept an external definition of who you are and therefore abrogate your responsibility to yourself and if you cannot trust your own judgement about your own person, there is really no reason for you to be trusted about anything or anyone else. If one's word cannot maintain any consistency over time or a number of actions (i.e. promises), there is no basis for trust in that word or that person. This self-imposed contractual arrangement is the basis for considering authenticity to be a foundation for community. Clearly then, seeking authenticity presupposes that mankind is alone and the old divinities and metaphysical justifications and explanations

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18 From Sartre's preface to N. Sarraute, *Portrait of a Man Unknown*, trans. Maria Jolas (New York: George Braziller, 1958).

have left a void. "This vacuum, where humanity is left without any 'pillars of fire' to guide its way, is the cultural and intellectual background for the emergence of the search for authenticity" (Golomb 1995: 13). Understood in this way we cannot point to a definitive path at the end of which one becomes forever authentic, for "to be authentic means to invent one's own way and pattern of life.... undogmatic openness—or, to use Nietzsche's terminology, a 'horizon of infinite perspectives' from which the individual can survey his or her own life and mould it accordingly" and continually (ibid.: 19). Authenticity in education is desirable then, not because it is a well thought out and defined set of characteristics, adherence to which may relieve difficulty and struggle and answer all our questions, but precisely because it is not this. A concern for authenticity in life and education will keep the questions right where they ought to be, at the forefront of our every action and reaction. Authenticity cannot lead to would-be canonical answers to the questions of life and the abatement of struggle and suffering. Instead it allows us to recognize these as the fundamental characteristics of life, through which alone any degree of happiness and freedom are to be achieved.

In outlining Nietzsche's emphasis on the concept of authenticity, Cooper subordinates the understanding of the various aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy to an understanding of that philosophy as essentially educative because of its concern with the creation of a certain type of person, namely the free spirit, higher cultural type and ultimately the *Übermensch*. The need that Nietzsche saw for such a programme arises out of his understanding of the inquisitive nature of modern society. As Cooper puts it, Nietzsche wondered "...how the individual shall live in the era of history after the 'death of God'," because in such an era "...our hitherto highest values have destroyed themselves by being taken to their logical conclusion" (Cooper 1983a: 1). The answer, when we can no longer rely on the traditional sources of value and meaning on account of the revelation of their 'shabby' origins, lies in the individual. The distinguishing feature of humanity and that which makes this answer

plausible, is the "capacity for self-concern" (ibid.: 15). This capacity allows us to reflect on our actions, beliefs, intentions and values with the objective of analyzing and, where it is deemed appropriate, altering them in order to improve the quality of the unique interpretation that is life. Only through self-reflection can we understand in what regard we hold our selves and our values which for Nietzsche are the first and necessary steps toward any development of the individual and thereby society and culture. This is noted in *The Genealogy of Morals* where Nietzsche says that "the value of these values themselves must first be called into question—and that there is needed a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which they grew, under which they evolved and changed" (*GM*: 20). The objective is, of course, to become masters and authors of our situation and condition in a more conscious and intentional manner. If, given the qualification of the demise of our "hitherto highest values," we choose to maintain the outward appearance of stability by tacitly accepting the old ideals, apart from the obvious hypocrisy and necessary self-deception of such a choice, we will find ourselves in what can only be described as an existential crisis of the highest order. As Cooper notes, the incongruity of following policies and values in which we no longer believe, "produces a problem of authenticity" (Cooper 1983a.: 4). In order to avoid this it is necessary for each individual, to the extent that this is possible, "[to] live in a full awareness of the possibilities of action, belief, and purpose that are in fact open to him, and which anyone concerned with his existence as an issue must consider" (ibid.: 19).

In pursuit of an authentic life, creativity must serve as both a means and an end. It is a means insofar as it is not possible to achieve authenticity without it, and it is an end insofar as the authentic life is one of perpetual creation and re-creation. Nietzsche offers this conception of creativity as a way "to avoid and overcome nihilism and decadence" (Murphy 1984: 1), which are the result of its lack. He identifies the type of person that he sees as key to our understanding of this point as the philosopher-artist. This type serves a central role in

Nietzsche's pedagogical thought because, "in brief, to be a philosopher means, for Nietzsche, to be a visionary, a teacher, an example" (ibid.: 7). His combination of the characteristics of the two is meant to emphasize the need for a deep critical honesty, for holism and for the integration of the merging focus of the three horizons, the individual, the synchronic and the emergent, mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, in the pursuit of authenticity. Nietzsche's examples of free spirits are drawn from the ranks of the great philosophers and artists of European cultural and intellectual history, and the small number of such examples is explained by what he saw as the extreme rarity of this combination of artist and philosopher. Indeed, of the examples among the philosophers that he does present, his choices may strike the reader as somewhat counterintuitive, but this too is tied to what he sees as the crisis in education, for "his criticisms of educational institutions and practices is deeply associated with his criticisms of Western philosophy" (ibid.: 19).

To this end, Nietzsche says that what is truly important about a philosopher, and equally about an artist, how they *educate*, is not their productions, their philosophy or works of art, but the example of the lives they lead. For Nietzsche it is these that may stand as an example to the rest of us. As his true educator Nietzsche chose Arthur Schopenhauer, and while he ultimately rejected Schopenhauer's system, he did not reject the man as an important influence because, as he states in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, "the only thing of interest in a refuted system is the personal element. It alone is forever irrefutable" (PTA: pref). Again, in individuals who demonstrate a sense of holism, integration and strong judgement, there we find Nietzsche's examples. It may seem more appropriate to use the thinkers who have had the greatest influence on the thought of the West, but because this is what he is criticizing, the people he holds responsible for this situation cannot satisfy his criteria for the authentic individual. As he says in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, "[a] scholar can never become a philosopher; even Kant could not do this and remained to the end, in spite of



the inborn drive of his genius, in a state of pupation. Whoever thinks that I am doing Kant an injustice with these words does not know what a true philosopher is; namely, not only a great thinker but also a true man and when has a true man ever come from a scholar?" (SE: 189). This point recalls his criticisms of professional scholars that Nietzsche outlined in his early pedagogical works.

