

**Beyond the Artist-God?
Mimesis, Aesthetic Autonomy, and the Project of
Philosophical Modernity in Kant, Nietzsche and Heidegger**

Jonathan Salem-Wiseman

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partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
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Abstract

In this dissertation, I examine the development of autonomy in the philosophical works of Kant, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. After outlining the centrality of this development to what I call, following Robert Pippin, “philosophical modernity,” I show that the figure of genius described in Kant’s third *Critique* becomes the model for the “aesthetic” versions of autonomy articulated by Nietzsche and Heidegger under the names of “sovereignty” and “authenticity” respectively. According to these more recent formulations, autonomy is not understood as rational self-legislation, but as a quasi-artistic “self-creation.” Moreover, in each of these versions of aesthetic autonomy, I claim that in spite of a disavowal of *mimesis* understood in a Platonic sense, an implicit reliance is placed upon the operations of a “higher” sense of *mimesis*, a *mimesis* of freedom, that enables autonomy to be exemplified and, paradoxically, “imitated.” For Kant, this *mimesis* of freedom accounts for both the continuity and discontinuity of art-historical traditions. In Nietzsche and Heidegger, however, this covert deployment of *mimesis* has implications for our understanding of historicity more generally, and the relationship between history and modernity in particular. After showing what these implications are, I comment on the problems and limits of “aesthetic autonomy,” especially when it is understood politically or collectively, and utterly decoupled from any moral constraints.

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INTRODUCTION

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche invokes Goethe's Faust as a final, dissatisfied representative of the "Alexandrian" or theoretical culture in whose net the "whole modern world is entangled."¹ Faust's insatiable thirst for knowledge, which has led him beyond the limits of science to devil-dealing and magical trickery, exposes, in Nietzsche's eyes, the ultimate delusions of Socratic optimism so deeply embedded in our modern preoccupations with rational self-mastery, control and inexorable cultural progress. What Faust signifies, then, is the exhaustion of the Enlightenment project precisely because it cannot satisfy its very own desire for knowledge.² The strictly theoretical life of scientific inquiry is no longer able to contribute to the self-realization of "modern cultured man," who, as Faust shows, must paradoxically demand the increasingly empty satisfaction of his will in a world utterly devoid of intrinsic ends or purposes. This growing awareness of limits, understood by Nietzsche as a "victory over the optimism...that is the basis of our culture," was made possible by the "courage and wisdom of *Kant* and *Schopenhauer*," who notoriously restricted scientific knowledge to the world of phenomena (*BoT*, p. 112). For Nietzsche, this restriction again makes possible the birth of a genuinely tragic culture, since beyond the theoretically illuminated

phenomenal world, tragic insight is no longer compelled to compete unsuccessfully with science, and thus a truly aesthetic life can once again be restored.³

What this brief glimpse at Nietzsche's text reveals is a remarkably contemporary characterization and assessment of philosophical modernity, not unlike those of many more recent commentators. Without explicitly stating it, Nietzsche's interpretation is based on the suspicion that "autonomy" or self-legislation - in each of its early-modern forms, including commitments to individual and collective self-determination, the emancipation of science from tradition and myth, exclusively moral and rational modes of justifying activity, a belief in Enlightenment progress - has failed to make our lives better than they were before. Due to the absolute centrality of autonomy to both the origins and historical trajectory of the modern world, this perceived failure has placed the entire project of modernity, particularly the legitimacy of philosophy which first articulated these unrealized expectations, into question. Nietzsche's response to this "problem" of autonomy, as exemplified by the powerful yet aimless Faust, is itself, however, decisively modern. Consequently, his "solution" does not involve a rejection of autonomy per se, but merely a rejection of autonomy in its theoretical and moral disguises, which are ultimately at odds with the existential tasks of radical independence and self-creation that Nietzsche's own version of autonomy requires.⁴ What Nietzsche offers, therefore, is a transvaluation of philosophical modernism by means of re-interpreting autonomy as now an artistic, rather than an epistemological or moral ideal.

This move is certainly not single-handedly accomplished by Nietzsche, and at least in *The Birth of Tragedy* as we have just seen, much of the credit goes to Kant and

Schopenhauer. For contemporary scholars, this positive assessment of especially Kant's contribution to Nietzsche's "aesthetic metaphysics" should be viewed with great interest. Kant is, after all, dutifully cited as a great defender of the philosophical Enlightenment, even as his own most renowned work, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, attempts to determine the legitimate application of reason from the standpoint of reason itself. This should make Kant at best Nietzsche's ambiguous ally, given that the restriction of reason which Kant endorses is importantly a *self*-restriction, and thus in the end a confirmation of the rational autonomy intrinsic to modern Enlightenment culture that Nietzsche desires to overcome. Yet Nietzsche's early enthusiasm for Kant's epistemological (yet at no point his moral)⁵ project results from its skeptical effect on the modern sciences. The "will to truth" underlying the development of the sciences was now turned against the very culture of theoretical optimism which denied any limits to scientific inquiry and the progressive accumulation of knowledge. Nietzsche describes this elsewhere as "*Kant's tragic problem!*"⁶ What is of interest to the thesis I am pursuing here, however, is that Kant's merely "negative" contribution to his deeply Socratic world produces, from Nietzsche's perspective, at least one crucially *positive* result: the degradation of science means that a "*new dignity*"⁷ can once again be conferred to art. What defines us as humans, as now properly modern humans, is that our "salvation lies not in *knowing*, but in *creating*."⁸ It is again possible, as it was in pre-Socratic Greece, for the artist to play a decisive role in the shaping of our modern culture.

At this point, my purpose is not to question either the wisdom of, or the motives behind, Nietzsche's preference for tragic over theoretical culture. I will leave that

discussion for later. Nor am I interested in Nietzsche's interpretations of Kant, per se. But what I do want to examine is one central aspect of what I want to call Nietzsche's "modernity thesis;" namely, the role Kant played - both wittingly and unwittingly - in the transformation of philosophical modernity from its early phase as a legitimation of theoretical and practical autonomy, to its later versions as an "aestheticized" reaction to modern bourgeois life, best exemplified by the quest for cultural renewal through the artist's creative activity. In a recent study of philosophical modernism, Robert Pippin advances a reading of modernity, at least as it has unfolded as a problem within German philosophy, that resonates deeply with Nietzsche's position.⁹ Pippin identifies Kant as the "first thoroughgoing 'philosophical modernist,'" and like Nietzsche, points out that our deepest "dissatisfactions" with modern life (recall Faust's unacceptable reactions) originate with the paradoxical results of Kant's critical project.¹⁰ On the one hand, the self-restriction of reason's legitimate application means that we must forego our natural desire to seek the unconditioned - the in-itself world that is independent of human cognition - and unhappily settle for knowledge of phenomena - how the world must spatio-temporally appear to finite beings like ourselves. On the other hand, Pippin also reminds us that although pure reason can be practical, it is virtually impossible to achieve the purity of will necessary to consistently obey the moral law, since practical reason must in effect "compete" with our sensuous natures, our petty and egotistical drives, desires and self-satisfactions. "We must," as a result, "settle for 'legality,' not morality."¹¹ We are thus constitutionally disadvantaged to live the moral life that our own reason commands. Consequently, from both a theoretical and a practical point of view,

these formulations of rational autonomy that Kant requires to salvage philosophy from the blindness of empiricism and the emptiness of rationalism cannot ultimately fulfill the optimistic promises of especially early-modern philosophy. Lowered expectations, in effect, are the hidden costs of legitimacy. If our critical self-reflection determines that we cannot, by our very nature, gain epistemological access to God, freedom, and the immortality of the soul, then philosophy's own self-understanding must hereafter be transformed, its legitimate tasks reduced, regardless of our deep and continuing interests in these no longer theoretically answerable questions. And herein lies the ironical predicament of philosophical modernity: it is precisely this historical and intellectual epoch - an epoch essentially defined by its opposition to antiquity, its optimistic belief that the modern world can solve the outstanding pre-modern problems - that has self-consciously "decided" that the radical self-determination of modern subjects is incompatible with the very sorts of "assurances" that previous, albeit dogmatic, philosophies were enlisted to provide. In other words, the idea that this uncompromising insistence on human autonomy and self-grounding, on a radically new expression of human freedom, is intrinsically related to the limitation of all philosophical proposals to ground knowledge or morality on a metaphysical foundation "outside" of human subjectivity, is responsible for the initial dissatisfaction with, and reaction against, Kantian philosophy.

Pippin's elaborate reconstruction (and Hegelian resolution¹²) of Nietzsche's less developed modernity thesis, however, focuses exclusively on the rational constraints or autonomous self-restrictions which Kant places on both legitimate knowing and moral

willing. He does not specifically take up what Nietzsche identifies as Kant's contribution to the development of a tragic culture, in which the life-serving artist replaces the idle scientific or theoretical man as the new, higher type of human being.¹³ For Pippin, the *aporiai* of Kant's critical project initiate the widespread dissatisfaction with, and exclusively modernist problematization of autonomy that preoccupies virtually all nineteenth and twentieth century European philosophy, particularly in Germany, but the subsequent aestheticization of life and the newly championed autonomy of artistic creation are viewed as merely distant consequences of Kant's Copernican revolution.¹⁴ Although Nietzsche, still under the influence of Schopenhauer, enthusiastically connects the restrictions of reason articulated in the first *Critique* with his own attempted transvaluation of modernism, even he is blind to what I will argue is the pivotal Kantian contribution to the centrality of aesthetic autonomy to modern life and culture. My own view is that in the third *Critique*, the conflict between the scientist and the artist is not "settled" in favor of the scientist as some recent Kant scholars have argued, but is rather ambiguously elaborated in a way that prepares the ground for the increasingly important role the artist is to play in the work of subsequent modern philosophers, particularly Schiller, Schelling, Nietzsche, and even Heidegger.¹⁵ Consequently, the conflict between the scientist and artist should not be viewed as a localized, Kantian affair, but as a debate that insistently repeats itself in other crucial texts of modern philosophy, despite the growing unanimity of responses that subordinate science to art. This reflects, I think, a broad philosophical consensus that the gap Kant opens up between the legitimate use of reason and the "satisfactions" this use provides cannot be bridged, and thus new ways of

formulating human autonomy must be sought. One crucial step in the philosophical history of the need to re-formulate autonomy, however, does not belong to the *post-Kantian* tradition, for it is Kant himself who first opens up this possibility, I will argue, precisely in his theory of fine art and genius where the artist/scientist debate is first staged within the critical framework itself.

In chapter two, I will begin to develop a reading of this crucial section of the third *Critique* that shows how the metaphysical tasks assigned to genius cannot be legitimately “disciplined” by external constraints, and thus a new possibility of autonomy is announced that appears to be irreducible to the operations of reason alone. While it is true that Kant understood his theory of genius, as we shall see, in opposition to those of his rival, *Sturm und Drang* enthusiasts whose cultic celebrations of the artist offended his more traditional Enlightenment sensibilities,¹⁶ he was philosophically unable to curtail the artist’s newly expanded metaphysical curriculum the way he successfully restricted the transcendent applications of reason, and as a result he both tacitly permitted and even advanced the central aesthetic dimension of philosophical modernism in nineteenth century German thought. Additionally, following Derrida, I want to introduce another major theme of this study: the problem of *mimesis*. I want to claim that the very “autonomy” of artistic production is made possible, paradoxically, by Kant’s reliance on *mimesis*, understood here in a non-Platonic sense as the imitation of productivity or freedom. This use of *mimesis* also sheds light on how Kant attempts to account for the logic of art-historical traditions without apparently compromising the autonomy of the artist. I will show, finally, how this mimetic logic structures the relationship between

modernity and history in a way that has become determinative for subsequent “modernist” thinkers, especially Nietzsche and Heidegger. Generally speaking, my thesis relies on, even as it attempts to extend, Pippin’s reading of Kant, by decisively placing the third *Critique* at the center of debates concerning the essential features of philosophical modernism.¹⁷

In chapter three, I will attempt to show how Nietzsche takes up and radicalizes some of these aesthetic themes either implicitly or explicitly contained within Kant’s text. The focus here will be on three of Nietzsche’s texts which, I believe, shed the most philosophical light on the aesthetic dimensions of philosophical modernity. First, I will examine *The Birth of Tragedy*, which, as I will show, takes over Kant’s metaphysical framework, and is for this reason ultimately unable to account philosophically for the re-birth of tragic culture that Nietzsche desires. The inability of the tragic artist to communicate his higher truths to his audience (on which the re-birth depends), I will argue, actually founders on Nietzsche’s linkage of tragic insight to the mimetic identification between the tragic artist and the “true” author of the world, the “artist-god.” Second, I will turn to *Human, All Too Human* for evidence of Nietzsche’s abandonment of his earlier “Kantian” position and the difficulties that resulted therefrom. In this “middle period” text, Nietzsche is highly critical of an expanded, metaphysical role for art or the creative genius, although I will attempt to show that his criticism is not of art or artists per se, but only a specific, Romantic conception of them which relies on deception and concealment to secure a sense of aesthetic autonomy. Third, I will undertake a lengthy examination of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in light of how the problem of imitation

affects both its political dimensions and its mature teaching of self-creation, which is how I construe the “doctrine” of eternal recurrence.

In chapter four, I will show how Heidegger’s philosophical modernism is also tied in an essential manner to what are basically aesthetic questions, particularly this “higher” sense of *mimesis* that I am developing throughout this study. I will begin this chapter by providing a brief overview of Heidegger’s modernism, which has recently been called into question by critics who believe that his disastrous political affiliation was the result of his nostalgia for pre-modern forms of life. I will then turn to a discussion of *Being and Time* wherein I argue that Heidegger’s description of historicity provides a possible “solution” to the history-modernity problem upon which Nietzsche’s texts foundered. Next, I will examine Heidegger’s problematic “political” deployment of *mimesis* upon which the “self-assertion” of the German university and the fate of the German people ostensibly depends. Finally, I will show how in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger’s “overcoming” of aesthetics once again depends on the operations of *mimesis*, an ancient aesthetic category that problematizes not only Heidegger’s break from the philosophical tradition but also the very “autonomy” of the work of art to which his thinking is here committed. This will exemplify, once again, how the promise of “aesthetic autonomy” can never be fully realized, and how the modernist break from the authority of tradition can never accomplish the decisive rupture of historical time upon which the authority of modernity is itself founded.

What I want to do in this first chapter, however, through a sequence of brief, philosophical “vignettes,” is step back somewhat and examine some important

connections between autonomy, reason, and subjectivity in the context of (especially) modern philosophy and aesthetics (specifically in Descartes, Leibniz, and Rousseau), and then attempt to show how Kant's crucial re-orientation of these issues, particularly in the context of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*, generated the philosophical "dissatisfactions" to which subsequent formulations of "aesthetic autonomy" are both a reaction and a response. But I also want to address the "problem" of *mimesis* which will, in multiple yet discrete ways, both enable and destabilize these pretensions of aesthetic autonomy in the works of Kant, Nietzsche and Heidegger. I will thus prepare the ground for the argument in the subsequent chapters wherein I attempt to show that the texts of these three major philosophers are haunted by the ancient concept of *mimesis*, which operates in its different modes as both a condition of the possibility and impossibility of aesthetic autonomy. I will try to demonstrate that even in texts that have officially broken with mimetic determinations of art, this break itself is generally made possible by an implicit appeal to a more genuine mode of *mimesis*, which inevitably contests the overcoming of classical theories of art and poetry. In fact, I will argue that once the ideal of autonomy gets translated, after Kant, into the basically aesthetic project of self-creation, it will have to be defended against the claims of history and tradition by at least an implicit reliance upon *mimesis*, now understood as the *mimesis* of a prior freedom upon which the task of self-creation is paradoxically founded. In what immediately follows, consequently, I want to historically situate the problem of imitation in the works of Plato and Aristotle, in order to show how it was first a threat (Plato) and then a confirmation (Aristotle) of the life of reason.

CHAPTER 1: Philosophical Background

Plato, Aristotle, and the Problem of Mimesis

For Plato and Aristotle, aesthetics in the modern sense as an inquiry into the relationship between beauty and the feelings of producers and spectators was unthinkable. True, Aristotle did claim that our ability to use metaphor was a key index of natural genius, but this claim is absolutely subordinate to the critical taxonomy of the *Poetics*.¹⁸ For the Greeks, a work of art was not experientially determined by subjective criteria, but rather through its mimetic relationship to an objective order of being, be it Plato's immaterial forms or simply human activity. In either case, art is representational. A work of art is thus an imitation or reflection of some other, sometimes higher reality, but the way in which this order is possibly transformed or refracted through the artist is the exclusive focus of aesthetics in its restricted modern sense. For the Greeks, then, neither the artwork nor what modern philosophers might refer to as the "aesthetic experience" can be understood in and of itself. Instead, the artwork can only be comprehended in relation to a criterion that is extrinsic to the work. Notoriously, Plato grounds this mimetic relation in his interpretation of being as *idea* - the eternal and unchanging essence of things on which all transitory worldly beings are modeled. The

idea or *eidos* makes beings possible with respect to visibility. We “see” the couch, for example, only insofar as it participates in “couchness;” the idea of “couchness” makes possible the seeing of the particular couch. Again, it is precisely this independent, objective ground of being that collapses in the modern epoch. For Descartes, to *be* is to be *representable*. The “representedness” of the object, the *perceptum* of the *perceptio*, supplants Plato’s *eidos* as that which makes the object possible.¹⁹ But what exactly is at stake in this transformation of fundamental metaphysical positions? Why is this important to the history of aesthetics in its widest, general sense?