With this idea, what Nietzsche attempts to show is the damage caused by the repression of the creative force and thereby the creative potential of the individual. One of the results of such subordination, and one moreover that is self-perpetuating, is overspecialization. In the quest for authenticity and authentic education we are warned against this since "towards the end of teaching man how to live, epistemology, language analysis, and metaphysics are instruments of the philosophical task, not in themselves the whole [of] philosophy" (Murphy 1984: 8). Nietzsche discussed this problem in many of his works, but the most forceful explication of the damage of such an attitude comes in *The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, wherein he describes the break-up of the study of history into three competing types: the monumental, antiquarian and critical. I discussed these types earlier in chapter 2, but a brief reprise of these types at this point will be useful. Recall that each of the three is, for Nietzsche, a necessary part of a healthy sense of history, but the modern propensity towards specialization has led to the overemphasis of each. The monumental has its value in that "the great moments in the struggle of the human individual constitute a chain, that this chain unites mankind across the millennia like a range of high mountain peaks, that the summit of such a long-ago moment shall be for me still living" (UD: 68). But this form of history becomes detrimental when pursued in isolation because "But it is precisely this demand that greatness shall be everlasting that sparks off the most fearful of struggles. For everything else that lives cries No" (ibid.), that not only the great from history are important. Then there is the antiquarian, wherein the ancient alone has value, and creates the danger most of what exists it

does not perceive at all, and the little it does see it sees much too close up and isolated; it cannot relate what it sees to anything else and it therefore accords everything it sees equal importance and therefore to each individual thing too great importance" (ibid.: 74). And finally there is the critical which serves "to shatter and dissolve something in order to enable [the present] to live: this [man] achieves by dragging [history] to the bar of judgement, interrogating it meticulously and finally condemning it" (ibid.). This is done out of a desire to avoid the shabby nature of our own origins, to relieve a kind of growing historical guilt. These forms of historiography, when each is treated in isolation, work to the detriment of the others and thus create what Nietzsche calls the "historical sickness." The remedy for this ailment is a more inclusive interpretative approach and for this he looks to philosophy.

Over the course of his career Nietzsche considered many of the disciplines as possible remedies: philology in the early stages of his activity followed by history, physics and biology, but ultimately he felt that philosophy had a special role to play with regard to the quest for authenticity because of the characteristics it shares with art, namely vision and its fundamentally interpretative nature, for "without the philosophical life, as the mode of human life which generates meaning, then indeed a lot of mankind would be meaningless" (Murphy 1984: 22). This conclusion is a return to the "sound philosophical foundations" described in the *Encyclopaedia*. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche tells us that "the philosopher...[is] the man of the most comprehensive responsibility who has the conscience for the over-all development of man..." (*BGE*: 72), and it follows that such an individual cannot subordinate himself to predetermined limits and definitions since these can only serve to hinder creative potential. Referring to the quote from *Schopenhauer as Educator* above (at *SE*: 189), Murphy notes that, "by adopting the idea of scholarship, one adopts a structure of meaning and values that is dictated by prior generations. Having knowledge as its ideal, scholarship might seem in a position to advance the cause of human creativity. But the kind of truth that scholarship

reveals and the use to which scholarship puts it, constrain the liberating capacity of truth” (Murphy 1984: 30). This, as we saw in chapter 1, was a key concern for Nietzsche during his time as a university professor and the impact of this circumstance can be seen in his decision to take a year out in Paris, in the tone of the five lectures on education and the academic reaction to *The Birth of Tragedy*.

In this regard it is important to note that Nietzsche’s description of the need for revaluation does not only apply to our moral values, though these are the most immediately associated with this doctrine, but they must and do apply to everything, and in particular to the system of education. This, for Nietzsche, goes to the heart of the matter because to educate means to create meaning, value and culture, and this “demands from [the student] not only inner experience, not only the judgement of the external world of flux, but finally, and chiefly, action” (*SE*: 62). Moreover, this action is manifest primarily in engaging in struggle and contest. Only by embracing the agonal nature of authenticity can one learn what it means and how far reaching its consequences. In Nietzsche’s analysis this must begin with the educational process, for this is the most fruitful skill that education has to offer.

## 4.2 Nietzsche's Competition

The agonistic aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy of education stems from the analysis of authenticity and explains why education must not be based on an external scale against which one attempts to measure the degree of success or failure. Indeed, by fully integrating contest into education, the very possibility of failure is significantly limited. Normally speaking we consider those who 'win' to be those who receive external accolades, but since, as we shall see, experience is the aim, in authentic contest there can only be degrees of victory. The contest is first and foremost directed inward. This is what Nietzsche describes as self-overcoming and here we ought to be careful of the double meaning in this term. On one level, the individual must seek to become better than whatever they may consider themselves 'to be' at any given time. The ability to point to something that defines the 'self', cannot, for Nietzsche, actually be done in the normal sense, for "How can man know himself? He is a thing dark and veiled; and if the hare has seven skins, man can slough off seventy times seven and still not be able to say: 'this is really you, this is no longer outer shell'" (SE: 129). The type of fixity that such a reified concept of self implies can only give rise to the complacency and apathy that stands in the way of progress in Nietzsche's sense of the term. Lazy self-satisfaction is, in this regard, the only available type of failure. If one arrives at something that he or she is willing to call a 'self', development must be at an end. In seeking a final or complete definition of what one is, if we are to follow Nietzsche's critical approach, it will become clear that the endeavour can bear no fruit. This is because each individual is a continually developing entity in a perpetual state of becoming. As such the definition of a self-in-itself cannot be achieved. Understood in this way, contest is a perpetual and self-generating activity. Whenever one champions oneself there arises a new standard which must, in its turn, be overcome. The actual achievement of a definition of self is ultimately less important than engaging in contest because "the irreducible advantage of the contest is

experience. And to the extent that the contest provides that experience, Nietzsche looks to it as the guiding notion of philosophy, of education, of life itself" (Murphy 1984: 47). Thus self-overcoming means to seek to become aware of the possibilities open to oneself at any given time. Of course, some of these possibilities will be limited to a certain extent by external factors such as social norms, moral codes and culturally accepted practices, and this brings us to the second meaning of self-overcoming. This meaning is turned outward at those norms which limit individual development and experimentation and chief among these is the very concept of a self-in-itself.

Here then, the concern is not with how the individual may see him or herself, but with how society attempts to constrain and limit that vision with the idea that there is some *thing* that an individual is ultimately meant to be. This teleological view of the self is, for Nietzsche, one of the most powerful aspects of nihilism because of its tendency to limit possibility through the practices and institutions of a given society which has subordinated itself to the perceived greater interests of the State, thus thwarting the will to overcome. "Here...we are experiencing the consequences of the doctrine...that the state is the highest goal of mankind and that a man has no higher duty than to serve the state..." (SE: 148). On Nietzsche's interpretation then, religion, education and culture, even the day to day concerns of the individual, become largely dominated and thereby determined by the State, and a predetermined 'self' is born. In order for such a system to work, every individual must accept a hierarchically determined place or function in society which it then becomes 'wrong' or 'bad' to transcend because any such attempt undermines the institutionalized validity of the presuppositions of the system. A kind of existential conservatism becomes the rule, imposed from the top down, which breeds complacency and apathy thus giving rise to nihilism. In such a system, the contest becomes no more than a vestige of the old order, removed to the stadium for entertainment purposes, and here lies the essential contradiction that Nietzsche sees in contemporary attitudes towards

this notion. While on the one hand “nothing should at any price undermine the ‘rational’ and the ‘real’” (*DS*: 11), there remains great admiration for the sovereign individual who masters himself and wins contests, which is to say, the individual who sets his own limits and rules. The elitism that all true democrats fear as a great threat to their way of life, is at the same time the thing they gather in largest numbers to admire, it is one of their highest values. The contest, initially a process, becomes a spectacle to be enjoyed, rather than a positive activity to be engaged in.

Against this self-contradictory understanding of the process, Nietzsche offers contest as the central activity in culture and education, which is to say in life. On the above model, education becomes a practice or habit rather than a task, and its application is expanded as much as possible with the aim of including as many people as possible, or what Nietzsche calls the ‘democratization of education,’ which can only be achieved by adopting the lowest common denominator as the standard, breeding the kind of apathy, mediocrity and fragmentation discussed in chapters 1 and 2. At this point it will be useful to introduce two separate uses for the word “knowledge” which Cooper (1983a) has outlined. In the first use the focus is on content, and in the second the focus is on the process of knowing. An education which focuses on knowledge in the first sense is essentially a process of assimilating a given body of facts, existing definitions and parameters that are said to comprise a discipline, and this is something which Nietzsche aggressively opposed because of its tendency toward overspecialization. The only remnant of the contest left in this type of education is almost entirely external insofar as the individual measures him or herself against little more than the ability of other individuals to assimilate the same body of facts. Creation and innovation are essentially spurned on account of the threat they pose to the existing structure and system. On the other hand, the type of education that focuses on the second sense of knowledge is an essential component of the pursuit of authenticity because it seeks to

facilitate the creation of values and meaning; it encourages creation of truths by which one's unique existence is made possible. But the kind of truth that this sense of knowledge creates is not the abstract, disinterested kind, "[this] truth must be truth which is felt in the blood" (Murphy 1984: 47). In this way the concept of contest becomes something all encompassing, which is to be expressed in all aspects of both private and public life.

It follows, then, that if contest is to be recognized as a fundamental part of life, it must be something that is encouraged throughout education which, as a result, must focus on method rather than content. Moreover, we can now see how Nietzsche's self-overcoming will involve not just the individual's desire to become better and to reject the normative concept of a self-in-itself, but also the overcoming of the guide, that is, the teacher. Again, we do well to remind ourselves that what Nietzsche means by "teacher" is quite different from what he means by the phrase "true educator." One's true educators are chosen from a specifically perspectival awareness of one's own formation as an individual, involving as a necessary characteristic a critical awareness of the decisions one makes. The teacher is imposed, as it were, from external, societal norms, and serves in effect as a guide, though not the exclusive one, through the myriad examples who may eventually become one's true educators. To clarify this, for Nietzsche teachers must perform a dual role. A teacher must present content, but must also point to various methods of applying knowledge to such content. "[The] educator is a model...of self-discipline...who is constantly striving to make creative and unique choices based on the context of each situation as he sees it and who is able to bear the responsibility for his choices" (Sharp 1975: 103). This raises the question of the teacher's own interest in the subject being taught, for without a high level of such interest, Nietzsche tells us, the object of study says nothing to the teacher and so he has nothing to say about it. There is, of course, a certain degree of subordination of the student to both 'teacher' and 'teaching,' but, as we shall see in the last section of this chapter, this subordination remains

under the control of the individual being taught for the express purpose of overcoming self, society and teacher.

Thus far in the discussion of contest and overcoming the emphasis has been on victory of some sort, but this impression needs to be tempered to certain extent, since as was noted earlier, experience rather than gold medals is what is important here. Nietzsche says that "the value of the thing sometimes lies not in what one attains with it, but in what one pays for it" (*TI*: 92). On the surface this statement does not appear particularly novel, but I take Nietzsche's intention to be to draw our attention to the idea that values are not inherent in objects but come from what one is willing to forego in order to possess a certain object or right, and that this has ceased to be the case. We need only think of what value is placed on consumer goods, on degrees, or, more specifically, the value of excellence in our modern culture. More often than not what is counted as valuable is the status associated with the possession of these things. A Mercedes-Benz may be a fine automobile and the result of significant effort on the part of designers and engineers, but in the drive at home it is little more than a status symbol. Excelling in a certain area can often have less to do with the expansion of knowledge, either for the individual or the area of study, than it does with the status afforded the individual in the eyes of others by the title conferred, the income gained and so on. The point that Nietzsche makes with regard to this valuing is a very Heraclitean one. Murphy notes that, "it would be well to point out that Nietzsche did not necessarily locate the value of the contest in the *result* of the contest" (Murphy 1984: 49). To put this point back into the mouth of Heraclitus: "The path up and down are one and the same" (Hippolytus *Ref.* IX, 10, 4. fr. 60). Nietzsche refers to this characteristic in *Human, all too Human*, when he says that anyone who has come to inquire must consider himself a wanderer, "must not attach his heart too firmly to any individual thing; there must be something wandering within him, which takes its joy in change and transitoriness" (*HAH*: 638). There



are, of course, achievements to be attained, objectives, aims and the like, but each of these needs to be seen as its own repudiation. One who seeks to learn will go to a teacher, but the education does not and should not end with the certificate of degree because the education received becomes the basis for the next stage in an unending process of learning. That said, one may be led to the mistaken belief that this process serves no purpose, but for Nietzsche the purpose is clear because "the contest results in the victorious state of human cheerfulness, the condition of overfulness, the paradigmatic Nietzschean mood. This cheerfulness is the self-justifying condition, which on the grounds of lived experiences, *means* human well-being and self-fulfillment" (Murphy 1984: 50). It thus stands to reason that this cheerfulness lasts only as long as the contest. It may be useful to think of the analogy between this idea and an Olympic athlete. We need only ask ourselves if all of those who do not win gold medals regret having competed. I suspect that most would answer in the negative because the commitment to training is not a commitment solely or even primarily to gaining a gold medal, however importantly this may figure in the decision. Rather, the commitment is to improving oneself, which is to say that the competition is primarily with oneself, as is, or should be, according to Nietzsche, the case in education as well. To make this point he raises a poignant fact about the ancient Greek practice of excluding previous victors from the Olympic games. "Why should no one be *the best*? Because then the contest would come to an end and the eternal source of life for the whole Hellenic state would be endangered" (*Homer* in *PN*: 36). This process of contest requires that the individual, not unlike the Olympic athlete, should have a great capacity for the redirection of his basic drives. In self-overcoming the individual is transformed into the 'sovereign' individual who is capable of the type of competition described, and this sovereignty is the result of an on-going process of sublimation, to which we now turn.