Plato’s determination of the a priori nature of being, the *eidos*, not only means that beings can show up and be significant for us only subsequently, but also that *mimesis* itself is inscribed within the originary metaphysical articulation of what Heidegger calls the rift between Being and beings intrinsic to Western metaphysics.²⁰ The apparent equiprimordiality of such a rift and the mimetic logic which articulates this relation testifies to the inescapable metaphysical framework within which alone the opening of aesthetics, again understood in its most general sense, can be philosophically comprehended. As is well known, for Plato there are three distinct ways in which beings can “come to presence,” each of which presupposes a different order of productive activity. In addition to the distortionless presencing of the idea “couch,” for example, over which the god presides, there are two subordinate means by which production can occur, each one fixed by its relation to the true, originary *eidos*. The carpenter similarly makes a couch, possibly many couches, all of which presuppose the *eidos*, but he does not bring the real couch into being. Even the manufactured couch does not come into

being without the mediation of the idea. As a copy, it is *a* being rather than being itself, and thus the couch of wood is ontologically distinct from, and less real than, the immaterial one on which it was modeled. The painter is also a producer, but the painted couch is even further removed from the idea than the carpenter's couch:

“And is the painter also a craftsman and maker of such a thing?”

“Not at all.”

“But what of a couch will you say he is?”

“In my opinion,” he said, “he would most sensibly be addressed as an imitator of that of which these others are craftsmen.”

“All right,” I said, “do you, then, call the man at the third generation from nature an imitator?”

“Most certainly,” he said.²¹

The possibly coloured, merely two-dimensional painting of the couch can only show the couch from one limited perspective. In addition to the obvious absence of utility, this mode of production cannot adequately reproduce the self-showing of the manufactured couch since the painting can only depict the couch from the front or side, or from some other singular angle that does not allow the entire couch to come into view. The aim of the painter, consequently, is not to imitate the way in which the manufactured couch really is, but rather to imitate the couch as it appears. Unlike the craftsman, the artist's production is no longer guided by reality and therefore it can grasp “a certain small part of each thing, and that part is itself only a phantom.”²² What is crucial to Plato's analysis, however, is the inability of either mode of subordinate production to exactly reproduce that which it is attempting to duplicate. A hierarchy of production is thus established between god, carpenter and painter based on the degree to which each respective production is removed from the distortionless presencing of the *eidos*. Because art can

only produce the dimmest semblance of beings, it is consequently “third from the king and the truth”²³ and thus constantly open to the epistemological charge of deception.

In addition to distorting the truth, art similarly stimulates feelings that ought to be held in check by reason.²⁴ From a modern perspective, this established remoteness of art from truth has a familiar ring, but what is vexing and paradoxical for us is the corresponding remoteness of art from both goodness and beauty. This is but one troubling consequence of a metaphysical system in which the same criteria have both explanatory and moral force. For Plato, however, the absolute reference point of the *eidos* means that all modes of production must submit to the same independent criterion such that art by its very nature cannot help but fail to perform, say, philosophical or juridical tasks well beyond its limited scope and expertise. The ontologically enforced competition within the republic for the singular prizes of truth, justice and beauty inexorably determines in advance and legitimates the subordination of the artist to the philosopher. By fixing art at this furthest remove from the ideas, Plato thus simultaneously secures the lowliest position possible for the artist within the political community. Not only is the artist as a member of the artisan class subordinate to the guardians and philosopher-kings, but as we have seen, the artist is also subordinate to the craftsman with whom he must compete within the artisan class itself.²⁵ This seems to be the inevitable result of attempting to determine the nature of the artist from the perspective of politics.

But the artist is also antagonistic to the state for perhaps even more fundamental reasons. Jonathan Lear has recently presented an account of Plato’s need to repress the *paranomos* in human nature in order to preserve our proper end as a political animal.²⁶

According to Lear, what threatens the well-ordered state is the unchecked rule of desire which will, in the absence of any higher, rational mode of organization and control, ultimately destroy the soul of the individual. This is what characterizes the tyrant, although we are all subject to *paranomoi* desires to at least some extent. As a force of decomposition intrinsic to our very nature, our unmastered desires ultimately prevent us from achieving what we want. The tyrant, who characteristically desires everything, is least of all capable of fulfilling his wishes. As Lear demonstrates, the *paranomos* is *paralogos*. The rationally ordered polis, therefore, must actively repress all manifestations of *paranomoi* desires, since the principle of decomposition which the omnivorous appetite engenders is a threat to the very existence of political life. Because tragedy is a cultural practice which enables irrational desires to flow from the individual soul onto the stage of political life itself, Plato is compelled to banish tragedy from the well-ordered polis. What facilitates the translation of psychic *paranomos* into political *paranomos* is the operation of *mimesis*. *Mimesis* accomplishes this translation by disallowing any emotional distance between the audience and the irrational, destructive acts of the tragic heroes. Instead of helping us to discharge our unwanted appetites and emotions, the mimetic relation only encourages us to re-enact the actions of the tragic drama in the “real” world of the polis. For this reason, Lear observes, tragic *mimesis* contributes to the destruction of political life by promoting those *paranomoi* desires which govern the tyrant. “Tyranny thus emerges, for Plato,” Lear concludes, “as the true meaning of tragedy.”²⁷ If *mimesis* functions in this way, it is no surprise that the poets are given such a lowly rank in Plato’s just state.

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle's meditation on the particularly literary arts moves within, even as it transforms, this mimetic model inherited from Plato. Indeed, the *Poetics* has to be read most generally as Aristotle's attempt to rescue the fine arts - understood as a passive mirroring of appearance - from their otherwise eternal subservience to speculative life.²⁸ In opposition to this passive and "thrice removed" copying of the antecedently disclosed *eidos*, Aristotelian *mimesis* is an imitation of human action. As such, it can make a rigorous distinction, unavailable to Plato, between the fine arts and all other forms of craft activity that were previously only locatable within a single continuum of production.²⁹ This clarification thus opens up a distinct region within which all types of poetry, music and painting can be properly examined, and furthermore importantly exculpates the fine arts from the Platonic charges of distortion and corruption by emancipating them from all transcendent evaluative criteria.

But the efficiency of Aristotelian *mimesis* goes beyond simply clarifying these external relations. Additionally, Aristotle claims that the various genres of poetry (tragedy and comedy are the obvious examples) can be determined principally through the *type* of activity that is imitated. These distinctions of poetic species are supposedly naturalistically grounded in the human instinct to imitate, which is both a source of early learning and pleasure. As Aristotle writes, "we enjoy looking at the most exact portrayals of things we do not like to see in real life" because, the argument continues, "all men enjoy getting to understand something" and thus by looking at paintings and reading poetry, we "can infer what each thing is, can say, for instance, 'This man in the picture is so-and-so.'"³⁰ A representation, for example, of a "high" and "complete" action that is

proper to tragedy will help us to grasp hitherto unnoticed connections between, say, particular activities and undesirable moral consequences. What is involved here is a recognition - often sudden and particularly dramatic in the case of tragedy - that discloses something true about ourselves in the world. But this re-cognition goes beyond simply remembering something familiar that has been in the mean-time forgotten. Rather, as Gadamer rightly observes,³¹ recognition is in its deepest sense always cognitively excessive, meaning that our pleasure is aroused by the fact that we now “know *more*” than what was previously familiar. This means that imitation does not blindly reflect back an already known world, but is in fact revelatory in so far as the unexpected disruption of the recognition scene enables us to most perspicuously grasp the various similarities and oppositions the poet is attempting to disclose. This answers Plato in three ways.

First, with respect to the distortion of truth that is invoked to legitimate the subordination of poetry to philosophy, Aristotle’s rehabilitated *mimesis* enables the fine arts to assume a philosophical role since the poem, for example, enables us to pass beyond the particular actions it represents to a level of generality and understanding unavailable to the historian who cannot transcend the mere reporting of singular events that have already occurred. Sophocles, therefore, is more philosophical than Herodotus because the latter “tells us what happened” while the former tells us “the sort of thing that would happen.”³²

Second, regarding the claim that the fine arts engender unwanted emotions in the audience, Aristotle counters Plato by claiming that the feelings of fear and pity aroused by *mimesis* in a tragedy are at once pleasing and can be cathartically discharged without

compromising the moral integrity of the spectator. In fact, without intending to do so, the tragic poet actually heightens our moral understanding by representing actions and situations that typically would not be encountered within our own narrow horizon of experience. This would ironically carry a certain political utility in so far as the fine arts could now actually provide a largely autonomous region within which emotions that are undesirable in other contexts could be successfully discharged and expunged.

Third, in a related point, we are now in a position to see how Aristotle would deal with the political problems aroused by tragedy and *mimesis* which Lear exposes in his discussion of Plato. To recall Lear's argument, because the imitation of tragic action is a threat to the political bond itself, Plato was compelled to banish it from his just state. For Aristotle, conversely, because tragedy reveals *logos* in its very attack on *logos*, it "plays a significant role in the self-validation of logos."³³ As such, tragedy facilitates the communal reflection on human self-destruction, but unlike Plato, Aristotle believes that such reflection need not be a threat to political life. This politically "safe" reflection is made possible by Aristotle's somewhat rationalistic definition of tragedy, wherein the logical unfolding of the plot organized around the protagonist's tragic mistake inoculates the audience from witnessing "a surd eruption of meaningless devastation."³⁴ Just as importantly, the inclusion of pity as tragic emotion further constrains the plot development and enables the audience to identify with imaginatively, while maintaining a certain distance from, the tragic actions. This rational negotiation of a mean between emotional proximity and distance enables the spectator to experience terror without being consumed by it. In other words, pity enables us to "master" otherwise undesirable

emotions, and because pity is only evoked when we witness the protagonist's rationally ordered downfall, there is no room within tragedy for those truly unaccountable acts and deeds that would typically engender sheer terror in the spectator's hearts. As Lear argues, "even the most horrific reversals must have an inherent *logos*" if pity is to count as a definitive tragic emotion.³⁵ With this important constraint in mind, Lear is able to conclude that tragedy "'legitimizes' the ability of *logos* to account for human destruction, because it ignores any destruction that does not fit."³⁶ Although this points to a weakness in Aristotle's theory of tragedy, it perhaps more significantly points to a reversal of the consequences of *mimesis*. Plato argues that *mimesis* potentially facilitates the introduction of irrationality and threatens the destruction of the polis; Aristotle, however, believes that *mimesis* contributes to the internal legitimation of the rationally ordered polis, since its operations confirm, rather than disrupt, the inherent intelligibility of human reason and the capacity of human beings to provide a reflective account of their political life. With Aristotle, then, we first see the surreptitious yet crucial relationship between *mimesis* and the autonomy of reason.

Descartes and the Autonomy of Reason

I want to cover some familiar territory here, beginning with a brief sketch of the metaphysical formulation of subjectivity in the seventeenth century. With this development, coupled with Aristotle's enormously influential recovery and defense of *mimesis*, the historical and conceptual stage is set for the specifically modern mode of *mimesis* that becomes linked, as I will show, with the self-legislative freedom of the subject in Kantian and post-Kantian aesthetic discourse.

What occurs in the seventeenth century is no less than a fundamental shift in our philosophical understanding of the relationship between thought and being. The initial Cartesian determination of this shift is by now long familiar; its classical locus and most systematic articulation is Descartes' *Meditations*.³⁷ What is at once self-consciously modern about this text is Descartes' sense of his own revolutionary itinerary, most famously announced in his "First Meditation" by his refusal to accept as true all previous knowledge claims, regardless of their social or practical utility, scientific status, or religious importance. From the perspective of metaphysics, what is unique about Descartes' refusal to accept external authorities or take anything for granted, is that even the most basic question, What is being? cannot be answered until a criterion for determining the certainty of a response can first be given. This entails the radical displacement of "first philosophy" - *meta ta physika* - as the immediate concern of philosophical inquiry, and replacing it with a concern for method. Descartes' willingness to suspend his trust both in his senses (the ball of wax example) and his deductive reason (the evil genius thought experiment) enables him to pursue a secure ground that cannot be doubted upon which he, as *res cogitans*, can eventually reconstruct an indubitable connection to the world of extended substances around him, including his own body. The termination of his methodological doubt at the certainty of his own existence, his *self-certainty*, means that a new ground of truth has been identified. To be true, for Descartes, means that any scientific conclusion or idea in general must be as indubitable, as self-certain, as his own existence. What is characteristic of all such ideas and the steps involved in their deduction is that they be "clearly" and "distinctly" perceived. This

ensures that nothing can be passed off as true without the authorization of the representing subject.

The metaphysical view of this wholly autonomous subject that emerges from Descartes' methodological skepticism is that of a thinking ego irreconcilably disengaged from the world around it. Such a separation of "subject" and "object," however, results in two intrinsically connected and absolutely crucial themes of modern philosophy. First, the absolute jurisdiction of the "I think" turns human reason into what Charles Taylor calls the internal "directing agency"³⁸ of all mental affairs, which thereby secures the "innerworldly liberation"³⁹ of the soul. As a result, reason need no longer attempt to "discover" the rational design of the universe or receive its directives from an external cosmic order, since it itself legislates according to its own internal ordering procedures. To get at "reality" properly, to represent the world "correctly," we need only start thinking in the right way, but this is only possible on the basis of the most radical self-inspection conducted by the methodological operations of reason itself.⁴⁰ The nature of reason has thus been transformed from its ancient and medieval role of "perceiving" a reality beyond itself to its modern task of instrumentally controlling the very order to which it was previously subordinate. This means that by securing the self-reflexive ego as the self-certain basis of all knowledge, Descartes is able to place cognition, and by extension morality and beauty (supposing we pursue the Cartesian legacy of modern philosophy) under the uniquely modern purview of disengaged subjectivity.⁴¹ This marks, to cite Taylor again, the "inward" turn of modern philosophy - a wonderfully suggestive way of describing the inaugural movement and animating dilemma of modern

philosophy; namely, the disjunctive relationship between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* that produced the (“scandalous,” according to Kant) problem of the external world.

Of course, the legacy and apparent paradox of Cartesian, and thus modern, epistemology is the inextricable link established between the claims of “subjectivity” on the one hand, and the “objectivity” of the scientific and technological developments on which all our lives now depend on the other. But there is a less obvious consequence as well - and this brings us to the second related theme of modern philosophy. What I have in mind here is the metaphysical “prejudice” that results from Descartes’ restriction of truth to ideas that can be clearly and distinctly represented. This means, in effect, that beyond a small set of theologically necessary “concessions,” only the world of extended substances amenable to mathematical description can count as the type of “object” that is knowable in this restricted sense. In other words, the metaphysical task of delimiting the nature of the “real” has been handed over to the physical sciences, which can formulate the ideas that best satisfy the criteria of clarity and distinctness required by Descartes’ epistemological stance. What this means, in effect, is that the richness of our phenomenological lives, our world of colours and tastes and feelings - minimally Locke’s secondary qualities - must be declared illusory. This points to an unbridgeable rift between the scientifically knowable world of extended bodies in motion, and our existentially significant world of epiphenomenal excrescences - the merely subjective residue of the physicist’s atoms in the void. And yet despite this highly reductive version of “the myth of the given,” it is precisely this objectively real, mechanistic cosmos over which we ghostlike, yet autonomous human beings are supposed to exercise control. This

guiding paradox of Cartesian metaphysics and epistemology is the inaugural prefiguration of Kant's explicit attempt to reconcile the determinism of Newtonian mechanics with the freedom of the moral will.

For aesthetics, the collapse of the knowable into the strictly scientifically knowable has profound consequences. Specifically, the consolidation of scientific method based on the subject's internal ordering procedures effectively disqualifies art as a possible "truth-disclosing" activity. On the surface, this appears to repeat in a more systematic way the subordination of art to truth first articulated in Plato's *Republic*. Once again, it seems that knowledge has been advantageously defined such that only rational inquiry can grant access to the truth, which again leaves the artist vulnerable to charges of deception, if not the more onerous charge of moral corruption. Paradoxically, however, the philosophical consequences have been quite different. Because Descartes' method so drastically restricts the pursuit of truth to scientific inquiry, art is implicitly emancipated from its Platonic competition with philosophy and science, and is hereafter more able to pursue its own distinct ends. This, of course, does not follow immediately or automatically as any survey of the history of modern aesthetics will attest. However, a fundamental re-orientation of the way in which we understand works of art has been made possible by the "inward," subjectivist turn that Descartes takes, according to which artworks are no longer referred to any "external" metaphysical criteria, but rather to either a judging or creating subject.⁴² This change is worth exploring in some detail, since it is the crucial first step toward the sort of aesthetic autonomy which, I am arguing, is a distinctive, unifying category of philosophical modernity.

Modern Legacies of Descartes and Aristotle

From the perspective of the history of criticism, Aristotle's "salvage" project was a huge success. In fact, the retention of *mimesis* as perhaps *the* dominant critical concept up into the eighteenth century clearly attests to the lasting hegemony of the Aristotelian paradigm. The gradual breakdown of this model did not really begin to occur until the Renaissance, when, as M.H. Abrams has detailed, Sir Philip Sidney relegated imitation to a strictly instrumental role by placing it in the service of pleasing and instructing the audience.⁴³ This shift to the pragmatic concern for transforming an audience is but the first stage of the gradual "subjectivization" of aesthetic theory, and should be placed in the context of the far-reaching metaphysical re-orientation, the movement "inward," that has already been outlined above. Such a turn, moreover, removes critical attention from the relationship between the work of art and the cosmos or rational order it is attempting to represent and focuses instead on what *ought* to be represented in order to inculcate certain moral and social feelings in the audience. The genres of poetry are thus no longer fixed and evaluated by the type of action that is imitated but rather by the particular *effects* each genre is best able to realize. By the eighteenth century, the aesthetic demand to inspire noble feelings, particularly sympathy, had become a theoretical and practical commonplace. The good life was no longer understood along Aristotelian lines as a life of *praxis*, but rather as the capacity to respond in certain ways and display appropriate feelings to particular situations. Historically speaking, *mimesis* becomes increasingly irrelevant to these ends, as the theoretical work of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson perhaps most clearly attests. But this is no innocuous move. The displacement of *mimesis*, then, as

the critical concept which organizes our access to “nature” or “reality,” implicitly undermines the previous ontological role that art was able to play by operating as, to borrow from Abrams, a “mirror of nature.”