### 4.3 Sublimation

Now that we have seen what the objectives of Nietzsche's philosophy of education are, the creation of authenticity and the conscious and committed embracing of contest as a central activity in life, let us now look at what he offers as the apparatus and method for engaging in these practices. A subject that comes up repeatedly in Nietzsche's work is the concept of instincts. In *The Birth of Tragedy* he discusses the conflict and interplay of the Apollonian and Dionysian instincts in art. In the *Untimely Meditations* he talks about the instincts of the scholar, the philosopher and the artist. Many of his aphorisms investigate the wide array of human instincts and in the *Genealogy of Morals* he introduces the notion of how second natures become first natures and the relative strength of each. In all of these discussions Nietzsche appears to be attempting to understand how humanity might overcome the drives and tendencies that stand in the way of development. I say 'appears' because this is not what he is doing. Rather, as he says in the third of the five lectures on education, the point of confronting the student with nature is to show him that 'man' does not stand opposed to nature, but that he is ultimately part of it. He hopes to show that nature in man is a very powerful thing but that its domination of him is not absolute. And while this may indicate that he draws a distinction between man and nature, Nietzsche makes no such distinction. Instead, humanity is capable of working with nature in order to improve itself. The process by which this takes place is sublimation.

Nietzsche says that "... [the]"natural" qualities and those called truly "human" are inseparably grown together. Man, in his highest and noblest capacities, is wholly nature..." (*Homer in PN*: 32). Thus we can see that Nietzsche maintains an important connection between man and nature, but rather than taking nature to mean essence, or what man essentially is, we must understand nature to refer to the immediate drives and desires, namely the instincts of

mankind. In this sense man's nature is the primordial source of his activity, and in the process of the development of the species this energy is transformed into those activities and drives that we call the basic instincts. This makes the instincts a second nature that became a first. This point is made in "Of the Three Metamorphoses" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where Zarathustra says to his followers:

Yes, a sacred Yes is needed, my brothers, for the sport of creation: the spirit now wills *its own will*, the spirit sundered from the world now wins *its own world*.

I have named you the three metamorphoses of the spirit: how the spirit became a camel, and the camel a lion, and the lion at last a child. (Z: 55).

In this passage the spirit should be understood as man's basic drives, the camel as the repressed individual, the lion as the self-determining individual and the child as the free and authentic individual. For Nietzsche, this process is unending. In this sense man is still developing, although still subject to the instincts. But just as the instincts were a transformation and reorganization of something prior to them as a result of the changes in context and circumstance, so the instincts must be transformed and reorganized as a result of further changes in the human condition and context. Strictly speaking, the instincts of man belong to that period of human prehistory when our existence resembled that of the animals more than humans. This no longer being the case, further developments are required. Man must "impose an iron pressure on at least one of these instinct systems which must be paralyzed to permit another to gain power, to become strong" (TI: 41). This power must be able to subordinate something that is already strong and long-standing, but provided that there is an apparatus or method for achieving this, it is an obstacle that can be overcome. Whereas the transition of instincts was an unconscious reaction to external circumstances, this second development is something that can and, for Nietzsche, should be entirely conscious. This development takes place through acts of sublimation which are seen as necessary by

Nietzsche because for man “the most desirable thing is still under all circumstances a hard discipline at the appropriate time” (*WP*: 482). This ‘hard discipline’ speaks of the individual’s sovereignty over the instincts as part of the path to authenticity.

As with authenticity and contest, sublimation is also directed toward the creative capacity of man and the infinite possibility that life represents, and as such it embraces the pain and suffering of life in deference to the objective. Sublimation involves the domination and redirection of the instincts in the service of creation, which will require a certain degree of destruction. It is first an affirmation of life in all its aspects, and it does not shy away from the many harsh truths and inherent tragedy of life. “To make the individual uncomfortable, that is my task” (Notes in *PN*: 50). Nietzsche hopes to achieve this by presenting many ‘harsh truths’ about life and education in an effort to present a choice between nihilism and progress. The former requires apathy and the latter, considerable and considered activity. Among those activities sublimation is perhaps the most difficult, but also the most rewarding because “[it] is born of [man’s] suffering—his capacity to sublimate his life energy for the sake of creative action and to endlessly destroy what is old and accomplished for the sake of becoming qualitatively more” (Sharp 1975: 98). But such destruction must not be read as the renunciation or rejection of the old and accomplished simply because it is old and accomplished. Rather, this destruction is not directed at the achievements but at their domination of the present and future creativity of man. All such achievements have the potential to become a new system and dogma, which is precisely what Nietzsche hopes to avoid with his description. “I mistrust all systematizers and I avoid them. The will to system is a lack of integrity” (*TI*: 26). In upsetting the privilege of system and dogma the process of sublimation creates the space and freedom in which not just new achievements, values and modes of living and acting can be created and expressed, but also the re-valuation and possible re-affirmation of those old and accomplished elements. Sublimation is the strength of

freedom, “[for] what is freedom? That one has the will to assume responsibility for oneself” (ibid.: 38). Because the instinct to hold the old and accomplished in highest esteem is normally associated with a type of passion, there is the danger that sublimation will be read as the antithesis of passion. But rather than associating it with the passion of the preservationist, it is to be associated with the creative passion of the artist or individual who does the creating. “Nietzsche’s educated man is a man who has affirmed all of his passions and is able to consciously take upon himself the task of channeling them to their fullest extent in the production of creative ideas, creative works of art, creative inventions” (Sharp 1975: 100). All of this is done in the interest of individual growth, development and freedom and must lie at the very heart of education for it is in the process of education that the habits of a life are acquired.

If sublimation is to become an effective tool in the process of education and of becoming free, of becoming who we are, it must include the highest degree of personal responsibility. For Nietzsche, the normal practice of subordinating one’s will and strength to a society or culture is part of the ease and comfort attitude of the modern world. It is an abrogation of responsibility with the most damaging consequences. One can see the apparently practical reasons for this subordination and abrogation in this context, such as the freeing up of one’s time and the minimization of one’s involvement, but doing so in effect kills the tree from its roots. Without responsibility one can have no claim to his or her own development, expression or creativity. Conversely, “in assuming responsibility for oneself, one has developed the power to consciously create oneself, to assume responsibility not only for one’s present, but for one’s past and one’s future and to affirm life...” (ibid.: 99).