But this is still only one side of the story. There are in fact two related concerns here that need to be sorted out. First, as mentioned, the gradual subordination of imitation to various pragmatic requirements effectively replaces the broad ontological ends of art with more narrowly circumscribed moral concerns. It is, however, only possible to transcend the mimetic operations of art according to which the artist is attuned to a metaphysical order governed by God or the Good while simultaneously expanding the morally instructive role that art is required to play if the “inward” turn most radically effected by Descartes has been accomplished. Only if these moral sources are locatable within the subject can the abandonment of *mimesis* as the organizing principle of artistic production *not* have profound moral consequences. But why does this abandonment of *mimesis* occur?

This leads to my second point. As Earl Wasserman has shown, the mimetic task of art has been historically fractured and subverted by the gradual dissolution and loss of authority of shared “cosmic syntaxes” in and through which the work of art could represent a widely recognized order of reality.⁴⁴ Since it is this shared sense of cosmic design that makes imitation meaningful, the gradual fragmentation of previously widely held metaphysical assumptions - from the Great Chain of Being to the Christian interpretation of history - that began to occur at the dawn of the modern era rendered *mimesis* untenable as a critical concept understood in this sense. In the absence of an

already recognized prototype existing independently of the creative act, the mimetic relation must almost by default be replaced by a different concern, be it the moral formation of the audience or the artist's creative act itself. Consequently, the metaphor of the mirror so widely invoked to describe the proper activity of the artwork must ultimately be replaced by the metaphor of the lamp, which, as Abrams argues, captures the concern with "expression" in especially Romantic theories of art.

Of all the possible philosophical entrances into the larger metaphysico-aesthetic matrix out of which the philosophical project of Kant's third *Critique* emerges, it is perhaps the philosophy of Leibniz which most clearly explains how "expression," and the vehicle of expression, the artist, became the key figures of aesthetic theory by the late eighteenth century.⁴⁵ Leibniz's determination of the rational soul as analogous to the mind of God facilitated the change in the metaphoric description of the artwork from "mirror of nature" to "heterocosm,"⁴⁶ an alternate, micrological resemblance of the divine creation. Although the possibility of this "second nature" found its initial philosophical articulation in Aristotle's *Physics*,⁴⁷ it is Leibniz who first metaphysically secured the analogy between these higher and lower modes of production. Unlike, for example, Malebranchian occasionalism which requires the continuous intrusion of divine grace in order to account for the deceptively "causal" ordering of the universe, the Leibnizian monad unfolds by virtue of its own internal nature in accordance with (for contemporary philosophy, a problematic) "pre-established harmony." This means that the ultimate arrangement of these metaphysical atoms has been prefigured from the moment of creation, since external causation has been explicitly ruled out. A remarkable corollary of

this is the claim that each monad “knows” the infinite universe, albeit in a confused, imperceptible way at any one moment. Such an economy of the infinite within the finite means that the rational mind, the most dominant type of monad, “is not only a mirror of the universe of created things, but also an image of the divinity.”⁴⁸ Consequently, in addition to the monad’s confused perception of divine works, the mind is “even capable of producing something that resembles them, although on a small scale;” it is therefore “like an architect in its voluntary actions; and in discovering the sciences according to which God has regulated things...it imitates in its realm and in the small world in which it is allowed to work, what God does in the large world.”⁴⁹ What is crucial to note here is that the *mimesis* which conditions the production of the heterocosm is not a passive mirroring of the creation but an activity resembling divine creativity itself. A parallelism is thus forged between God and His universe on the one hand, and the artist and his work on the other. But since the analogy is one of *production*, the content of the heterocosm will not be bound in any way to Wasserman’s larger cosmic syntaxes that were heretofore woven into the fabric of the work of art. The history of the fine arts certainly confirms this trajectory; works of art, music and literature of this period exemplify a progressive deracination from specifiable religious contexts that is irreducible to the current, stereotypical accounts of a natural move toward secularism. In fact, as Leibniz’s text implies, this transition from the mirror to the heterocosm is not marked by a loss of our relationship to God, but rather inscribes this relation within the higher analogy of production which paradoxically brings man closer to the divine. Human productivity or creativity need not attempt to replicate the cosmos by imitating an independent

metaphysical order that must first be discovered; rather, the specifically human modalities of *technè* are governed by an imitation of God's autonomous *act* of creation - not the creation itself. The critical concept of *mimesis* has thus been recast to specify the analogous creativity of divine and human authors such that a relation between two autonomous subjects - God and man - can be metaphysically secured.

Rousseau and the Problem of Freedom

We can thus see from this brief sketch of a few selected moments of Western aesthetics how the problematic of autonomy emerges in tandem with the recovery of a second sense of *mimesis* in the history of modern philosophy. From the perspective of *moral* philosophy, however, we can examine with more precision and detail just how the concept of freedom similarly unfolds within the epoch of philosophical modernity, affecting as it does our relationship with nature and our understanding of human autonomy. We have already seen how Descartes' philosophical revolution and the reductive criteria of Enlightenment science compelled the theoretical man to abandon his everyday phenomenological perspectives and disengage his reason from that illusory world in order to master and control the objective, natural world over which he now, as *res cogitans*, stands. This is but one of the two dominant forms of inwardness, according to Taylor, which characterize our conflicted modern identity.⁵⁰ The second manifestation, a generally Romantic antidote to Enlightenment instrumentalism, involves the identification of a nature *within* us as the crucial new source of moral value and, ultimately, human autonomy.

Rousseau, of course, is the thinker most closely associated with this view. As Charles Taylor notes, Rousseau “is the starting point of a transformation in modern culture towards a deeper inwardness and a radical autonomy.”⁵¹ Although he offers one of the earliest and most infamous expressions of a growing dissatisfaction with the selfsame Alexandrian-Socratic culture that Nietzsche will later condemn,⁵² his own reaction is itself deeply wedded to - and indeed conditioned by - the very language of “inside” and “outside” that made possible the dawn of reductive Enlightenment science in the first place. For Rousseau, there are two mutually exclusive conceptions of freedom, neither of which can be realized in a modern culture governed by institutions that have deformed and dehumanized the individual. There is, first, the strictly natural freedom of the “savage” who, in a pre-political state, depends on no one but the inner voice of nature to satisfy his inclinations and appetites.⁵³ Guided by his sense of self-preservation and basic compassion for others, the human being in the state of nature “lives in himself,” he neither fears for his life nor is he dependent upon others. But this natural freedom is to be replaced, second, by a higher “human” freedom in which the chance isolation and ignorance of the natural condition must be radically extinguished for the sake of a higher, properly human dignity that is of our own making. Consequently, a choice must be made between our “nature” and our “humanity” when we contractually enter civil society. We become internally divided and fragmented, however, when we are suspended between these two incompatible modes of freedom - clearly beyond the state of nature yet unable to realize our uniquely human freedom and individual harmony in the face of corrupt institutions. This is the world in which Rousseau thought he lived. In different places,

Rousseau speaks in favour of each type of freedom. In *Emile*, for example, Rousseau examines how our residual natural sentiments can still be cultivated and remain independent of deforming external influences. Here, it is the task of private education to get us back in touch with our innate goodness, our deepest natural impulses, that have otherwise been concealed by the corrupting influences of instrumental reason and its cultural manifestations. From this perspective, Rousseau is able to condemn our growing estrangement from nature at the hands of rational domination, and correspondingly praise our inner independence from the corrupting forms of modern life. Although Rousseau's position has Augustinian overtones, Rousseau's understanding of independence would have been unthinkable for Augustine, since for Augustine the illumination required to circuitously turn toward God via the inwardness of the will demands the intervention of grace.

Rousseau's task, however, especially in *The Social Contract*, does not involve returning "civilized" man to a state of nature in which virtue did not exist, but rather in creating citizens who have permanently left this natural state behind.⁵⁴ The natural egoism and independence that is abandoned in this move is necessary for our true human freedom to be realized, which it is only through our self-imposed conformity to the general will. In order to be free as autonomous, self-legislating citizens, it is not sufficient merely to follow our passions as it was in pre-political life, since our sentiments have largely become corrupted through socialization and exposure to the opinions of others. What is required, then, is a political solution to the problem of autonomy. By freely subjecting ourselves to the general will, Rousseau believes that we do not actually

entrench our miserable dependence upon others, but rather secure our own autonomy by identifying ourselves with this ostensibly objective, common, collective good. Although I cannot go into the details and difficulties of Rousseau's social contract theory, I should at least mention that it is precisely this aspect of Rousseau's thought that became so decisive for Kant, as we will soon see. There is no room for nature in Kant's moral philosophy, yet the idea that the source of human freedom and self-direction was locatable within each one of us became the central background for Kant's ideas about autonomy and the categorical imperative. This means that we need not, and in fact, *cannot* point to any metaphysical reality that could possibly resolve disputes between the competing moral claims (supposing we admit this Kantian impossibility) of autonomous wills. What is respected, therefore, is not so much the content of our moral choices, but merely our capacity as free subjects to make such choices. If this is the case, then our own "right" reasoning alone can thereby determine the morality of the voice, for example, enjoining Abraham to kill Isaac as Kant's formulation of the categorical imperative attests, but this very move to "privatize" reason - despite its universalizing aspirations - is already a step toward undermining the possible "public" agreement that can be legitimately expected from any such moral claim. Yet Kant also returns moral philosophy to the Cartesian mastery of nature by ultimately identifying nature as the source of heteronomy, the antithesis of human freedom. Whereas for Rousseau, there were a number of important concessions and advantages embedded in the transition from nature to humanity, in Kant this sense of loss and ambiguity is abandoned, and nothing of moral value remains on the side of nature (at least prior to the third *Critique*).

But despite these differences, there is also a larger picture which develops out of the inward turn that ought to be mentioned. This involves the idea that our interior mental life has become a vast reservoir of ideas, emotions, and drives, and it is these inner potentialities which help define us as unique, radically individuated, self-directed and creative beings. Moreover, our capacity to master and control this inner life through reason⁵⁵ or the imagination⁵⁶ is the source of our distinctively modern preoccupation with dignity, respect and, in the philosophical wake of Rousseau, authenticity. Kant's practical philosophy offers compelling evidence of this trend, linking as it does the dignity of human beings to their free and rational natures. In essence, this inward turn that is implicitly so crucial to the self-understanding of the modern subject means that we no longer locate "value" (since, as Nietzsche will argue, the highest values have "devalued" themselves) in an "external" metaphysical order to which our own "nature" must conform, but within the newly configured depths of human subjectivity. Taylor argues, however, that "if our access to nature is through an inner voice or impulse, then we can only fully know this nature through articulating what we find within us."⁵⁷ This means that in order to understand the nature "within us," or to express what or who I am, or to make manifest what was hitherto obscured, I cannot simply turn inside myself and gaze clearly at the pre-formed contents of my soul in order to determine what this inward life is. Instead, the task of expression involves not only the task of "making manifest but also a making, a bringing of something to be."⁵⁸ Because the artist most paradigmatically exemplifies this inner self-mastery through the outwardly expressed artwork, the artist becomes the privileged representative of human nature and thus in the post-Kantian

epoch of later-modernism has been increasingly assigned the metaphysical task of uniting for everyone the otherwise incommensurable domains of “inner” and “outer” life. We can see from this how the philosophical ground is prepared for the eruption of aesthetic autonomy - simultaneously prohibited and permitted in the third *Critique* - that occurs in the aftermath of Kant’s critical project.⁵⁹

What we see emerging in this all-too-brief survey of but a few central themes of philosophical modernity are two distinct modes of construing autonomy that originate in Descartes’ modern version of “inwardness,” whereby exclusively subjective criteria are called upon to determine what for Aquinas are transcendental features (being, unity, truth, beauty and goodness) that still “belong” to, or characterize in some degree, all entities themselves. This led, as we have seen, to the subjective mastery of nature (continuous, I might add, with the development of the market economy and the increasingly bureaucratized state - important “effects” of philosophical modernity that I cannot discuss here) on the one hand, but also, as a corollary of Descartes’ reductionism, the inauguration of aesthetics in its modern sense of referring artworks to judging and/or creating subjects. This development can be registered in the transformation of *mimesis* as an imitation of what is, to an identification between two types of producing subjects, as Leibniz’s monadic metaphysics entails. The subject of aesthetics (double genitive) is thus gradually emancipated from classically prescribed metaphysical tasks, although it is still in the eighteenth century (and beyond) deployed to serve exclusively moral and political ends. With Rousseau and the *Sturm und Drang* and Romantic generations, the moral and aesthetic keys required to unlock the inward and (by Enlightenment culture) repressed

dimensions of our “true” and “higher” selves was the ability to make manifest the hitherto unknown dimensions of this inner life. The need to overcome our own divided natures - the metaphysical rift between inside and outside, the infinite and the finite - was certainly a moral one, yet this unifying task fell increasingly to the artist who was most able to articulate and translate these inner depths into coherent, outward expressions. Without moving too far beyond Kant, we can clearly understand how this problematic unfolds in Schiller’s *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, in which there is an attempt to reconcile aesthetically our otherwise divided selves.⁶⁰

My task now is to return to Pippin’s modernity thesis and examine the contribution of Kant’s first two critiques to the philosophical trajectory I have been outlining above. Recall that for both Nietzsche and Pippin, Kant’s critical project is what first called into question the scope of scientific inquiry as an attempt to know the world as it is in itself, and thus radically undermined the hollow optimism of the rationalist Enlightenment. This in turn produced the often referred to “crisis” of reason in nineteenth century thought, and prompted philosophers (and artists) to reconsider the entire modernist project of self-grounding and self-legitimation based on the hitherto unchallenged assumptions of human rationality. Nietzsche, of course, recognized and self-consciously contributed to this “spiritual” crisis developing out of the Kantian critiques of reason, and his own devastating attacks on the pretensions of the rational Enlightenment - its values and institutions - were central to his own and other late-modern attempts to transpose the question of autonomy (those very aspirations of self-grounding and self-legitimation) to an aesthetic context. Indeed, it is at this crucial

historical and philosophical junction that the revolutionary hopes of the modern world, particularly the longing for that ongoing promise of independence, have been entrusted to the creative artist, who is now understood as the figure best able to articulate, affirm and exemplify those exclusively modern values.

Kant is so important here because his own project, although occupying an interstitial region between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, is paradigmatically and self-consciously modern: like Descartes, his language and philosophical intentions are revolutionary from the start. What he attempted to effect was a rupture within the history of modern philosophy such that philosophy itself as a form of knowledge could assert its independence from science, religion, and history without, in turn, losing its influence upon those very disciplines. So in addition to the claims Kant makes with respect to the autonomy of all rational beings, he is only able to make those claims by virtue of the self-restrictions of reason itself, which in turn marks the independence of philosophical knowledge. I want now to turn to Kant's texts and examine in some detail just how the limitation of reason is accomplished, and how this produces the dissatisfactions which both Nietzsche and Pippin address in their own similar readings of philosophical modernity.

Autonomy in Kant's First and Second Critiques

In a most general and familiar sense, Kant's project in the *Critique of Pure Reason* involves fundamentally reconfiguring the relationship between the knowing subject and the known object. Instead of submitting to what is "given," or claiming that certain mental states are "foundational," or circuitously demonstrating that a benevolent

God vouchsafes our access to an external world, Kant argued that the thinking subject, as a “spontaneity,” is able to determine for itself the rules under which alone any experience of, or objective claim about, the world is even possible. Kant’s project thus stands as the first thorough-going defense of reason as a radically self-determining activity capable of independently evaluating evidence and actions in the absence, supposedly, of any external or metaphysical conditions.⁶¹ The implications of Kant’s claims for the autonomy of reason were nothing short of revolutionary. I will try to summarize briefly his central arguments in what follows.

Kant’s distinctly “modern” grounding of philosophy is perhaps best understood in contrast to that of his philosophical predecessors, in both the “rationalist” and “empiricist” traditions. For Leibniz, the aim of philosophy was to provide an adequate foundation for human knowledge. For Hume it was to question the objectivity of this cognition. But their combined inability to overcome satisfactorily the rift first engendered by Descartes between what is going on “in the mind” and what is happening “out there” in the world led ultimately to the same skeptical position with respect to the possibility of empirical knowledge. The problem for both Leibniz and Hume was their commitment to transcendental realism, the metaphysical doctrine that “interprets outer appearances (their reality taken as granted) as things-in-themselves, which exist independently of us and our sensibility, and which are therefore outside us...”⁶² This confusion of appearances and things-in-themselves means that we are inexorably led to an empirical idealism such that the knowing subject is continually attempting to demonstrate or prove that our internal mental representations are actually a veridical account of what is in the world. This

produces the exclusively modern problem of the external world that attends all available formulations of transcendental realism in both its rationalist and empiricist guises.