Again, we are seeing the development of the conscious decision to build the foundation in the educational contest. Only when this has been achieved can we expect to build the monument

of society. The drive to authenticity, contest and sublimation is always first directed inward. When this provisional objective has been met, the "true culture" of which Nietzsche writes will be possible. Understanding that this is a daunting task, and a precarious expectation, Nietzsche considered two reactions to his description. The first is that since the instincts are closely associated with nature, with what we normally consider human nature, Nietzsche anticipated the reaction that attempting to alter this nature may be seen as somehow denying what we in fact are, and so perhaps a return to nature is the better, more honest course. But against this he warns that "thus men plunge into nature not to find themselves, but to lose and forget themselves. 'To be outside oneself' is the desire of the weak and self-discontented" (*WP*: 495). Being outside oneself is to succumb to the domination of an external system such as a religion, a moral code or a discipline. In this way we can see how the apparent will to truth is in actuality a very damaging will to ignorance and a justification of inactivity in defining ones circumstances and objectives.

The second reaction to this idea of responsibility is that we inhabit a world that is beyond our control and which cannot be altered by our activity. In the face of such overwhelming dominance, capitulation is seen as the only course and the 'value positing eye' is directed elsewhere. But "[to] forego the world without knowing it...that leads to a fruitless, perhaps melancholy solitude," which is considered a mark of detached wisdom, though "[it] has nothing in common with the *vita contemplativa* of the thinker: when he chooses that he is renouncing nothing" (*D*: 441). The world of which Nietzsche speaks is the human world, the world of society and of culture. Renouncing it in earnest is the result of the feeling of helplessness and weakness. But these feelings can only come into effect with the express permission of the individual, and should not be seen as 'the way things anyway are'. Nietzsche's exhortations to responsibility through sublimation demonstrate how this is so. The choices one makes create the path and the bridge on which the individual will travel

through life. But we may well ask, as did Nietzsche, “how [it is] possible to stay on one’s path? Always someone crying calls us aside; our eye rarely sees a case where it does not become necessary to leave our own task immediately....There is even a secret seduction in all this...our ‘own path’ is too hard...and too far from the love of others...we do not at all mind escaping it” (GS: 338). That our task appears too difficult is precisely Nietzsche’s point. The fact of this difficulty is the test of one’s strength and quality of will to power. “Sublimation becomes a tool, and nothing more, through which one gains power over oneself. It does not involve the repression of something evil, but rather a redirecting of the power or energy for something higher, something more valued” (Sharp 1975: 103).

Thus the free and sovereign individual is born out of “obedience, subordination and a willingness to serve,” but rather than to serve some higher and external authority, it is to oneself that these things primarily apply. This means obedience to one’s chosen path, the subordination of the instincts and drives that would draw one away from that path, discipline in governing oneself, and a willingness to serve the higher goals of freedom and authenticity. In other words the individual must stand for something or they are likely to fall for anything. And in this falling there is a great deal at stake because the *laissez aller* attitude to self and society precipitate mediocrity, blind conformity and the leveling of all values, with the result that “excellence and differentness become non-existent, and the capacity for reform within society disappears” (Sharp 1975: 102).

The three issues discussed in this chapter all point to a kind of separation of past and present with an eye to the opening up of novel creation for the future. The transition to authenticity requires critical evaluation of one’s past in an effort to avoid being dominated, or at least to take control of the circumstances and context of one’s existence. The constant struggle and competition that this requires replaces the apathy of nihilism with a fundamental desire to

become better, to progress. And finally, sublimation is the struggle for authenticity turned inward, dominating one's basic drives and unreflective desires in order to allow others to grow and develop in the interest of a type of existential sovereignty which is the chief characteristic of the 'new humanity' Nietzsche hoped would eventually emerge.



## Conclusion

Whenever we endeavour to understand a thinker we are never far from the danger of laying the conclusion that is the philosophy over the development that is the philosopher, leading to the desire to see consistency and coherence between late and early considerations. In order to avoid this we must always bear in mind that every philosopher, just like every person, is a process and, it is hoped, a progress and development. Nietzsche looked to philosophy as the activity with the greatest potential to teach because of its fundamentally developmental nature. But at the same time he was careful to remind us that in a world of ever-changing perspectives, of narrowing and expanding horizons, there will always come a time when each philosophical view will be called into question and perhaps refuted. Nietzsche maintained the position that in order to find the educational value in any such refuted system, we must look to the personal element because this, he says, remains forever irrefutable. Turning this view back on Nietzsche, as Cooper notes, it is difficult to separate the educational thought of thinkers from their philosophy, which is a point with particular resonance in Nietzsche's case since it is difficult, if not impossible, to divorce his personal views from his philosophy of education because, as I hope to have shown, these are of a piece.

Over the course of this dissertation I have attempted to show that Nietzsche's larger philosophical project is essentially educative and as such it is best read and best understood through the explication of his philosophy of education. The development of Nietzsche's philosophy grew out of his considerations of education and how this serves culture and thereby life. From a remarkably early age Nietzsche separated himself from the internal debates over the content of his chosen discipline of Classical Philology in order to focus on the methods used by classicists to elucidate that content. In so doing he generated a critical awareness of the idea that the problems that appeared to be specific to classics were the problems of education in general. Nietzsche identified these as the democratization and

professionalization of education which he felt had served to fragment knowledge to such a degree as to separate education from what he considered its central function: the creation of the fertile environment in which future cultural leaders might develop who, in their turn, might serve to ensure cultural development and progress. I have shown, in chapter 1, that the fragmentation that he blamed for this situation was the result of the practices of contemporary education and so he sought to offer a remedy for this by identifying a culture that did not suffer from this modern disease. Through his genealogical analyses of the roots of the problem, Nietzsche recognized the Pre-Platonic period in Greek culture, the so-called tragic age, as that culture. As we have seen, there are two reasons for this conclusion. First, as a Classical Philologist, Nietzsche's understanding of education and culture has its roots in his studies of the ancient Greeks. Side-stepping the traditional view of the Golden Age of the Greeks as the most important period in their history, Nietzsche discovered that the agonism and self-definition of the period leading up to that age were even more important. If anything were to be learned from them, the process and development of the culture, rather than the conclusion of that development, must be understood.

Second, Nietzsche recognized that it was during the tragic age that the Greeks managed to organize the chaos of their origins, slough off the yoke of foreign cultural and political domination and impose their own meaning on the world around them. Ultimately then, the Greeks represented for Nietzsche a culture which focused on development and progress and on the changing nature of reality for the benefit of cultural health, creativity and life.