Kant's solution to the impasse of skepticism without resorting to dogmatism is most famously captured in his "Copernican" hypothesis. This hypothesis inaugurates a transformation of the way in which the question of knowledge is even posed: "We must...make trial whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge."⁶³ This reversal of the transcendental realist's position thus leads to Kant's equally remarkable conclusion, namely, that "the conditions of the *possibility of experience* in general are likewise conditions of the *possibility of the objects of experience*."⁶⁴ Although I must skip over the extended argument that produces this revolutionary claim, I should at least briefly review the central features of this position. Kant's project must be understood, as the quotation indicates, as an attempt to determine the structure of objectivity, and the conditions for the possibility of objective experience, within the a priori structures of the transcendental subject. What this entails is that the way the objective world *appears* to us is inextricably connected to the way in which it is knowable. The demand of transcendental realism for our cognition to conform with its object is thus replaced by a radicalized inquiry into what must be presupposed *a priori* in order for knowledge to be possible for us in the first place. What Kant has to demonstrate in this inquiry, of course, is the objective validity of these subjective conditions. If he cannot do this, then his entire project founders. But it is perhaps the *implications* of this demonstration, even if successful, which ultimately produce the dissatisfactions with Kant's transcendental turn, for the

only objectivity Kant is able to defend is not the objectivity of a world that exists independently of the conditions of human cognition, but only the objectivity of phenomena.

In addition, however, to the empirical knowledge we can have of the spatio-temporal world and the a priori knowledge we can have of mathematics, Kant claims that the knowledge which “critical” philosophy appropriately and uniquely seeks is of the a priori, “subjective” conditions - specifically the sensory forms of intuition and the categories of the understanding - that make experience, in the broadest sense, even possible. Furthermore, instead of appealing to Humean association or some other psychological principle to account for the coherence and regularities of our experience, Kant argues that the unity of experience, the unity which alone makes it possible for an experience to be taken as “mine,” must be found in a principle that is not itself derived from experience. Kant calls this unity the transcendental unity of apperception, the “I think” – a purely logical ground that must accompany all our representations if they are to be the representations of the *same* subject over time.⁶⁵ Taken together, these subjective conditions limit our possible experience to the domain of phenomenality. Kant thus effectively cuts off our cognitive access to the world as it is in-itself, but he certainly does not doubt (and in fact requires) the existence of things-in-themselves, of God, freedom and the immortality of the soul. His guiding concern, however, has now become the way in which experience is even possible for finite, rational subjects like ourselves. If the sensible and intellectual conditions are not met, then the “object” will be unrepresentable; it will not conform to the very conditions of objectivity as such, since, for Kant, an object

by definition must be something represented. Consequently, the knowledge of phenomena is objective in this Kantian sense, and intersubjectively accessible as the result of its transcendental grounding.

Kant's reflection on the nature of the subject-object relation has thus led to the conclusion that human knowledge is inextricably built into the objective structure of the world as it must appear, which means that the Cartesian impasse in modern philosophy has at least been transposed to a new set of difficulties. Instead of having to justify continually how our mental representations mesh with an external, in-itself world or be construed as indubitable in a foundational sense, the problem of "harmony" is now a strictly "internal" one rooted in the correspondences between the various cognitive faculties, since for each of the mind's possible powers a different legislative authority and harmonious configuration of the faculties is required.⁶⁶ Yet despite this new difficulty, what remains revolutionary in Kant's transcendental project is the independence from experience, from the supposedly empirically "given," that the Kantian subject is constituted to achieve. This does not mean that the receptivity of the mind plays no role, but the ways in which the sensory manifold is synthesized and structured as a system of scientific knowledge is the result of the spontaneous, englobing capacities of reason "occupied with nothing but itself"⁶⁷ - its own independent operations. Yet there is a philosophical "price to pay" for conceiving of reason as a spontaneous, self-legislating agency that need no longer "obey" or conform to the in-themselves rational structures of an independent metaphysical order. To be radically self-determining in this Kantian sense, reason need no longer attempt to find or confirm its own reflection in an

antecedently given cosmos underwritten by the rationality of a Greek or Christian divinity. However, this originary independence of reason that commands but does not submit to nature means that knowledge must conform to *our* subjective conditions, and this means that the solution to the dilemmas of transcendental realism and the newly won autonomy of Kantian reason come at the cost of denying ourselves knowledge *in principle* of things-in-themselves, things considered independently of the subjective conditions which alone guarantee the objective validity of experience.

Kant's transcendental idealism thus enables him to overcome a number of philosophical "pseudo-problems" that are utterly insoluble from the rival perspective of transcendental realism, as the Antinomies of pure reason are designated to prove. The Antinomies, however, also have a more positive role to play. On the one hand, they demonstrate that when the understanding steps beyond its empirical mooring and seeks to provide determinate judgments of the supersensible, the result is the paradox and confusion that attends all dogmatic metaphysics. On the other, the finitude of human knowing means that the supersensible is left theoretically undetermined and thus available for reason to give it a *practical* determination. This is a crucial move since it attempts to legitimate as a philosophical possibility our own deepest self-interpretations as both knowing and willing subjects, beings who are inextricably *of nature yet free*.⁶⁸

In the third Antinomy, the perspective of transcendental idealism enables Kant to resolve the apparent conflict between two independent modes of causality. Already in the first *Critique* Kant has attempted to account for the sort of mechanistic causality that we discover in the world of phenomena. The entire focus of the second Analogy is to show

that every event in time must be caused by some preceding event. In fact, Kant claims that this “every event must have some cause” structure is known a priori as a condition of possible experience, although, like Hume, Kant leaves the empirical question of *how* successive events are determined unanswered.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, this claim has profound cosmological implications. If all events must have some cause, then there can be no first cause that is responsible for the chain of cosmic events since this original prime mover must itself be causally determined if the conclusions of the second Analogy are to be rigorously pursued. As a result, “[t]here is no freedom; everything in the world takes place solely in accordance with laws of nature.”⁷⁰ This is the antithesis of the third Antinomy, but in the thesis Kant argues that a different order of causality, a causality of freedom, is required to account for the existence of the series of empirically contingent appearances in the first place. What this transcendental freedom presupposes, consequently, is the existence of an empirically unconditioned being that is responsible for, yet outside of, the otherwise infinite regress of the mechanistic causality defended in the antithesis. Clearly there is a conflict between this postulation of a necessary cause and the absolute denial of freedom which concomitantly rules out the very possibility of this type of claim.

Yet Kant resolves both this (and the other Dynamic) Antinomy by arguing that both the thesis and the antithesis *can* be true without violating the law of non-contradiction. This does not involve, at least in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, any claim about the reality of transcendental freedom, but only the more modest task of establishing the possible compatibility of these two types of causality. The key to the “solution”

would not, however, be possible if we remained within the purview of transcendental realism and thus could not distinguish between appearances and things-in-themselves. The third Antinomy is only exhaustively disjunctive if it is understood from this already confused perspective. After all, it is certainly true that freedom is impossible in the world of appearances, since this renders nature unpredictable and chaotic and absolutely recalcitrant to the type of objective determination that Kant's transcendental stance requires. But this does not rule out the possibility of a transcendental freedom that is still in the first *Critique* uncommitted to, and independent of, any positive moral ontology. By making a distinction between a first beginning in time and one in causality, Kant does not have to commit himself to the existence of an unconditioned first cause of the series of temporally ordered appearances, but only to the free "power of *spontaneously* beginning a series of successive things or states"⁷¹ that is itself consistent with the constraints of the second Analogy. The example of Kant rising from his chair illustrates the compatibilist thesis that the philosopher's new state is freely chosen, for although this new series cannot be explained with reference to some external, antecedent cause, its appearance is similarly not a beginning in time and thus acts of spontaneous agency can be thought to co-exist with the natural mechanisms of the phenomenal world. The force of the third Antinomy is thus precisely this negative proof of the possibility of the Idea of transcendental freedom, yet from the perspective of speculative reason, the capacity to consistently *think* this freedom without contradiction is not tantamount to demonstrating practically its objective reality. Kant leaves this considerable effort to the *Critique of Practical Reason*.

In the preface to the second *Critique*, Kant situates the possible employment of practical reason within the theoretical opening of freedom preserved by the third Antinomy. One of the initial and central philosophical tasks of this text is to show that the Idea of freedom which the moral law must presuppose is itself only knowable by virtue of our capacity to think the moral law in the first place. This capacity is grounded in our very nature as rational agents. Because reason intrinsically requires the universality of its application, to be rational thereby demands that we conform only to maxims that can withstand the test of universal applicability, and this is precisely what Kant means by the form of the moral law. Indeed, to be reasonable is to unconditionally will the moral law, but this very task must presuppose that the rational agent is at least potentially free to do so, in spite of the pathological impulses that would otherwise contaminate the purity of the will. The binding nature of the moral law on all rational agents consequently translates into an affirmation of the will's independence from all contingent, empirical sources of motivation. This moral freedom, understood as the radical self-determination or autonomy of the will, is the ground of human dignity. As rational beings, we must not only act rightly, but do so for the sake of the moral law; the mere legality of action is not enough. Any other motivating source, such as the fear of external authority or the desire to maximize happiness, would undermine the autonomy of the will and effectively violate our nature as rational beings. Kant, in fact, actually clarifies his position through reference to the utilitarian claim that morality is reducible to the pursuit of happiness by asserting to the contrary that morality instead only shows us "how we are to be *worthy* of happiness."⁷²

Kant's almost militant insistence on the separation between reason and inclination, however, inexorably results in the achievement of our radical, moral freedom at the expense of our sensuous natures. But this necessary and teleologically inscribed alienation of the moral will from nature does not represent for Kant a painful division that is to be somehow transcended or reconciled. On the contrary, Kant argues that the road to respect for the moral law must pass through the humiliation of natural inclination, such that a direct relationship can be identified between the degree of humiliation and the purity of the law itself.⁷³ Although the unwanted influences of inclination can never be utterly expunged except in the case of the holy will, it is our duty as moral beings to continually wage war on our lower nature in an endless struggle to perfect ourselves individually and as a species. The rift within our natures is thus exploited by Kant as the ground of our self-elevation above the finite, empirical world since it is precisely through its struggle with the sensuous that our moral freedom is ultimately won.

In the second *Critique*, then, there is the twofold objective of articulating the a priori structure of the moral law, and through its objective determination, securing the practical reality to "a supersensible object of the category of causality, i.e., to freedom" (CPrR, 6), which can and must belong to the will of all rational beings. But not only this. In this text Kant also claims that in addition to our practical knowledge of the moral law and the freedom it presupposes, we must also be guided by a rational faith in what the categorical imperative ultimately determines as the *object* of our will. This object is the "highest good," which is understood by Kant as the coincidence of virtue, the worthiness to be happy, and happiness itself. Kant has already made clear that the present antinomy

between virtue and happiness cannot be resolved by attempting to inculcate a virtuous disposition through the pursuit of happiness, and yet the exigencies of empirical life do not guarantee the realization of happiness through observance of the moral law alone. The solution, therefore, requires that we consider ourselves as noumenal beings, and as such, eternal inhabitants of a strictly intelligible world. Hence the fulfillment of this commandment to realize the highest good must in turn presuppose the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, which, in accordance with the epistemic constraints of the Transcendental Dialectic, can be construed as objects of faith but not matters of fact.

It is precisely here that the “dissatisfactions” identified by Pippin - yet perhaps most originally articulated by Hegel - come to the surface of Kant’s moral philosophy. Very briefly, the opposition between morality and nature, which for Kant is a necessary separation if the will is to be fully autonomous, calls into question the very possibility of morality realizing itself (even though it somehow must) in the phenomenal world. There are two reasons for this - one weak and one strong. The weak reason is that because of our own sensuous natures by virtue of which we are intrinsically “evil,” there is “little chance,” according to Pippin, that our actions will ever ascend beyond mere legality and be determined by the purity of the will itself. The strong reason offers an even more telling assessment of the metaphysical dilemmas engendered here. Since nature is always alien to morality, the moral can never fully actualize itself in the world. This double-bind, whereby to have morality means that morality cannot be actualized, suggests that nature is both morality’s condition of possibility *and* impossibility - a paradox both invoked and exploited by Hegel in his criticisms of Kantian ethics.⁷⁴ The very possibility of autonomy

- the separation of freedom and nature - is precisely what prevents the moral agent from actualizing his or her own moral will in the phenomenal domain. Moreover, although the highest good – the union of virtue and happiness – is an ideal that moral agents seek, its realization, paradoxically, would not likewise be the realization of morality, since morality itself would at this moment be abolished. Much like in the first *Critique*, then, the means for securing the autonomy of reason have simultaneously entailed a reduction in the power of reason to perform its traditional tasks, however dogmatic they may now seem. The general and unsettling consequence of Kant's critical system is thus a profound and apparently inescapable bind for subsequent philosophy. In a nutshell it is this. The independence of reason, and with it the possibility of radical self-determination and freedom - central features of philosophical modernity, of what is definitively authoritative in the modern world - can only be realized at the necessary expense of disconnecting reason from the very world within which it is supposed to have, and ultimately required to have significance.⁷⁵

For Nietzsche and others, this self-limitation of reason contributed to the dissolution of philosophical Enlightenment and opened up the possibility for an alternate mode of autonomy and self-definition. From this perspective, Kant's real contribution to the development of philosophical modernity was strictly negative. But this Nietzschean interpretation, like Pippin's, largely ignores the very real *positive* contribution Kant makes to post-Enlightenment culture in his *Critique of Judgment*. It is here, as I will argue in the following chapter, that we can begin to detect a still deeply ambiguous response within the critical system itself to the types of "dissatisfactions" that emerged

from the first two critiques. What I have in mind, specifically, is Kant's doctrines of the fine arts and genius in which Kant begins to articulate a different sense of connection between nature and freedom, and moreover *fails* - for important reasons - to offer good reasons for the subordination of art to science, and for restricting the *autonomy* of genius by the disciplinary constraints of taste. As a result, what emerges embryonically from the third *Critique* is an alternate configuration of autonomy and self-definition that is not reducible to the law-governed, formal operations of reason itself, which in the first two critiques was both a necessary and sufficient condition for transforming the nature of philosophical modernity.

CHAPTER 2: Kant

Toward an Aesthetic Satisfaction: Kant's Critique of Judgment

Kant's *Critique of Judgment*⁷⁶ stands as a monumental, if not the inaugural, text of modern aesthetics and has exerted a massive and sustained influence on both philosophy and the arts over the past two centuries. Yet it is not merely a book about aesthetics. Its more immediate task is to bring the "entire critical enterprise" to a close, which means that it must additionally play a mediational role between the laws of nature and the laws of freedom. As such, the third *Critique* is frequently described as an exemplary piece of "philosophical diplomacy,"⁷⁷ a correct but somewhat reductive observation which Kant himself encourages, suggesting as it does that the philosophical revolution accomplished in the first two critiques now stands in need of no more than a formal recognition and adjudication of the differences and abstract tensions that remain outstanding.⁷⁸ It is for this reason, I think, that the significance of the third *Critique* has not been registered in recent debates about the origins of philosophical modernity, since the central "dissatisfactions" which contributed to the emergence of modernity as a philosophical problem are typically seen as the result of the first two critiques alone.

Certainly much of the philosophical argument in the third *Critique* is intended to address the dualistic legacy of the critical enterprise, which, even in Kant's time, was identified as the central and most perplexing source of dissatisfaction with the Copernican revolution. However, the important features of philosophical modernity that I want to locate in Kant's final critical installment are not the ones typically invoked to support the standard "philosophical diplomacy" thesis.⁷⁹

In the following reading, then, I want to focus not so much on how the *Critique of Judgment* continues the wide intellectual arch of Kant's earlier work, but more on how Kant engages a number of themes from important theoretical debates in Germany at that time and develops them in clearly novel and unexpected directions. Indeed, it is Kant's proposed "solutions" to many of these philosophical difficulties that have had a profound effect, I will argue, on the subsequent self-understanding of modern life. My focus, accordingly, will be on those final, seemingly discontinuous sections of the "Deduction of Pure Aesthetic Judgments" in which Kant begins to reflect on art no longer so much in terms of its reception, from the perspective of aesthetic judgments of taste, but rather from the perspective of artistic production. A close reading of these sections will reveal that despite his official opposition to the *Sturm und Drang* and other Romantic precursors, Kant is unable to restrict legitimately the freedom of aesthetic production, and, in fact, offers a description of the metaphysical activities of genius that contributes to the definitively modern preoccupation with the artist as a figure around whom our cultural hopes of overcoming the dissatisfactions of modern life most dramatically coalesce. It is not the scientist, but the artist who is best able to realize his freedom in the

world, yet the “aesthetic autonomy” that is evident here is both enabled and called into question by Kant’s reliance on the operations of a higher, less “slavish” mode of *mimesis*.

In this chapter, consequently, I want to trace the opposition between genius and taste in the third *Critique*, and determine to what extent Kant succeeds or fails in “disciplining” the creative activity of the artist. This will open up, I hope, a larger debate about the centrality of the third *Critique* in our understanding of philosophical modernism, particularly with respect to how the relationship between modernity and historicity must be construed, which, as Nietzsche first explicitly showed in his second *Untimely Meditation*, is the crucial opposition governing our modern self-understanding. Consequently, after discussing how Paul Guyer and Gianni Vattimo conceive of the historicity of tradition in Kant’s theory of the fine arts, I will examine Paul de Man’s reading of the modernity-history relation in his important essay, “Literary History and Literary Modernity.” In this final section, I will attempt to show that Kant implicitly understood the paradoxical articulation of the “logic” of modernity that de Man attributes to Nietzsche and Baudelaire, even as he rhetorically “shrank back” from a full endorsement of aesthetic autonomy in the third *Critique*. Before this can be shown, however, I want to rehearse briefly some of the key movements of the third *Critique* leading up to those crucial sections on art and genius, at which point I will attempt to unpack Kant’s reliance on *mimesis* through a reading of Derrida’s important essay on precisely this topic.