Returning to the question of method, I have shown in chapter 1 how Nietzsche began his career in the spirit of reforming the methods and focus of classics. He criticized the tendency towards over-specialization and fragmentation in order to re-assert the importance of unified and coherent philosophical foundations. This unity had been lost through the shift in focus

from the object of study, initially the Greeks for Nietzsche but eventually human knowledge and understanding in general, to the scholars and academics who carry out the research. He moved on to try to identify the basis for a more coherent approach which he found in the recognition of the existential constitution of the present, or modernity, as the context in which claims to truth achieve value. This recognition led him to the further realization that this value can only be achieved on the basis of the hermeneutic awareness of one's perspective from a particular philosophical world-view. Part of the value of a given hermeneutic is the individual's critical awareness that the results of research serve primarily to reveal the presuppositions and perspective of the present, which is to say that history tells us more about the present than it does about the past. One of the problems that he identified as standing in the way of this was the impoverished state of language education in modern society. Fuelled by the *vitesse* of modern journalistic culture, language education had lost its ability to convey any sense of unity in the past and the importance of the positing of meaning which is a result of the misapplication of the 'gelehrt-historische' method of instruction. This method had become dominant as a result of the drive towards specialization in the modern, professional academy. Recognizing this allows us to see that Nietzsche had identified the self-perpetuating nature of this situation and its detrimental effect on education and culture. Nietzsche's criticisms and observations thus shifted to the source of this problem, what he called the historical sickness, and the relationship between history and culture.

In coming to this realization Nietzsche came to a deeper understanding of the all-pervasive character of fragmentation in modern scholarship and education. He observed that whereas history and culture had in the past always stood in close association with one another through the transmission and re-assessment of tradition, modern culture did not and could not because of the division of the modern understanding of history into three isolated types. These were, of course, the monumental, the antiquarian and the critical as discussed in chapter 2.

Nietzsche noticed that in the separation of what he counted as a healthy whole, history had lost its ability to transmit any sense of unity. As a result, the transmission of the unity of style that he saw as the primary function of history had been replaced by a sense that the parts were all-important. Regarding them as all important, history confers on tradition an authority which it should not have. The result is that our history comes to be seen as separate from us and so the long separated examples that we do see in each of the isolated types of history become authoritative with regard to creative expression. Furthermore, this authoritative function stands as an example, not of human creative potential, but of creative limitation, thus fostering the culture of imitation which, as we saw in chapter 2, has the effect of a degenerating culture. The achievements of the past become an unattainable outward limit of creative possibility and we are left with the sense that since we can never be that past, there is no point in trying. This, of course, is one of the sources of the modern sense of apathy and nihilism that Nietzsche sought to remedy. This collage-culture lacks any sense of innovation and drive because anything that does not fit the canon is deemed a threat to the dogmatic view of received tradition and is marginalized or rejected. Against this Nietzsche sought to instil a holistic sense of history which combines a critical awareness of the origins of contemporary culture with an eye towards the continual questioning of the value of tradition to the present. This, he felt, ensures that developmental attitude which he first attributed to a healthy academic culture. In this way the relationship between culture and education can be restored and the merely apparent culture of the present can more easily be replaced. This realization again stemmed from Nietzsche's search for a culture that did not suffer fragmentation and isolation from itself. Seeing this divided form of history as the chief reason for the loss of cultural progress and the promotion of imitation, Nietzsche looked to the culture that had been held up as the model for modern culture and society in order to find the origin and root cause. This, he felt, was the product of a reified view of Greek antiquity which privileged the merely

superficial aspects of that culture, and again, he was led to the period before the 'classical and ever living standard' for his answer to the question of how a people must be in order to produce such a healthy sense of culture. And in so doing, Nietzsche recognized that the sophistic culture of the late 6<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC was the answer.

What Nietzsche recognized in the sophistic culture was the spirit of creation and innovation. There arose a need among the Greeks for new ways of defining themselves and their values and it was this period of re-definition and self-definition that marked the dawn of the so-called classical period in Greece. This raised the question of the nature and constitution of knowledge and the process of understanding. We saw in chapter 3 how Nietzsche's development of the Protagorean doctrine of man as the measure of all things had allowed him to offer an explanation of the nature of truth and knowledge. Protagoras maintained the position that the object of knowledge was the impressions we have of the world around us. On an individual level it is necessary to place value on one object over another in order to have it stand out from the background of perpetual flux and therefore become 'interesting' to us. But Protagoras realized that while this was readily acknowledged it creates the problem that what holds value for one individual need not—indeed rarely if ever can—hold the same value for anyone else. As a result the desire to share individual interpretations runs into to what he identified as the insolubility of the double argument, or the *dissos logos*. The origin of the conflict was not the impression of the object to be considered, but the valuation that has been appended to that impression in the initial process of identification. That valuation holds only for the individual who imposes it—something he or she is at liberty to do—but when the sphere is shifted to the community that valuation becomes the source of incommensurability. In order to come to agreement over objects of study it is necessary to remove the valuation and so describe the impressions of objects rather than assert truths about them. Nietzsche realized that this was the key to the incorporation of multiple perspectives into a given view which

renders the resulting view a more inclusive one. This inclusive view of human knowledge and understanding is a fundamental characteristic of Nietzsche's analytic of perspectivism and his understanding of cultural progress, but in order for this to satisfy the requirement of perpetual development it must be part of a more fundamental understanding of the world as in a constant state of change. And for this understanding Nietzsche looked to the thought of Heraclitus and through him the other great Sophist of the classical period, Gorgias.

From Heraclitus Nietzsche derived a deep and abiding view of the world as in this perpetual state of change, of birth, growth, death and renewal. Nietzsche's understanding of the agonistic nature of first Greek and thus all cultures was of a piece with this. In an effort to explain the health that he sought to promote in modern education and culture, Nietzsche required an explanation of the place of the concept of becoming which would not be subject to the kind of valuation that Protagoras had identified as the origin of stultifying conflict and competition, while at the same time maintaining competition as central to education, culture and life. This was to be found in Gorgias' analysis of the incongruity between Being and becoming which was discussed in chapter 3.

The relation of these elements was brought together in chapter in the identification of Nietzsche's philosophy of education. Here it was shown that education, for Nietzsche, was composed of three interdependent activities, all of which are geared to the objective of continual creative renewal and growth. The first of these was the pursuit of authenticity. This was shown to be the necessary foundation of the mode of life that Nietzsche saw as ceaselessly engaged in the activity of questioning the applicability of one's values and value systems to the world. Through the pursuit of authenticity the individual is put in the position of having to justify their choices to themselves in an effort to maintain a sense of integrated wholeness. This activity is of course initially directed inward, towards what one may consider

oneself to be, with an understanding of the ever-changing nature of that self. Such an understanding serves to direct attention to the agonistic nature of avoiding the modern tendency towards fragmentation. This outward turn is manifest in the recognition of competing versions of reality and the constitution of knowledge as demonstrated by a perspectival awareness of one's position within a given community and thus it serves as an outward representation of the internal competition between present and former views. I then identified the method by which this takes place as the sublimation of the drives and instincts that have become familiar, those considered to be first natures. Ultimately then, Nietzsche's philosophy of education seeks to develop an environment in which cultural progress can be promoted by the development of an understanding of the competitive nature of existence. And so, in answer to the question of what Nietzsche means to education, we are now in a position to answer that through the perspectival understanding of external competition we are driven towards creative renewal and development. This drive promotes the pursuit of authenticity both in the individual, and through it, in society as a whole. Based on this position, the modern tendency towards 'ease and comfort' can be seen as having the effect of reifying and thereby degenerating creative potential. The nihilism that marks this tendency can thus be seen as the 'worse interpretation' of life and culture which we are able to replace with the 'better interpretation' which is marked by the pursuit of authenticity, positive creative competition and the sublimation of the drive towards easy self-satisfaction in an effort to allow ever-new and life affirming natures to grow.

## Appendix

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900)  
By Thomas E. Hart  
from *Fifty Key Thinkers on Education*.  
Joy Pamer and David E. Cooper eds. London: Routledge, 2002.

“The hardest task still remains: to say how a new circle of duties may be derived from this ideal and how one can proceed towards so extravagant a goal through a practical activity - in short, to demonstrate that this ideal *educates*.”<sup>1</sup>

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche was born on October 14, 1844 to Franziska and Karl Ludwig who was the pastor of the small village of Röcken, Germany. Nietzsche was descended on both sides from devout Lutheran families and theology had been his intended course of study right up to his inscription in philology at the University of Bonn. His father died when Nietzsche was just four years old of what was then called ‘softening of the brain’. This diagnosis haunted Nietzsche throughout his life since from an early age he too suffered from debilitating headaches. After the death of his father Nietzsche’s mother moved the family to the walled mediaeval town of Naumburg where he attended the Dom school for his primary education. In 1855 Nietzsche was awarded a residential scholarship to attend Schulpforta which was one of the best schools of classical education in the Prussian Gymnasium system. Upon leaving Pforta Nietzsche pursued higher education at the University of Bonn but transferred to the University of Leipzig after just one year following an unfortunate power struggle between his supervisor Otto Jahn and the chairman of the faculty Friedrich Ritschl, over the appointment of a new professor. Although Nietzsche initially supported Jahn he followed Ritschl to Leipzig. The debate was significant for Nietzsche because it was his first contact with the political nature of professional scholarship and his decision to follow Ritschl came back to haunt him in the form of vehement attacks against his first book, *The Birth Of Tragedy*. These attacks came from Nietzsche’s younger contemporary, Ullrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff. This latter event marked Nietzsche’s withdrawal from



professional academics and the beginning of his concentration on his philosophical development. In 1867 Nietzsche entered military service as an artillery officer and after his discharge due to injury he was appointed to the chair of classical philology at the University of Basle in 1869. He was just 24 years of age and one of the youngest scholars ever to be appointed to such a position. While there can be little doubt that his success at such an early age was due in part to the support of Ritschl, who once called him the "idol of the whole young philological world,"<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche had long been recognised as a classicist and scholar of the highest rank.

In 1871 Nietzsche's first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, met with exaggerated indignation from the academic community. The attacks mentioned above confirmed Nietzsche's suspicions that so-called professional scholarship was far too politically motivated to accommodate his interests. He subsequently reduced his active service at the University and the local highschool, and he retired from his chair at Basle in 1879. From 1871 onwards Nietzsche gave up the academic world and concentrated on the development of his philosophy which was committed to the revitalization of culture, education and society through the rejection of the dogmatic reception of tradition. His work in this regard remains a model of philosophical inquiry into the development of modern intellectual opinion to this day. One of the most significant parts of Nietzsche's philosophy is the importance he places on the role of education and teachers in society and their relationship to the development of culture.

Nietzsche collapsed in 1888 and was bedridden from then until his death on August 25th, 1900. Between 1871 and 1888 Nietzsche produced 11 major works dealing with many aspects of modern cultural and intellectual life. He was a harsh critic of the superficiality of the modern world and the pretensions of the academic community. Many of his works are written as collections of essays and he often preferred the terseness of aphorisms over the

exhaustive plodding of the treatise. He wrote with a style and eloquence that has seldom been equaled. His work has had the most broad reaching influence and the continued popularity of his thought both inside the academic world and out is a testament to this. Nietzsche's influence on education came to be known in the early part of the twentieth century and he has held the attention of educational thinkers ever since.

Nietzsche's importance to pedagogical philosophy can best be understood through an appreciation of his larger philosophical project and the changes that occurred during the first half of the 19th century. Throughout his career Nietzsche held a deep concern for what he considered the stagnation of intellectual life and the fragmentation of society through the increased emphasis on material wealth and comfort over cultural and social development. His cultural criticism was motivated by what he saw as the decline in education, the increasing professionalization of scholarship and rising State control over both education and culture. During the first half of the 19th century both secondary schools and universities in Germany underwent something of a revolution.<sup>3</sup> The old professional degrees of Law, Medicine and Theology were being challenged for primacy by the Humanities and Natural Sciences. Unfortunately, where once the Humanities, or Liberal Arts, were pursued out of a genuine interest in the development of human understanding, the nature of modern scholarship ushered in an era of competitive academic work which placed position and reputation in a more central role; one that Nietzsche felt was contrary to the true objectives of education. This had the effect of increasing the fragmentation not only between the various disciplines, but also the various specialties within each discipline. In his inaugural lecture at Basle Nietzsche called his discipline an admixture of blood and bone, which is to say that which gives life and that which remains after death, consisting of the most diverse interests and skills and he urged his colleagues to resist the growing tendency to idealise antiquity, the result of over specialisation itself, and to seek the real antiquity which might stand as an

exemplar for cultural and societal progress. And although Nietzsche was one of the greatest products of that system of education his attention to method and his understanding of progress made him one of its most adamant critics. Professionalization had created the divisive forces that had damaged the Bonn seminar and these same attitudes were later responsible for the attack on Nietzsche himself. The overriding tone in Nietzsche's work during the early period, up to 1867, is one of frustration which drove his desire to develop a pedagogical philosophy which could accommodate his objectives. After this period he became concerned with the repair of the situation which led to the development of his well-known method of criticism, genealogical analysis and reconstruction. Insofar as Nietzsche sought to understand the development and proliferation of these negative forces in society education took a central role in his whole philosophical project.