Reflective Judgment and the Foundations of Modern Aesthetics

The organic or holistic nature of the critical project is perhaps most famously announced in Kant's "First Introduction" to the *Critique of Judgment*. This text is needed, Kant claims, not merely to prepare the reader for the forthcoming doctrine, but also to establish a link between the system which this doctrine completes and the unity of reason that such systematicity presupposes. As such, it functions as both a *propaedeutic* and an *encyclopedic* introduction. To be genuinely encyclopedic, the introduction must show how the diverse doctrines within a system are connected, for it is only in this way that the whole can become a system in the first place. What is meant by "system" here is the totality of a priori knowledge for which reason in its broadest sense seeks unity and logical completion. All the other faculties, including reason itself, must submit to this regulatory force without which the critical project itself, articulable as a system of types of judgment, would not cohere.

As the first two critiques demonstrate, the faculties of the understanding and reason provide those objective a priori principles that immanently ground the possibility of both theoretical and practical knowledge respectively. Kant calls the type of judgment governed by the understanding or reason a "determinant" judgment. The type of judgment under consideration in the *Critique of Judgment*, however, is governed by the faculty of judgment itself, and is referred to as a "reflective" judgment. Reflective judgment further divides into two main headings, depending on whether the judgment is logical, as in the case of teleology, or aesthetic, as in the case of taste. The analytics of beauty and sublimity fall under this latter division by virtue of the intrinsic or relative

purposiveness of the judgment respectively. The types of reflective judgments under consideration in the third *Critique*, however, do not contribute to philosophy qua doctrine, since they lack an objective principle of their own. Yet reflective judgment itself still belongs to the critical system because, like the understanding and reason, it possesses its own a priori principle, even if this principle merely *subjectively* determines our non-cognitive experience. The confusion of the heuristically designated subjective principle that conditions *reflective* judgments with the objective principles supplied by the understanding or reason that govern *determinant* judgments has been the traditional source of the transcendental illusions to which uncritical reason is so notoriously prone.⁸⁰

This distinction, therefore, has the dual role of granting reflective judgment its own autonomous operation while simultaneously preventing it from competing with the understanding in the acquisition of knowledge. Reflective judgments thus give Kant a special way of thinking about a “supersensible” ground of nature that could unite morality and nature in a way that is illegitimate for the determinant judgments of the understanding or reason. Kant believes he has found a way to unite his system without violating the epistemic constraints of the first *Critique*. This does not mean, however, that reflective judgments have no cognitive role to play. In fact, the synthetic capacity of reflective judgment to furnish a general category for a particular intuition enables the sciences to become a unified system without resorting to the claims of dogmatic metaphysics in a way that is unavailable to determinant judgment, which can produce merely contingent unities based on the subsumption of particularities into increasingly more general classes. So, for example, the purposiveness that aesthetic judgments impute

to natural beauty cannot be confused with the understanding's scientific claims, which cannot make determinant claims without an objective concept under which to subsume the particular representation. Yet, in accordance with the demands of reflective judgment itself, the representation of natural beauty remains subjectively valid for us.

Generally speaking, this subjective validity that accrues to our reflective judgments makes it possible to refer our heterogeneous empirical laws to what Kant refers to in his "First Introduction" as the "concept of the *technic of nature*"⁸¹ which itself has no objective application yet must be presupposed as the guiding idea of all empirical inquiry. In other words, any scientific understanding of the sensible must be guided in advance by an idea of the supersensible that cannot itself be known. Kant argues that although our knowledge is determined a priori by transcendental laws, the actual empirical laws of nature may be infinitely diverse and utterly recalcitrant to the "lawful coherence" that scientific investigation must presuppose, but which cannot be guaranteed by the application of the second Analogy alone. As a result, the possibility of accounting for the coherence of empirical laws within a system demands that we ascribe a *purposiveness* to nature that transcends the principles of objective knowledge. The systematicity that such a purposive ordering of nature produces is thus only for the subjective benefit of judgment, and, as Kant makes clear, in no way contributes to our theoretical cognition of nature. But this subjective determination of nature as "art" - the work of an intelligent author - importantly shows how we must assume that the world of phenomena is dependent on a different, supersensible order of causality. Such a claim is of a strictly analogical order. It is merely incumbent on us, by virtue of our a priori

conceptions of nature as purposive, to “present nature *as if* [my italics] an understanding contained the basis of the unity of what is diverse in nature’s empirical laws” (*CJ IV*, p. 20). There are, accordingly, two parts to Kant’s central claim here. First, judgment has been shown to facilitate the transition between nature and freedom by means of the concept of a technic of nature which arises from its own a priori principle. Second, this concept has merely regulative force and thus belongs to the critique of our a priori knowledge, but not to the doctrine of philosophy per se. In other words, it unifies without contributing to doctrinal philosophy.

To fill in judgment’s task of mediation and unification somewhat, the relationship between the three powers of the mind must be expounded. This rehearses, from a slightly different perspective, the relationship between the faculties touched on above. As has already been shown, the understanding and reason have two different legislative responsibilities. It is through the legislation of the understanding that our *cognitive power* is referred to nature, and it is through the legislation of reason that our *power of desire*, governed by the concept of freedom, is referred to morality. On the basis of these two legislations, we can make both theoretical and practical judgments. Yet it is not clear from the perspective of these two mental powers how they can possibly be related. To effect this transition, Kant needs a third, mediating power that can facilitate a connection between these two parts of philosophy. He finds this power in the faculty of judgment. As noted above, reflective judgment is able to provide a subjective ground for the purposiveness of nature that exceeds the grasp of the understanding, and it is on this basis that Kant is able to attribute the feeling of pleasure to aesthetic judgments.

Now between the cognitive power and the power of desire lies the feeling of pleasure, just as judgment lies between understanding and reason. Hence we must suppose, at least provisionally, that judgment also contains an a priori principle of its own, and also suppose that since the power of desire is necessarily connected with pleasure or displeasure (whether this precedes the principle of this power, as in the case of the lower power of desire, or, in the case of the higher one, only follows from the determination of this power by the moral law), judgment will bring about a transition from the pure cognitive power, i.e., from the domain of the concepts of nature, to the domain of the concept of freedom, just as in its logical use it makes the transition from understanding to reason. (*CJ* III, p. 18)

All pleasure, Kant notes, must in some way be connected with the achievement of an aim. When a feeling of pleasure is connected to our reflection upon the form of an object, this is not the result of referring the presentation to either our cognitive power or the power of desire.⁸² This pleasure is rather an entirely subjective feature of the presentation, based on the a priori judgment of the object's purposiveness for us. In fact, we remain utterly "disinterested" with respect to the type or existence of the object which elicits within us these subjective feelings of pleasure. Aesthetic judgments, consequently, are not derived from our cognition of, or our desire for, a particular object, but result instead from the pleasure that arises from the free play of our faculties, temporarily uninhibited by the constraints that normally accompany our determinant forms of judgment.⁸³ This does not mean, however, that aesthetic judgments are reducible to judgments of the "agreeable" - those associated with sensuous pleasures in which we are deeply interested. Like aesthetic judgments, judgments of the agreeable affect us *as individuals* rather than as neutral observers; however, in this latter case the agreeable object cannot be considered without reference to the perspective of our own contingent satisfactions, regardless of how idiosyncratic they may be. The aesthetic judgment, conversely, both engages the intellect in a strictly non-logical play *and* involves me personally as the singularly

affected spectator of the beautiful thing, which must be judged irrespective of its interest or perceived utility. The beautiful object lacks an objective purpose, although it must be purposive *for us*.

Furthermore, because we all possess the same faculties, this pleasurable relation of free play is available to all, and thus aesthetic judgments, despite expressing a merely subjective formal purposiveness, are nevertheless universally valid. Kant calls our ability to make aesthetic judgments “taste,” a “shared sense” which enables a man to abstract from “charm and emotion” and the “private subjective conditions of his judgment” and reflect “on his judgment from a *universal standpoint* (which he can determine only by transferring himself to the standpoint of others)” (*CJ* §40, pp. 160 and 161). This “enlightened” divestment of perspective which idealizes, to borrow Nietzsche’s phrase, “an eye turned in no particular direction,”⁸⁴ enables the observer to transcend the private subjective conditions responsible for prejudicial and illusory judgments. This is accomplished through a suspension of material presentations in order to contemplate the merely formal aspects of the aesthetic object. The “broadened” perspective is not achieved, however, through arguments from authority or uncritical invocations of tradition. Kant’s theory attempts to preserve both the autonomy of the subjective judgment *and* a non-logically determined universal validity without relying on the empirical contingencies of mere public opinion. This transition from the singularity of aesthetic judgment to the ideal of universal assent “does not say that everyone *will* agree with my judgment, but that he *ought* to” (*CJ* §22, p. 89). Kant attempts to make sense of these empirical disagreements by opposing the merely “common human understanding” -

the minimal degree of conceptually communicated sense shared by all humans - with his notion of the "sensus communis," the shared sense by virtue of which the feelings we experience in the mere judging of something are rendered "*universally communicable* without mediation by a concept" (*CJ* §40, pp. 160 and 162). This communicability, moreover, is of deep importance to our collective interests in social cohesion, hence any activity – such as the production of works of art – that furthers our actual communication of feelings with others will be of great value to the community. Now, if this is the case then certainly our actual agreement on questions of taste will be desirable, but there is no guarantee that this will empirically be the case. Our differing abilities to make aesthetic judgments do not, therefore, undermine the universal validity of such judgments; rather, they merely reflect the degree to which any one individual's sense of taste has been cultivated to that point. Consequently, the *sensus communis* is not an empirical actuality, but rather a regulative ideal based on the moral force of judgment's universalizing claims. The cultivation of taste can only ever be for everyone a matter of duty.

There is a strong sense, then, in which Kant's formulation of aesthetic judgment in the third *Critique* conforms to the Copernican logic of his entire transcendental project. In the first *Critique*, Kant reverses the traditional conformity of knowledge to objects and argues instead that experience is only possible if objects conform to the sensible and intelligible conditions of human cognition. In the third *Critique*, Kant again challenges the assumptions of traditional criticism and the philosophy of art going back to Plato by denying any ontological role to artworks from which "objective" rules for determining beauty could be derived. Kant's Copernican revolution in aesthetics means that aesthetic

judgments must be exclusively construed as reflections of the conformity of an object's "form" to the universal and subjective feelings of pleasure and displeasure that arise from the free play of our cognitive faculties. Far from the Platonic location of beauty amongst the higher forms, Kantian beauty resists any type of conceptual determination, and thus is recalcitrant to any type of objective judgment. Although Kant is still deeply tied to the metaphysical tradition here (as his language of "form" and "matter" clearly attests), the *Critique of Judgment* does break with this tradition in a significant way by attempting to furnish transcendental grounds for aesthetic judgments that utterly exclude the validity of empirical criteria residing in the work of art or nature itself. The rose is beautiful or the mountain sublime not by virtue of some in-itself feature of roses or mountains,⁸⁵ but rather because of the subjective feelings aroused in *us* - the subjects having the particular experience.

Kant's transcendental stance thus ensures that aesthetic judgments, as shown above, are irreducible to other types of judgment. What this means, in effect, is that Kant's analysis manages to secure the purity of aesthetic judgment by rigorously distinguishing it from cognitive and moral judgments, judgments of the agreeable, and judgments of objective purposiveness by means of its own a priori principle. We can clearly see how, beginning with Kant, an autonomous sphere of aesthetic activity is established alongside equally autonomous spheres of cognition and morality. Although Kant is perhaps chiefly concerned with the underlying unity of these spheres, it is arguably his grounds for separation that persists as a decisive issue for modern philosophy.⁸⁶

According to Habermas, it is precisely the separation of these various spheres of activity that differentiates the pre-modern world from the modern world in which we live. The transcendental differentiation that occurs in Kant's three critiques thus becomes, for Habermas, the very grounds for his own theory of modernity.⁸⁷ For Gadamer, however, these differentiated spheres of reason, particularly the demarcation and development of a purely aesthetic sphere, may well be a uniquely modern phenomenon, but it is not a positive development since it depends on the abstraction of artworks from their original embeddedness in specific historical and institutional contexts. The artwork thus "loses its place and the world to which it belongs"⁸⁸ and only becomes visible as the 'pure work of art.'⁸⁹ Gadamer calls this illusory "purity" of the work of art "aesthetic differentiation" and refers it to its subjective correlate "aesthetic consciousness," the inward contemplative posture which performs this task of abstraction. As a result, our inner "aesthetic experience" (*Erlebnis*) requires what for Kant was the prerequisite bracketing of cognitive and practical interests, but Gadamer shows how this ultimately leads to the replacement of truly historical experience with the short-lived, epiphanic, timeless present of abstract contemplation - the false disengagement of the modern museum visitor or concert hall audience. Instead of enabling us to "sublate the discontinuity and atomism of isolated experiences in the continuity of our own experience," we rather experience the artwork as "some alien universe into which we are magically transported for a time."⁹⁰ Although in *Truth and Method* Gadamer reserves his strongest criticism for Schiller (whose appropriation and extension of this Kantian framework is reducible to the injunction to "live aesthetically") and the post-Kantian tradition, it is clear that the

Critique of Judgment, in its transcendental effort to preserve the aesthetic sphere from external encroachments, also contributes, however unwittingly, to the decoupling of this sphere from larger worlds of meaning wherein the mediation of past and present is accomplished.

Gadamer's analysis convincingly reveals what is philosophically at stake in the subjectivistic turn in aesthetics which Kant decisively initiates. There is clearly a fine line between submerging the aesthetic in, to use Habermasian language, the cognitive-instrumental or the moral-practical spheres on the one hand, and unduly abstracting the work of art from its cultural and historical context on the other. What I want to do, however, is complicate this picture somewhat by focusing now on the *production* of the work of art, which Gadamer's analysis does not fully appreciate, rather than on its corresponding mode of reception. This focus on the artist will reveal a new configuration of human self-understanding emerging in Kant's text that suggests a different fate for aesthetic autonomy than Gadamer's reading indicates. What I have in mind owes much to Charles Taylor's recent work in which he attempts to locate sources of meaning "outside" the subject "through languages which resonate *within* him or her."⁹¹ This means that the modern artist is not faced with the choice of either repeating pre-modern attempts to represent publicly accessible orders of reality *or* regressing to a strictly private or subjective mode of expression that fails to transcend the interests of self-therapy or personal liberation. For Taylor, what is positive about modernity is precisely the development of a new alternative for artistic creation whereby a world of public meaning can be disclosed without abandoning our needs for expression and self-definition. The

“subject matter” of great modernist poems (Rilke’s angels and Yeat’s Byzantium are Taylor’s favourite representatives) thus exemplify the sorts of modernist “aesthetic ideas”⁹² that resist Gadamer’s charge of subjectivism because they open up their own worlds of meaning and provide their own historical contexts while simultaneously expressing the unique, inward vision of the poet. In Taylor’s language, both “outer” and “inner” sources are creatively articulated, and the difficult task of this articulation falls to the artist. Taylor’s understanding of modernity is thus different from both Habermasian and Gadamerian versions. Whereas Habermas cannot account for the articulation of outer and inner sources of meaning within his designated spheres of validity, Gadamer does not seem philosophically equipped to attend to the differences between Taylor’s positive “inwardness” and the extreme modes of subjectivism both he and Taylor rightly decry. What I want to help show is that Kant contributed to this positive side of modernism not primarily through his determination of judgements of taste, but through his theory of genius and the fine arts wherein he is at pains to negotiate a middle course between traditionally mimetic theories of artistic creation and competing “subjectivist” accounts of genius that were hailed at that time.

Modernity and Genius

My own reading will first involve contesting the prevailing understanding of Kant’s theory of genius, perhaps most systematically articulated in John Zammito’s recent study of the *Critique of Judgment*.⁹³ Zammito’s reading attempts to undermine the “status” of genius in Kant’s text, particularly in relation to the scientist, and thereby subverts any strong claim to identify a source of aesthetic autonomy in the third

Critique.⁹⁴ Second, by interpolating some of the remarkable conclusions Derrida draws in his essay “Economimesis” back into the debate, I think it is possible to ground positively the “metaphysical” significance of genius for modern philosophy without having necessarily to acquiesce to Gadamerian charges of subjectivism.⁹⁵ What we find developing in Kant’s text is a not yet conscious “response” to the dissatisfactions resulting from the limitations of the first two critiques, but there is much here, I believe, that incontrovertibly - even if unintentionally - sets the agenda for the subsequent developments of philosophical modernity.