Underlying Nietzsche's philosophy of education is the notion of higher culture and true education. He described contemporary culture as philistine. This was characterised by what he felt was a tendency towards dilettantism and he attacked this most vehemently in the first of his four published *Untimely Meditations*, "David Strauss: confessor and writer." In this essay he identified philistine culture as the creator of "whole philosophies: the sole proviso [of which is] that everything must remain as it was before, that nothing should at any price undermine that 'rational' and the 'real', that is to say, the philistine".<sup>4</sup> His point was that when academic endeavour is defined by those with little or no vision or initiative education becomes a lifeless process of transferring a body of facts rather than a process of developing human understanding. This situation, Nietzsche argued, was in part the result of the decline of linguistic education. Too much emphasis had been placed on the development of specialised interests within a given field of study at the expense of the scholar's ability to convey his or her conclusions and contribution in an articulate and concise manner. The central role Nietzsche placed on language in education was first presented to his audience in a series of

five public lectures titled *On The Future Of Our Educational Institution*, given at Basle in 1872. During the course of these lectures Nietzsche outlined what he felt was wrong with the German educational system. He argued that education had been degraded by its subordination to the State, and had become composed of two detrimental forces which combine to destroy education and thereby culture as well: the greatest possible expansion of education, and the narrowing and weakening of it.<sup>5</sup> He felt that emphasis ought to be placed on strict instruction and guidance. More precisely, the student must be given the tools and guidance to develop his or her own abilities rather than being handed an image to imitate. The ultimate goal of Nietzsche's philosophy of education, as with his whole philosophical system, was the development of true culture through the production of fully authentic individuals or what he called the higher type of humanity, for through the production of such individuals all of society would find its justification and so reap the greatest rewards.

Nietzsche's educational philosophy is concerned, in essence, with the future. He was a harsh critic of the values of modern society and charged these with responsibility for the modern sense of dislocation and isolation. He could make no sense of progress, and here it is cultural and human progress that is meant, unless it was the result of the critical assessment of the past. This is to be done by deciding what ought to be maintained for its useful and beneficial nature with regard to the continued development of the individual and so through the individual, the whole of society. The goal of education in Nietzsche's opinion was the production of true culture and 'higher types', 'free spirits' and eventually the 'overman'. These are individuals possessed of the ability to decide for themselves what has value and what does not without reliance on the dogmatic reception of tradition. The highest form of life is the fully authentic individual who understands that the illusions and necessary fictions of which he is author are the ones that are right for him and that not everyone is capable of flourishing in the same way under the same conditions. Nietzsche felt that modern society

could be characterised by its lack of authenticity. The drive towards ever greater material wealth and comfort creates a leveling effect which in turn precipitates the stagnation of all culture, education included. This leveling effect results in a desire to have every individual place the same values on the same things and so to eradicate the individual altogether. This is one of the most important attitudes that Nietzsche worked against since its only outcome is nihilism: the feeling that since everything has the same value for everyone, nothing has any appreciable value at all. And it is precisely here that Nietzsche's educational philosophy gains its greatest importance, for he held that the purposes of education were the same as those of society, and as such, if society decides that there is no appreciable value to anything, education, in the sense of development and progress, becomes equally meaningless. Against this Nietzsche emphasized the importance of the formation of authentic individuals through, on the one hand, self-reflection and the critical analysis of one's 'true educators', and on the other, through a strong and strict educational system capable of reestablishing the ability of the individual to posit value and thereby reestablishing society's ability to do the same. The attainment of the goals of this form of education are what give sense or justify the society we create.

This 'true' education is, by definition, not within the realm of possibility for everyone, it is for the few. The majority, or herd, require a different type of education, that is, one that provides them with the ability to sustain themselves, but one which ought not be seen as less valuable since it too will allow those individuals to attain their highest possible level of authenticity. Nietzsche's argument is that full authenticity requires sacrifice and commitment on a scale that is exceptionally rare. For Nietzsche there were very few individuals who could be said to have approached the status of the 'higher type' and that only by accident. No overman 'has yet walked the Earth.' This status should not be mistaken for that of the hereditary aristocracy since when he says "noble" Nietzsche is "not speaking of the little

word “*von*”.”<sup>6</sup> He is rather speaking of an aristocracy of spirit and intellect, which is to say that anyone who aspires to greater authenticity ought to be able to access the means to that development. It is, therefore, not one’s birth-right but one’s convictions, attitudes and interests that are important. Nietzsche held that a society’s interest in such higher types was the same as a concern for all of society. The idea is that we are as great as our greatest examples and in that sense they justify us. For example, Julius Caesar, Pericles or Napoleon, as examples of their society’s highest values, are identified with Rome, Athens and France. For Nietzsche, a society is to be judged by the quality of its educational goals and its insistence on the attainment of those goals. On the basis of such educational aims the social, political and economic structure of society will be geared towards its own development in a more authentic manner. When this relationship is reversed, progress becomes synonymous with economic growth and technological advance and this, in turn, perpetuates the leveling effect which is contrary to authentic individuals and lives.

Although during his lifetime Nietzsche occupied the periphery of the intellectual community, his influence has steadily increased since his death. One of the main reasons for this is that his philosophy resists the standard approach of dissection and categorisation. Indeed, this approach is responsible for some the greatest abuses and misinterpretations of his philosophy. Perhaps the most significant of these are the Nazi distortions of some of Nietzsche’s key concepts for the purpose of justifying their own abominable policies. While Nietzsche did write only three works that deal specifically with education, to take these as his complete pedagogical philosophy would be to fall into the nearsightedness which he devoted himself to correcting. Education is a central theme in Nietzsche’s work from the time of his first autobiography at the age of 14 through to his last works. His approach to education came at a time when modern educational systems were first coming into being, and it stood as a warning. Unfortunately ignored during his own time, his work is becoming more and more

recognised as important in all of the subjects to which he directed his considerable intellect. During the twentieth century his thought has had a major influence on Existentialism, Critical and Literary Theory and Postmodernism. Time has done little to reduce the relevance of his approach, his analysis and his conclusions.

## Notes

1. Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books) 1967, § 942.
2. F. Ritschl quoted in F.A. Lea, *The Tragic Philosopher* (Methuen & Co Ltd, London, 1957) p.30.
3. Cf "Wilhelm von Humboldt" in this volume. See also *Die deutschen Universitäten und das Universitätsstudium*, by Friedrich Paulsen (Berlin, 1902) pp. 60-77.
4. Nietzsche, Friedrich "David Strauss: confessor and writer in *Untimely Meditations*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge University Press, New York, 1996) p. 11.
5. Nietzsche Friedrich, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (eds) (Berlin, 1967) IIIii, p. 139.
6. Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books) 1967, § 942.

## See also in this book

Humboldt, Hegel

## Nietzsche's Major Works

*The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), trans. Walter Kaufmann (Random House, New York, 1967).  
*Untimely Meditations* (1873-76), trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996).  
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## Further Reading

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