Unlike many Anglo-American Kant scholars who focus primarily on the epistemological issues deriving from the “Analytic of the Beautiful” or the on the first thirteen sections of the “Deduction of Pure Aesthetic Judgment” (which still curiously figures under the heading of the “Analytic of the Sublime”), Zammito’s reading successfully transcends these narrower, less architectonic concerns by locating “the true heart of the third *Critique*” in “Kant’s effort to extend his theory of aesthetics into the ‘metaphysical’ domains of the sublime and the symbolic, culminating in the bold claim that ‘beauty is the symbol of morality.’”⁹⁶ Because of this concern to excavate those sites in which the transition between nature and freedom are problematically negotiated, it is no surprise that Kant’s theories of art and genius receive much deserved notice in Zammito’s study. Yet there are historical reasons for this hermeneutical re-focusing too. For Zammito, although virtually the entire third *Critique* reflects or responds to the intellectual debates of the 1780s, it is primarily Kant’s theories of art and genius through which the personal philosophical antagonism between Kant and Herder, and the larger

oppositions between the German *Aufklärung* and the *Sturm und Drang*, are most clearly articulated. Although I cannot begin to delve into the sources and stages of this historical quarrel, I will argue that Zammito's reading of Kant is at times unfairly overdetermined by "contextual" issues at the expense of "textual" sensitivity, which leads, I believe, to the erroneous conclusion that Kant's figure of genius must be understood entirely in opposition to the undisciplined mythico-poetic powers ascribed to artists by his *schwärmer* rivals.⁹⁷ It is for this reason that I will use Derrida's work on Kant as a "textualist" foil to Zammito's historically oriented approach.

At the outset I should acknowledge that Zammito is not alone in his attempt to read "epochal" divisions into Kant's theory of genius. Several commentators - not to mention Kant's own philosophical contemporaries - have noted how the figure of genius emerges as an undeveloped, yet in many ways a competing model of subjectivity that responds to the inherent divisions between nature and freedom, cognition and morality, the finite and the infinite, instituted by the first two critiques. The figure of genius thus points toward an explicitly "Romantic" solution to the Enlightenment problem of how the mind's apparently heterogeneous faculties could be united by some other power within the subject itself. It is precisely this "meta-aesthetic" function of genius, for Gilles Deleuze, "which bears witness to a Kantian romanticism."⁹⁸ Surprisingly, Ernst Cassirer goes even further. As he suggests but does not fully develop, Kant's doctrine of genius "signifies the achievement of a reconciliation between two diverse spiritual worlds, for it shares a crucial motive with the fundamental outlook of the Enlightenment, while on the other hand it shatters the conceptual schema of the philosophy of the Enlightenment from

within.”⁹⁹ It is this latter, immanently subversive claim that I want to develop here without having to resort to Zammito’s conclusion that Kant is developing, side by side and unreconciled, two distinct theories of genius - the first neo-Classical and the second Romantic. However, as I have already indicated, I would also want to contest the “localization” of the tensions in the third *Critique* to a conflict between Enlightenment and Romantic sensibilities, as if, for example, the role of the artist was not a concern of the post-Romantic, modern world.

According to Zammito, the history of Kant’s engagement with questions of artistic genius reveals much about his deepest intellectual sympathies.¹⁰⁰ Beginning in the 1770s, twenty years before writing the third *Critique*, Kant was already issuing warnings of the potential “unruliness” of genius, which he deemed immodest and opposed to the central interests of *Aufklärung*. Kant’s principal opponents in this debate were Hamann, Herder and other lesser *Stürmer und Dränger*, who disapproved of Western rationalism and sought alternate modes of truth-disclosing activities, including religious revelation, intellectual intuition, and poetic insight, which flowed from a new sense of language as an expressive-constitutive activity as opposed to a mere instrument of communication.¹⁰¹ Kant was notoriously unsympathetic to this proto-romantic program, which appeared to be claiming that the laborious work of science supervised by the understanding could be circumvented by the undisciplined epiphanies of mystagogues asserting their equal rights to the truth. Given the nature of this “debate” - if that is the right term - it is not difficult to see why the figure of genius became the focus of philosophical attention: the genius was the vehicle for the promulgation of mystical insight par excellence. This is the

context, then, of Kant's early association of genius with *Schwärmerei* and his own sarcastic alignment with "dryness and laboriousness and cold-bloodedness of judgment."¹⁰² According to Zammito, Kant's ongoing confrontation with the *Sturm und Drang* decisively shaped his own theory of genius, which now seemed to require a dual purpose. First, Kant was obliged to recognize those features of genius that legitimately capture the differences between great artists and the rest of us; and second, Kant needed to curtail the perceived "excesses" of genius in the name of which the general validity of Enlightenment science was being challenged. Kant's attempt to satisfy both of these conditions resulted in a theory of genius from which science was excluded, a necessary epistemic constraint resembling Kant's more famous attempt to "deny *knowledge* in order to make room for *faith*" (*CPR*, B xxx, p. 29). In each of these cases, Kant is certainly restricting and circumscribing the legitimate domain of science and knowledge, but he is perhaps more importantly immunizing knowledge from theological interference on the one hand, and science from the epistemic claims of genius on the other. In other words, the exclusion of science from genius is simultaneously, and most importantly, an exclusion of genius from science. According to Zammito, this was "not a disparagement of science but rather of genius, and was grounded in Kant's disdain for the *Sturm und Drang*."¹⁰³

The intellectual alignments and the "tone" of the debate surrounding not just the issue of genius were thus set well before the critical project was undertaken. Although Kant generally excludes specific references to current philosophical debates and his intellectual antagonists in his first two critiques (leaving that duty to smaller essays and

popular pieces), Zammito argues that the “origins of the third *Critique* lie in Kant’s rivalry with Herder.”¹⁰⁴ In fact, the “third *Critique* was almost a continuous attack on Herder...Herder and the *Sturm und Drang* were the main targets of Kant’s theory of art and genius.”¹⁰⁵ Even though the names of Herder and Hamann are nowhere to be found in the pages of the third *Critique*, much of Zammito’s textual exposition is governed by this larger contextual claim. The consistent reference of Kant’s theoretical claims back to this explanatory context, however, means that Zammito is committed to reading much of Kant’s text as if it must be unambiguously opposed to the entire counter-Enlightenment stream of German thought, beginning with the *Sturm und Drang* and culminating in Romanticism. But as I will now attempt to show, these contextual issues should not be the last word; the story is much more complicated than this intellectual history suggests.

In paragraph 43, Kant initiates his discussion “On Art in General” by attempting to distinguish art from both nature and other human practices. The first distinction between art (*Kunst*) and nature is an attempt to delineate all modes of human making from strictly natural processes. Despite the Latin to which Kant appeals to secure this distinction, the separation he is after is best captured by the Greek opposition between *technè* and *physis*. The sense of art he is invoking here is thus far broader than our own contemporary definitions, which for Kant are captured by two further discriminations from the general category introduced here. “Art is distinguished from *nature* as doing [*Tun*] (*facere*) is from acting [*Handeln*] or operating in general [*Wirken überhaupt*] (*agere*); and the product or result of art is distinguished from that of nature, the first being a work [*Werke*] (*opus*), the second an effect [*Wirkung*] (*effectus*)” (*CJ* §43, p. 170). What

Kant wants to juxtapose is the free and purposive activity of art with the blind mechanisms of the natural order. If the cause of the work has not first thought about its production, but has brought about the effect by instinct (like the bee's construction of honeycombs) or by mechanical necessity, then we know that it cannot be of human doing, and therefore cannot be considered "art" in this most basic sense.

Kant then makes a second distinction between this sense of art as a human skill and science as a strictly theoretical ability. This further division is thus articulated by means of a rather traditional theory/practice dichotomy: because art implies a technical ability, a mere knowledge of desired effects in itself falls short of practically accomplishing or realizing such effects. The art of surveying, to borrow Kant's example, is not reducible to the science of geometry. A second version of this distinction will play an important role in Kant's determination of genius.

Next, Kant makes an important, but somewhat more problematic, distinction between art and craft [*Handwerke*]. Kant calls craft "mercenary art" insofar as it is produced through "disagreeable" labor, much like the productivity of the bee. Unlike "free" art which cannot enter the circle of economic exchange, craft is motivated entirely by extrinsic reward, and thus the pleasure its activity produces is always deferred until its reward (pay) is received. The pragmatic profile of mercenary art effectively sets up a hierarchy between free art and craft, given that art in general is characterized by a freedom of production, a play strictly absent from coercive exchange relations.¹⁰⁶ Mercenary art is like free art since both are productive, yet only free art conforms, without analogy, to the essence of artistic production, as Kant's distinction between art

and nature made clear. Thus Kant somewhat problematically excludes instrumental labor, the opposite of free play, as a possible mode of true artistic production. As Zammito notes, however, this conclusion is immediately qualified in the subsequent polemic directed against Kant's *Sturm und Drang* opponents. Kant is not prepared to concede that mechanical constraints (like the metrical rules of poetry) are entirely absent from the free arts, as this would allow the animating spirit to "evaporate completely" (*CJ* §43, p. 171). Against those "more recent educators" (*CJ* §43, p. 171) who recklessly construe freedom as the absence of all rules, who turn labor into "mere play" and thus are reduced to celebrating arbitrary and random productions, Kant is here negotiating an alternative definition of free play according to which the spirit of genius and the discipline of taste (as we shall see) must necessarily coincide. The paradox results when the poet must obey rigorous formal considerations in order to be free; that is, the poet must simultaneously mobilize and suppress work in order to keep free art free and pleasurable. This paradox, however, calls into question the legitimacy of Kant's distinction, as his own example illustrates. There is indeed no philosophical ground provided - other than the highly suspect "proportion of talents" - for determining whether the watchmaker or the smith is an artist or a craftsman (*CJ* §43, p. 171).

As Zammito points out, this undeclared battle with Herder is resumed again in the following section. This almost bizarre discussion is initiated by the dual claim that there is no such thing as a "science of the beautiful," nor is there a "fine science" (*CJ* §44, p. 172). In addition to the more obvious reference to Baumgarten, who, by virtue of his determination of beauty through the concept of perfection rendered aesthetic judgment

excessively cognitive,¹⁰⁷ it is also possible that what Kant has in his sights here are passages from any number of Herder's works, including the following claim from the first version of Herder's *Fragmente*, published in 1767. In this work Herder writes:

If [language] is best suited to poetry, then it cannot be a highly philosophical language. Just as beauty and perfection are not the same thing, so too is the most beautiful and most perfect language not possible at the same time; the middle order, *beautiful prose*, is incontestably the best place because one can move in both directions from there" [my emphasis].¹⁰⁸

Herder's "beautiful prose" seems to soften the distinction that Kant is after here between the beauty of the fine arts and the objective determinacy of scientific discourse. As Robert Norton points out, this phrase "beautiful prose" is omitted in the second, 1768 version of Herder's text, suggesting that its use actually runs counter to Herder's more mature philosophical intentions.¹⁰⁹ Whether Kant is indirectly invoking Herder in these opening lines or not is a matter for historians to debate, yet the two claims he is making here are not reducible to any one of these possible references. The first claim, of course, only recapitulates and supports what has been argued at length in the analytic of the beautiful; namely, that unlike scientific judgments, reflective judgments of beauty are not generated by subsuming particular intuitions under universal concepts. The second claim, regarding *schönen Wissenschaften*, although strange, goes to the heart of the critical project, and as Zammito notes, is yet another rhetorical salvo in Kant's ongoing campaign against Herder. Kant's argument here transcends personal confrontation and more poignantly addresses the legitimate scope and boundaries of the humanities and the sciences. Whereas scientific disciplines are engaged in methodical, theoretical inquiry, the so-called human sciences must be restricted to the mere cultivation of taste and thus cannot

be granted official scientific standing. This positions Kant directly against those nascent Romantic voices who would otherwise subordinate theoretical understanding to the more penetrating cosmic vision of the truth-seeing artist. On behalf of the Enlightenment, Zammito's Kant here attacks these mystagogues and enemies of science by severely curtailing the imagined cognitive powers of genius - a defensive strategy, I will argue, that unwittingly complicates the allegiance of Kant's partisan struggle.

In §44, then, after having dispensed with the possibility of "fine science," Kant attempts to define the "fine arts." Art in general divides into mechanical and aesthetic art, which are differentiated with respect to their purpose. All aesthetic art directly intends "to arouse the feeling of pleasure" either through presentations that are "mere" sensations (as in agreeable art) or through presentations that do not furnish determinate concepts yet are nevertheless "ways of cognizing" (as in the fine arts) (*CJ* §44, p. 172). Whereas the agreeable arts aim at mere enjoyment - the jest and laughter that lubricates good dinner conversations - the fine arts, which alone are the arts of genius as we shall see, arouse a reflective pleasure through "the culture of our mental powers to [facilitate] social communication." Science, on the other hand, must always do without pleasure, although, to recall Kant's "Introduction," this may not have always been the case.¹¹⁰ The differentiae of the fine arts, then, is the non-conceptual pleasure without enjoyment "whose standard is the reflective power of judgment, rather than sensation proper" (*CJ* §44, p. 173).

Kant's discussion of the fine arts, however, must also be situated within the context of his claim that "adherent" [*anhangende*] or "conditioned" [*bedingte*] artistic

beauty must be subordinate to “free” natural beauty. This refers back to the qualitative moment of aesthetic judgment according to which our judgments of beauty must be disinterested - completely disengaged from objective purposes or the concept of perfection. In the absence of any conceptual determination, “our judgment of taste is pure” (*CJ* §16, p. 77) because the play of our cognitive powers is not inhibited, and we are thus able to contemplate freely the mere form of the object. Since artistic production is calculated to instill feelings of pleasure in the audience,¹¹¹ and because, as noted above, its presentations are “ways of cognizing,” it does not conform to the criterion of purity that judgments of natural beauty exemplify. By virtue of this criterion, then, Kant is able to claim here what his later reflections on genius and the fine arts will arguably call into question; namely, that natural is superior to artistic beauty. This official policy of subordination helps explain, I think, why Kant’s theory of the fine arts has traditionally received less critical attention than it deserves.

There is a second reason, however, why natural beauty is to be preferred, but this reason contradicts the requirement of purity that justified the subordination of artistic to natural beauty in the first place. In §42, “On Intellectual Interest in the Beautiful,” Kant argues that although “an interest in the *beautiful in art*...provides no proof whatever that [someone’s] way of thinking is attached to the morally good...I do maintain that to take a *direct interest* in the beauty of *nature* is always a mark of a good soul” (*CJ* §42, p. 165). The claim here is that despite the separation of aesthetic and moral feeling, our “intellectual interest” in natural beauty points toward and favors a mental disposition that aligns itself with our moral vocation. Unfortunately, this alignment of natural beauty and

morality violates the constraints of free aesthetic judgment outlined above. Because morality is determined by the concept of freedom, the play constitutive of free aesthetic judgment would be restricted by its introduction. Consequently, whereas judgments of natural beauty appeared to be purely disinterested compared to judgments of artistic beauty considered in the context of an object's purposiveness, they now appear to be *more* interested than judgments of artistic beauty considered under the purview of morality.¹¹² There do not seem to be consistent grounds to determine the superiority of natural beauty over artistic beauty from the perspective of judgments of taste alone. The very criterion Kant employs to secure this hierarchical relation actually undermines the legitimacy of this subordination and calls the desired connection between natural beauty and morality into question. If taste is not sufficient to forge this important relation, then we must look elsewhere in the *Critique of Judgment* to see how the connection between beauty and morality is adequately established.

I now want to turn and examine the fine arts from the perspective of their *production*; that is, from the perspective of genius. According to Kant, there are four distinct characteristics of genius. In a most general sense, “*genius* is the talent (natural endowment) (*Naturgabe*) that gives the rule to art” (*CJ* §46, p. 174); or, similarly, “genius is the innate mental predisposition through which nature gives the rule to art” (*CJ* §46, p. 174). Given Kant’s distinction between natural or independent beauty on the one hand, and artistic or adherent beauty on the other, it seems odd that Kant now appears to be eliding that distinction by placing the operations of genius under the aegis of “natural” production. Kant’s apparent motive is to rid the fine arts of any conceptual determination

that would betray the sort of cognitive interest constitutive of dependent beauty. Yet, in his more specific, four-fold definition, Kant states first that “genius is a *talent* for producing something for which no *determinate* [my italics] rule can be given” (CJ §46, p. 175). Since fine art cannot produce the rules required for its own production, these rules must be supplied to art through the mediation of genius. That is why Kant claims that “fine art is possible only as the product of genius” (CJ §46, p. 175). But there appear to be two separate, contradictory statements being made here. In his opening remarks on genius, Kant writes that genius must provide the fine arts with a rule, yet now he appears to be claiming that there are no given rules for artistic production. How can these two positions be reconciled?

The answer lies in what we understand to be the meaning of these rules. Because fine art is a species of artistic production in its general sense, it too must be governed by rules, yet in this case *not* rules that are extrinsic to the particular work itself, conceptually specifying in advance an objective goal that guides, as it were, the hand of genius itself. Kant’s solution to the production of the fine arts, accordingly, is to engender genius with the capacity to formulate the *indeterminate* rule for each work of art, without having to learn or copy this rule from some other source. This is why Kant claims that “the foremost property of genius must be *originality*” (CJ §46, p. 175), since only genius is capable of “originating” the rules required to accompany such purposive activities. Genius, therefore, is a natural talent incapable of being learned, which means that it is not a talent for merely imitating antecedently championed models of taste, but for creating new rules exemplified only in the artistic work itself. This leads to Kant’s second

criterion of genius. In order to prevent the possible identification of original “nonsense” [*Unsinn*] as a product of genius, Kant stipulates that “the products of genius must also be models, i.e., they must be *exemplary*” (*CJ* §46, p. 175). This does not mean, as the first criterion makes clear, that genius will be imitating previous exemplary models of fine art by re-employing the rules that others have originated. What Kant means, rather, is that the exemplary work will be intelligible and worthwhile for others such that it can arouse and guide subsequent artistic responses. This ensures, moreover, that the exemplary work will induce within the spectator the same cognitive harmony between the imagination and the understanding structurally homologous with the mental attunement of genius required for the production of all fine art.

The final two criteria return us to the very heart of Zammito’s rendering of Kant’s initially “deflationary” theory of genius. It is here that genius and science are first opposed, thus preparing the ground for Kant’s “ironic” treatment of genius, intrinsic to his quarrel with the *Sturm und Drang*, developed in the following section.¹¹³ The third criterion specifies that genius is unable to “describe or indicate scientifically how it brings about its products” and must rather give the rule to its products “as *nature*” (*CJ* §46, p. 175). This is both a clarification and expansion of the first criterion, which secured the originality of genius by removing all determinate rules from its production. Here, the focus shifts slightly from the process of production to the product itself. Since there can be no prescriptive rules governing the production of the work, the rule must be embedded *in* the particular work, and thus there can be nothing over and above the work itself to explain its production. There are two epistemological consequences that follow

from this claim: first, because the genius is not following a prescriptive rule to produce the work, “he himself does not know how he came by the ideas for it” (*CJ* §46, p. 175) which means he cannot at his own will methodically create works of fine art; and second, if there is nothing determinate guiding the production, then genius cannot explain or account for its own productions to others. Unlike the scientist who inhabits a world of universal understanding and must be capable of communicating determinate concepts to others, the artist “inspired” by genius is epistemologically blind to his creative operations, which means that genius can neither be taught nor learned. This is why, for Kant, the genius is born and not made.

The fourth and final criterion is required to isolate more specifically the relationship between nature and genius in order further to differentiate genius from science. Kant writes that through genius nature “prescribes the rule not to science but to art, and this also only insofar as the art is to be fine art” (*CJ* §46, p. 175-76). This again speaks to the fact that genius is a strictly natural talent, the function of “nature in the subject,” which implies that the creation of works of art is a uniquely human activity. Again, there are two important, paradoxical consequences which flow from this position. On the one hand, Kant appears to be relegating genius to the status of nature’s medium, which, if true, would seemingly undermine the very autonomy and freedom of artistic production that, as we saw in §§43 and 44, distinguishes aesthetic from mechanical art. Yet, on the other hand, the requirement that nature prescribes the rule to art importantly excludes the intervention of grace from the production of the fine arts. I will presently revisit this issue from the perspective of Derrida’s reading of Kant, but for now it is only

important to note that Kant is ruling out an officially mystical or theological grounding of genius whereby the artist could be construed as a mouthpiece for the word of God. This speaks against any crass, metaphysical role that Kant's rivals would want to ascribe to genius while simultaneously preserving the properly human capacity for artistic production.

The explication of genius in opposition to science culminates in the next section. It is here that Kant most radically separates the worlds of science and genius through his crucial, yet seemingly unwarranted denial of scientific genius.¹¹⁴ The criterion invoked to sustain this separation is "teachability" [*Gelehrigkeit*]. Since "genius must be considered the very opposite of a *spirit of imitation*" [*Nachahmungsgeiste*] (*CJ* §47, p. 176) - understood in the "fallen," servile sense of passively reflecting what is - and since "learning is nothing but imitation" (*CJ* §47, p. 176), it follows that even the greatest mind is no genius if such greatness is merely learned.¹¹⁵ Zammito is surely correct to read the irony of Kant's position, although he certainly fails to notice the ambiguity of its consequences. If genius cannot be learned, then *a fortiori* it cannot be taught, and thus Hamann, Herder and their fellow *Stürmer* are caught in a double-bind, unable to reconcile their pedagogical intentions with their declared status as geniuses, as elite defenders of intellectual intuition utterly exempt from (uncreative, scientific) labor.¹¹⁶ But the denial of pedagogical possibilities should not be reductively construed as a sign of "impotence," as Zammito suggests, for the circumscription of genius to the artist and the inaccessibility of genius to would-be disciples simultaneously elevates the status of genius qua *free* producer vis-à-vis the scientist.¹¹⁷ Moreover, by removing any mystical

sources from creativity, Kant secures the ground of a strictly *human* creation, and thus, contra Plato, who argued that the “madness” of artistic creation is God-given, opens up an opposition between divine inspiration and an all-too-human, untranslatable, human activity. That genius cannot be taught thus contributes more to the elitism and cult of genius than the public dissemination of ideas which science requires. Even if Kant’s discussion of the artist is “patronizing” and “ironic” and conducted from the disengaged stance of science (thus prefiguring the Nietzschean reversal in *The Birth of Tragedy*), Kant has not only *not* managed to deflate the exclusivity and mystery of the *Sturm und Drang* genius, but he has also unwittingly secured this status by sharpening the distinction between genius and scientist and, at his most rigorous, grounding this distinction transcendently by referring it to our subjective mental powers. The denial of any epistemic role to genius should not be read as a reduction of the artist’s power or autonomy since this is precisely what is required to ensure that genius is not learned by all through the mechanisms of imitation. Having knowledge to teach implies that it can be learned, yet the imitation and following of determinate rules lacks the freedom intrinsic to the production of ideas unconstrained by the regularities of nature and the play of the mental faculties that results therefrom.

The scientist, while lacking the inspiration and free productivity of genius, differing from “the most arduous imitator and apprentice only by degree,” can make the rules of scientific inquiry available to everyone “by means of imitation” (*CJ* §47, p. 176). Kant’s assessment of *mimesis*, in this case, appears to be much closer to Aristotle’s view, who similarly claimed that learning is imitative, than Plato’s. In Kant’s case, because

science can give a rational account of its discoveries, its work can be imitated and mastered by the student. If the fine arts were imitative in this sense, then genius would be teachable and available to all. According to this distinction, then, Newton would be able to show both himself and others how he came to his discoveries, whereas Homer, ignorant of the “indeterminate rules” by virtue of which his epics were elaborated, would be unable to communicate his inspiration to his audience. Kant’s denial of scientific genius can thus be read, according to Zammito, as a defensive gesture safeguarding the now threatened distinction between public knowledge and private inspiration, between rational, effable, prosaic deliberation and the immediate, ineffable, poetic leap of intuition.¹¹⁸ Politically, this translates into Kant’s preference for the cooperative democratic ethic of the scientist over the disengaged aristocratic virtues of genius, although again the contrast is not as decisive as Zammito would have it.¹¹⁹ Indeed, for Kant the advantages of teachability over exemplarity ultimately secure the “superiority” of scientists over geniuses in this respect (despite perhaps lacking their superior “tone”), and ground the further claim, as I will explain later, that whereas the sciences are progressive, the canons of fine art are determined by the finite, discontinuous talents of exceptional individuals who long ago reached the presently unsurpassable limits of artistic achievement.

Although Zammito does not conclude that Kant’s theory of fine art and genius serves “a merely polemical function” in the third *Critique*, his entire exposition of the relationship between scientist and artist found in §§43 and 47 in particular seems to be governed by the historical battle lines he sees between the *Aufklärung* and the *Sturm und*

Drang. I do not dispute the claim that this larger cultural and philosophical quarrel is deeply inscribed in Kant's text, but I do take issue with Zammito's thesis that the terms of opposition in the *Critique of Judgment* are so clear and decisive. The reasons for this, however, may not themselves be entirely clear. Although it may be tempting to read this debate as yet another version of the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry, the originary grounding of this opposition in the question of truth, in the comparative abilities of philosophy and poetry accurately to represent "reality," has been supplanted by a definitively modern philosophical issue: the problem of autonomy. Whatever reasons Kant gives to declare officially the superiority of the scientist to the genius, he does not base this "preference" on the incapacity of the artist to make truth claims. By making genius non-mimetic in the (Platonic) sense *c.f.* imitation or representation, the ancient criterion of truth can no longer be invoked to authorize the subordination of creative to speculative life. The grounds of the ancient quarrel have therefore changed. My argument is that truth has been supplanted by autonomy as the ground upon which the opposition between scientist and genius, the modern representatives of philosopher and poet, can be best re-described and understood. What is surprising, however, is the role that *mimesis* plays in Kant's own redescription of the opposition. Although the traditional mode of *mimesis* still accrues to the scientist and guides his truth-seeking inquiries, Kant also covertly employs a second mode of *mimesis* to clarify the relationship between genius and nature, which, as we shall see, paradoxically secures a greater degree of autonomy for artistic production. Since Kant almost certainly was not fully aware of what this re-introduction of *mimesis* either presupposed or implied, he was philosophically blind to

how this move could be enlisted to contest his own intended resolution of this now modern philosophical quarrel. As I will now attempt to show, Kant cannot be strictly read as an Enlightenment partisan *despite* his claims to the contrary, for he in fact unwittingly prepares the ground for an aesthetic overcoming of the dissatisfactions of philosophical modernity that transcends, as both Deleuze and Cassirer suggest, his own Enlightenment framework. I will thus call Zammito's intellectual historical reading of Kant into question by consulting a much less orthodox reading of the third *Critique*, Jacques Derrida's essay "Economimesis."¹²⁰ Although I cannot here attend to the full breadth of philosophical themes that Derrida quite astonishingly manages to implicate in this reading, I would like to examine Derrida's recovery of *mimesis* from the Kantian text and suggest how this project might subvert in advance those discussions, like Zammito's, which too often uncritically accept or refuse to examine the deeper metaphysical distinctions organizing the *Critique of Judgment* in general, and Kant's theories of the fine arts and genius in particular.

Situating the 'Artist-God': Derrida's Reading of Kant

Derrida's essay, which should be read as an extension of, albeit a prequel to, his *Truth in Painting* (a deconstructive reading of the third *Critique* through to the "Analytic of the Sublime"), returns us to the beginning of Kant's initial interrogation of art in general. Derrida first focuses on Kant's recapitulation of the classical opposition between art and nature in §43. Art produces a work; nature an effect. Kant asserts that "we should not call anything art except a production through freedom, i.e., through a power of choice that bases its acts on reason" (*CJ* §43, p. 170). The point of this classical and scholastic

opposition is to place all purposive, human productivity under the purview of the *logos*, thereby immunizing art from the often art-like effects of blind nature. For example, Kant juxtaposes the pure, uncontaminated freedom of artistic production with the bee's instinctual construction of honeycombs. The bee is no artist. But this exclusion, masquerading as a rigorous philosophical distinction, more importantly confirms the status of the free, rational subject at the expense of a generalized category of "animality" by strictly delimiting the radius of artistic production. Kant's ostensibly natural hierarchy is implicitly designated to engender a rift suspending even the analogical suggestion that free, artistic production is comparable with a specifiable instinctual correlate. Derrida invokes this opposition between nature and freedom, *physis* and *technè*, however, only to show how a whole series of analogically related "secondary determinations" within Kant's text - particularly the interstitially located figure of genius - actually contribute to the undermining of this very opposition.

The logic of this opposition compels Kant to juxtapose further free art and mercenary art or craft. What is important for Derrida in this distinction is to show that the opposition articulated here is not between two structurally independent totalities, but between two intimately related modes of production, analogous to the mind/body relation itself. Just as the mind "depends" on the body to execute its directives, so too does liberal art require the mechanical constraints characteristic of the mercenary arts. Given the structural dependence on that which is subordinated, the apparently "natural" hierarchy that Kant wanted to secure is thrown into question, thus revealing the paradoxical conclusion that freedom requires its opposite, the non-free, natural mechanism, in order

to sustain and replicate itself. Recall that Zammito's reading of this opposition is solely concerned with recuperating Kant's insistence on, for example, metrical rules in poetry, into a moment within a larger intellectual debate, whereas Derrida is attempting to tell us something much more radical and unsettling about Kant's (but not *just* Kant's) inability to make the pure cuts and distinctions he needs to delimit properly, speaking more generally now, the very subject matter of his critique.

Again, in Kant's determination of the fine arts, this ambiguous logic of independence and dependence can also be discerned: "In dealing with a product of fine art we must become conscious that it is art rather than nature, and yet the purposiveness of its form must seem free from all constraint of chosen rules as if it were a product of nature" (*CJ* §45, p. 173). Derrida summarizes the paradox, asserting of free productivity that "the less it depends on nature, the more it resembles nature."¹²¹ The production does not depend on following a pre-given set of rules used to replicate nature, but it does depend on the reception of rules from nature such that the very production of nature is itself imitated. Kant's analysis is further complicated, however, by the role which deception must play in his discussion. Kant has already provided the example of the "jovial innkeeper" who conspires with the "roguish youngster" to copy deceptively the nightingale's joyful song in order to show that our direct interest in the beautiful vanishes when what we thought was nature is subsequently revealed as merely art.¹²² This already shows, in a preliminary way, the requirement to mobilize simultaneously and suppress deception in Kant's theory of art and genius. Kant first projects a quasi-human speech upon the nightingale's song, and then appropriates that speech - attributable solely to

nature - as a natural standard against which the now “deceptive” human imitation is to be negatively evaluated. It seems that when the illusion offered by imitation is complete, the revelation of such deception destroys the feelings of pleasure that would otherwise attend the aesthetic experience. But it is clear from Kant’s example that what is targeted here is the mode of *mimesis* governed by the reproductive imagination and its mechanical laws of association which can only in a servile fashion reproduce the “objects” of nature. Conversely, the productive imagination - spontaneous, free, playful - is capable of replicating the pure productivity of nature in the fine arts, yet it too is implicated in the operations of *mimesis*. The productive imagination thus eschews *mimesis* understood along Platonic models, but still mimetically relates to nature in its very production. Its freedom is not manifested by aping what is present, but is rather achieved by replicating the *presencing* of what is present - according to Derrida, the “free unfolding-refolding of the *physis*.”¹²³ In this case, however, deception is not avoided but carefully employed to preserve the distinction between art and nature. In order to seem like nature, the work of art must “use” labor and mechanical constraints like poetic meter, but must also suppress the “academic form” in order to maintain the illusion of freedom from painstakingly followed rules. Art must seem non-intentional, but this can only be accomplished by intentionally imitating the non-intentionality of nature. Without stating it, Kant appears to be invoking a purely psychological sense of freedom from constraint that is distinct from the freedom of the productive imagination from determinate concepts in order to preserve the independence of art. But as Derrida realizes, the reliance of art on nature to preserve

its freedom without seeming to do so is a deeply paradoxical way of grounding this independence. As Kant states,

a product of art appears like nature if, though we find it to agree quite *punctiliously* with the rules that have to be followed for the product to become what it is intended to be, it does not do so *painstakingly*. In other words, the academic form must not show; there must be no hint that the rule was hovering before the artist's eyes and putting fetters on his mental powers. (*CJ* §45, p. 174)

Kant is thus circumscribing a middle ground between the extreme positions of those *Sturm und Drang* enthusiasts who eschew the intrinsic constraints of academic form and the mercenary artists whose work is conditioned by the extrinsic constraints of exchange relations precisely by retaining yet concealing the "*punctilious*" yet not "painstaking" observation of rules.

What Derrida attempts to show, then, is that the productivity of the fine arts in general - independent of natural laws - resembles nature not as a product but as a free production. The analogy that Derrida identifies here is thus between two modes of production, between what he calls the "artist-god" or author of nature and the human artist. This does not secure a resemblance of the work of art and nature qua representation, but an analogical identification of two free subjects - God and man - which rules out the type of imitation that Kant elsewhere refers to as mere "copying" or "aping" - an activity appropriate only to the non-human or slavish. Paradoxically, the artist is closest to God precisely because he is least dependent upon Him. The freedom of man resembles the freedom of God "precisely by not imitating it, the only way one freedom can resemble another."¹²⁴ In other words, what is most divine is the autonomy of the artist. Artistic production, consequently, is a task for which grace would be

inappropriately enlisted since divine intervention would only subvert the capacity of genius to synthesize autonomously aesthetic ideas. God's help would thereby make genius less god-like - closer yet simultaneously further from the radical freedom of divine productivity.¹²⁵ The freedom of genius is made possible because genius is itself "produced" by nature, yet it is nature (understood as the Greek *physis*, the Spinozistic *natura naturans*) that paradoxically serves as the model for freedom. Nature certainly furnishes the material creatively assembled by genius, but the "freedom from the law of association" [my emphasis] facilitates the creation of "something quite different...something that surpasses nature" for which no examples can be found (*CJ* §49, p. 182). Hence the "naturalized" freedom of the genius, conditioned by the pristine exchange and "true" *mimesis* binding God/nature and artist, further positions genius not just as the exemplary Kantian subject straddling the opposing legislative domains of nature and freedom, but as the figure in whom this opposition is problematically annulled. Derrida identifies what remains in the wake of the nature/freedom opposition as an elaborate, naturalized hierarchy of production, analogically linking bees to God and all the interim stages of the divine teleology, including the mechanical, mercenary, free and aesthetic arts, which are stabilized through Kant's overt and covert deployments of *mimesis*, thereby massively determining the position of genius in both its ontological and political dimensions.¹²⁶

The force of Derrida's reading cannot be underestimated for two related reasons. First, because it manages to excavate a suppressed yet structurally crucial role for *mimesis* within Kant's text, the hierarchical subordination of genius to scientist as

described above is radically thrown into question. The very criterion invoked to officially secure this hierarchy operates at a much deeper level to re-inscribe genius beneath God alone in the continuum of free productive powers which now emerges. Second, as a result of this the terms of opposition between Kant and his *Stürmer* rivals so meticulously detailed by Zammito are no longer clear. Kant's refusal to grant epistemological powers to genius, the (ideally invisible) academic constraints he places on otherwise capricious, non-sensical productions, and his Winckelman-like claim that the creations of the classical world can alone serve as models due to the finitude of artistic talent are all readable as deflationary restrictions on a particular conception of genius and artistic power emerging at the time. These contextual issues are not contested by Derrida's analysis. The rehabilitation of *mimesis*, however, unwittingly betrays Kant's apparent intentions by analogically securing the mystical authority of genius despite, and because of, those very restrictions. Indeed, because these dual roles of *mimesis* render Kant's figure of genius intractably fraught with ambiguity, any failure to recognize this problem in all its complexity will prematurely assign Kant partisan roles - *pace* Zammito - which he can never fulfill.

But what precisely are the implications of this reading for the modernity thesis under consideration here? Certainly the sense of artistic "autonomy" latent in the Kantian genius should not be construed as the rational self-legislation exemplified by Kant's epistemic-moral subject. But this does not mean that the capacity to originate aesthetic ideas, the definite task of genius, is an irrational act. What Kant is striving for is a middle path wherein genius brings reason and feeling into a productive relationship without

being able to give an account of how this occurs, or what rules are to be followed. The freedom is rather a freedom of production, an absence of the servile replication of products, and this has nothing to do with the ability of genius to understand the natural prescriptions that it transmits. Unlike the constraints of the first two critiques, this latter epistemic constraint is thus not a restriction of the power of genius, and consequently should not be viewed as one of the hidden costs of artistic autonomy understood in this Kantian sense. As such, there is no immediate source of “dissatisfaction” to be discerned here. Kant has construed genius in such a way that it is immunized in advance from the sorts of “external” restrictions he attempts to impose as the result of the intellectual quarrels in which he was engaged. What is arguably lasting and philosophically influential about Kant’s theory of genius, therefore, is not the superficial attempt to curtail the powers of artistic creativity, but the deeper freedom and autonomy that we see the artist beginning to enjoy at the very heart of the third *Critique*. Kant has not detracted from, but contributed to our philosophical and historical understanding of modernity wherein the grounds of autonomy, self-definition, and authenticity are intimately and paradigmatically linked to the creative capacities of the artist. If it is difficult to see how Kant wittingly contributed to this modernist impulse, it is perhaps easier to see how Kant unwittingly became its ally, perhaps unintentionally securing the foundations of a tradition that he could never endorse.

Genius, Taste and the Problem of History

In this section, I want to backtrack somewhat and consider the figure of genius not so much in itself, but in its complex relationship with taste. This discussion will, in

turn, help make sense of Kant's often deeply cryptic remarks about the development of art-historical traditions in the third *Critique*.¹²⁷

Based upon what has been described so far, there are no grounds for identifying an opposition or conflict between the originality of genius and the social demands of taste. In fact, as Paul Guyer notes, for Kant taste – the shared sense which enables aesthetic judgments to be made from a universal standpoint – appears to be a “necessary condition” of genius – a condition that would not hinder what Guyer perceives to be the dialectical movement of art-historical traditions whereby each unique, original work of art becomes the “cause” of its own subsequent rejection.¹²⁸ Yet Kant himself, as Guyer rightly notes, recoils from the implications of his theory of genius and the determination of artistic canon-formation it entails. According to Guyer, Kant's “classicist ideal of stability is undermined by his own demand for individual artistic autonomy” which sets in motion a series of attempts to recuperate this ideal in spite of his already noted description of the freedom and originality of genius.¹²⁹

First, Guyer notes that Kant merely asserts without any argument the finitude of artistic talent – the claim that genius is in principle limited – which means that we have already reached this fixed boundary and cannot progress beyond it.¹³⁰ Kant obviously has the classical world in mind here, but this is not to suggest that modern works of art must somehow resemble the art of ancient Greece and Rome. Kant's claim does imply, however, that by virtue of this finitude of talent the arts and culture cannot “progress” in the way science does, since genius cannot be “learned” through the communication of determinate rules. The talent or skill dies with the artist, so the genius can only serve as

an example to future artists. Ironically, the freedom and originality of genius, coupled with this dubious claim about fixed limits of talent, is now invoked by Kant to subvert any sense of a progressive history of art on which a theory of cultural development could be based.

Second, Guyer observes that Kant's classical biases again appear in his equally unjustified claim that "only those models can become classical of which the ancient, dead languages, preserved as learned, are the medium" (*CJ* §47, p. 178). Although Guyer finally concludes (after formulating and then passing over a more reasonable interpretation of the passage) that we can make most sense of this remark if we understand Kant to be thinking of the classics as "models for the taste rather than the originality of geniuses" such that "they do not excessively constrain the originality of budding geniuses," I fear Kant's intention is much more reactionary than Guyer's "spin control" suggests.¹³¹ Kant's unargued claim does, in fact, reduce to the bald assertion that there is a closed canon of works that have been conferred with classical status, and this number cannot be expanded without simultaneously composing in ancient languages and exemplifying the originality of the genius. Since these competing demands cannot be met, Kant's claim must be seen as an attempt to circumscribe a timeless set of canonical works, no matter how illegitimate his "argument" may appear.

Finally, and most dramatically, Guyer turns his attention to Kant's final confrontation between genius and taste, between "the interest of individual autonomy in the creation of art and the interest of societal integrity in its reception."¹³² According to

Kant, the relation between genius and taste is equivalent to the relation between imagination and judgment, in which we can discern the apparent need for constraint.

In order [for a work] to be beautiful, it is not strictly necessary that [it] be rich and original in ideas, but it is necessary that the imagination in its freedom be commensurate with the lawfulness of the understanding. For if the imagination is left in lawless freedom, all its riches [in ideas] produce nothing but nonsense, and it is judgment that adapts the imagination to the understanding. (*CJ* §50, p. 188)

Taste, analogously, must no longer be thought of as simply a necessary condition of genius, a component of works of fine art that render their aesthetic ideas communicable to others (and thus socially important). As Guyer effectively points out, in §50 taste now becomes a “discipline” of genius, an almost external power that is now invoked to “clip the wings” of the autonomous creativity of the artist.¹³³ Kant’s rationale for this hitherto unprecedented radicalization of the opposition is the greater good that is achieved through an “ever advancing culture” (a possibility he has already called into question by his own claims regarding the finitude of talent) at the expense of the potentially “lawless” freedom of genius. Again, this is the result of Kant’s conservative and somewhat typical privileging of a stabilized cultural history, yet “to satisfy this inclination by fiat,” as Guyer suggests, cannot be justified, for this claim is simply unwarranted within the context of Kant’s own theoretical articulation of genius and taste in previous sections.¹³⁴ In fact, Guyer argues that Kant has actually provided a philosophical framework wherein we could legitimately expect to find justification for “a dialectical pattern in the history of art and culture” such that neither genius nor taste would ever be unilaterally “sacrificed” in principle for the sake of the other in order to pursue extrinsically related goals.¹³⁵ But Kant shrinks back from the radical possibilities of this claim, forecloses the dialectic, and

returns stability to cultural life for extra-aesthetic considerations. Instead of eliminating these outstanding tensions by subordinating genius to taste, Kant in fact had better grounds for preserving the dynamics of this relation, and unlike Hegelian, Marxist or neo-Freudian theorists of the arts, he would not have even needed to appeal to extra-aesthetic grounds - like Hegel's "Spirit" for example - in order to do so.¹³⁶

Unfortunately, Guyer says little more than this about what such a dialectical theory of art history would look like in a Kantian context.¹³⁷ Without attempting to engage in a merely terminological dispute, however, I think that this suggestion itself appears to impose a degree of order upon art-historical development that does not seem to be required by Kant's text, if we ignore, as Guyer rightly does, the bad arguments Kant raises to counter the unpalatable implications of his own theory. In other words, I am not sure if the attribution of a dialectical pattern of development does not also illegitimately constrain the free productivity of genius by tying the work of art too closely to its predecessor in a way that goes beyond Kant's injunction to limit imitation to the imitation of the productivity, but not the actual production of genius. A dialectical account would be compelled to tie the content of predecessor's and successor's work together, which may well appear to be the dominating feature of artistic traditions, but it does not seem in any way to be required by Kant's arguments. I will now turn to a more "revolutionary" reading of Kant's conception of art history that does not unnecessarily cramp the freedom and autonomy of genius in a way that I believe Guyer's own (admittedly undeveloped) dialectical reading perhaps unwittingly does.

In his book, *The End of Modernity*, Gianni Vattimo offers a brief, yet highly provocative suggestion for how we might read the sections of the third *Critique* in which Kant's "theory" of art history is located. By applying Thomas Kuhn's distinction between "normal" and "revolutionary" science to the fine arts, Vattimo productively complicates our understanding of the relationship between genius and historicity in Kant's text. Kuhn, of course, is famous for his claim that we do not simply and neutrally observe commonly available data, but instead only experience this ostensibly raw data through a conceptual framework that Kuhn calls a "paradigm."¹³⁸ Science generally progresses in incremental, cumulative steps as facts are gathered and integrated within such a paradigm, but when anomalous data are discovered that cannot be accommodated within this larger conceptual framework, then the paradigm itself is prone to "shift" in order better or more simply to explain the previously inexplicable anomalies. Kuhn describes these monumental paradigm shifts as "revolutionary" moments, since the most basic conceptual framework through which we comprehend the world has undergone a crisis and emerged in an entirely new form.

For Kant, of course, science progresses gradually and cumulatively as scientists discover the laws governing the natural world, and this mechanical development of extant paradigms accordingly provides a model for "normal" historicity in the Kuhnian sense. From this perspective, the epistemically blind and unteachable genius - the genius who serves exclusively as an exemplary model to other geniuses - appears to be utterly non-historical by comparison. Normal historicity is based on continuity, but "discontinuity" is all that Kant's artistic genius is able to provide. Vattimo suggests, however, that the non-

historical genius should actually be considered the “basis of historicity in the strong sense of the term” precisely because the originality and exemplarity of genius makes the “revolutionary” artist truly epoch-making, the sole figure capable of introducing the radically “new” into the continuous stream of normal history.¹³⁹ Whereas “scientific discoveries give articulation to already existing paradigms,” the Kantian genius is responsible for opening “new paths and horizons;” that is, for the real historical labor of producing different paradigms and thus establishing a mode of historicity that displays “an authentically processual nature.”¹⁴⁰ This is clearly a departure from Guyer’s suggested reading of Kant wherein precisely this strong determination of aesthetic autonomy as the basis for a revolutionary historicity is denied by a dialectical pattern of historical development that more closely resembles the normal historicity of Kant’s natural sciences.

This is not to say that Vattimo’s “Kuhnian” reading of Kant is not without its own difficulties, as he rightly acknowledges.¹⁴¹ Most importantly, the distinction between “science” and “art” is difficult to maintain within Kuhn’s framework (since the criteria involved in the choice of paradigms are often aesthetic considerations that are irreducible to claims about correct correspondence or the truth of the matter) and even within Kant’s text, this opposition has become deeply suspect. Most explicitly, in Kant’s definition of the “free arts” (to which the fine arts - the arts of genius - belong), he is not prepared to concede that mechanical constraints (like the metrical rules of poetry) are entirely absent from this determination, as this would allow the animating spirit to “evaporate completely” as we have seen (*CJ* §43, p. 171). Against those “more recent educators”

who recklessly construe freedom as the absence of all rules, Kant is, as I have already suggested, negotiating an alternative definition of free play according to which the spirit of genius must obey rigorous formal considerations in order to be free. Paradoxically stated, the artist must simultaneously mobilize and suppress work in order to keep free art free and pleasurable. This, however, calls into question any clear distinction between the free operations of genius and the mechanical labor of science in the third *Critique*, and thus any absolute distinction between normal and revolutionary historicity fails to map smoothly onto the terms of Kant's own taxonomy. It means, moreover, that the "revolutionary" freedom of the artist cannot, on Kantian terms, be understood as unlimited. Still, I think Vattimo rightly identifies the possible grounds for a non-cumulative, epoch-making mode of historicity in the operations of Kant's figure of genius that points toward, I would add, the sort of "critical history" that Nietzsche favors in his second *Untimely Meditation*. Kuhn's categories, however, are not adequately suited to a proper assessment of Kant's text. Consequently, I believe we must look toward Nietzsche in order, perhaps retrospectively, to appreciate the proper terms of Kant's "quasi-critical" history, and thus accurately characterize the "modernism" of his art-historical theory.

I will now turn to Paul de Man's article, "Literary History and Literary Modernity" in order to help untangle the definitively modern preoccupation with the "confrontation" between modernity and history.¹⁴² After examining how this encounter is discussed in Nietzsche's work, I will conclude by suggesting how Kant himself seemed

almost aware in advance of its paradoxical implications, thus suggesting the strikingly modernist purview of the third *Critique*.

In this essay, de Man's point of departure is the paradoxical formulation of modernity as the discovery of the impossibility of being modern. The most striking version of this paradox is found in Nietzsche's second *Untimely Meditation* wherein the apparent opposition between modernity and history - the condition from which modern consciousness tries to escape - ultimately collapses and gives way to a much more complex and revealing relation. It is in this text, de Man claims, that we can perhaps most perspicuously discern "the complications that ensue when a genuine impulse toward modernity collides with the demands of a historical consciousness or a culture based on the disciplines of history" even if the status of history is not explicitly challenged "in the name of modernity."¹⁴³ Nietzsche's ostensible concern, of course, is the value of history for *life*, but according to de Man, this is just "a more dynamic concept of modernity."¹⁴⁴ Life, for Nietzsche, is articulated as a temporal concept which denotes our ability to forget, and is therefore the true antonym of "history." In order to flourish in a genuinely creative culture, we cannot become unduly encumbered by the demands of the past, and thus a radical forgetting is required to serve and enhance life. This call for a "ruthless forgetting," for a life-serving repression of all pastness, exemplifies for de Man "the authentic spirit of modernity."¹⁴⁵ Nietzsche, like Rimbaud and Artaud, articulates a modernity that defines itself by its desire to rupture the historical continuum and determine for itself a "true present, a point of origin that marks a new departure."¹⁴⁶ This new departure requires action, and the action itself is conditioned by forgetting. It is now

clear that despite Nietzsche's rhetorical swipes at his supposedly "modernist" contemporaries, he is in fact only critiquing a life-denying state of mind that is only modern in name, and is thus opposing his own "modernity" thesis - here advanced under the aegis of "life" - to these improper versions which themselves are unduly constituted by an historical consciousness. The antagonism between Nietzsche's modernism and history is thereby rendered explicit.

But de Man now asks whether Nietzsche's own text "can approach the condition of modernity it advocates."¹⁴⁷ This question arises in virtue of Nietzsche's own realization that the present is itself embedded in an historical movement irrevocably rooted in the past. The pure present of modernity, therefore, cannot exist, and there is nothing we can do to change this circumstance. Taken together - Nietzsche's modernity thesis and this competing claim about the intractable regression of history wherein the present is experienced as a *passing* experience - leads us to a much clearer version of the paradox that de Man articulates at the outset of his discussion: "[m]odernity invests its trust in the power of the present moment as an origin, but discovers that, in severing itself from the past, it has at the same time severed itself from the present."¹⁴⁸ If the present is inextricably bound up with the past, and modernity is defined by its radically new determination of the present, then clearly the opposition between modernity and history must be called into question. This implies, on the one hand, that modernity cannot in principle resist its own inevitable reintegration into the narrative of history, yet, on the other hand, despite its own historicity, modernity simultaneously becomes, as de Man suggests, a "generative power" which inaugurates the very historical process that it can

no longer self-consciously oppose.¹⁴⁹ Modernity is a point of origination, but is itself historical and thus cannot overcome what it itself already is. For de Man, it is Nietzsche's awareness of this paradox (rather than his bogus attempts to think his way out of it)¹⁵⁰ that attests to his own modern consciousness, yet perhaps the most remarkable lesson de Man retrieves from his reading of Nietzsche is that this paradox is constitutive of all literary history. In other words, if this ostensible opposition between the generative power of modernity and the recuperative power of history is what definitively characterizes modernity itself, "then literature has always been essentially modern."¹⁵¹

Having reached this tentative conclusion, de Man now turns his attention to literary texts, particularly to the work of Baudelaire. Like Nietzsche, Baudelaire understands modernity as a pure present uncontaminated by the regressive forces of history, yet his own literary and critical works once again exemplify the paradoxical logic of modernity on which Nietzsche's second *Untimely Meditation* founders. De Man focuses in particular on a passage from Baudelaire's "Le peinture de la vie moderne" in which the temporal contradiction of aesthetic experience can be explicitly discerned: "The pleasure we derive from the *representation of the present* is not merely due to the beauty it might display, but also to the essential "present-ness" of the present."¹⁵² However, since the affirmation of immediacy requires the negation of this very immediacy through the temporalizing movement of representation - the *re*-presentation of the present - the attempt to capture this pure moment of presentness is inevitably undermined. In other words, any one pure moment must be constituted by a temporal distance which modernity must officially deny. Like Nietzsche's modernity, Baudelaire's

modernity is conditioned by “a forgetting or a suppression of anteriority,” yet as both Nietzsche and de Man realize, this desired moment of spontaneity depends upon an act of repetition that inexorably re-asserts the continuity between the present and the past.¹⁵³ The dispersion of the singular instant into the ecstases of an articulated time thus prevents “any present from ever coming into being.”¹⁵⁴ All modernist artists, accordingly, are faced with the following paradox:

When they assert their own modernity, they are bound to discover their dependence on similar assertions made by their literary predecessors; their claim to being a new beginning turns out to be the repetition of a claim that has always already been made.¹⁵⁵

What appears to be paradoxical here, however, may not be so troubling if it is described in a different way. Consequently, in my concluding section I will attempt to transpose this paradox into the philosophical framework of Kant’s theory of fine art and genius, which, I believe, can help us think through the conditions of modernity as described by de Man and Nietzsche. This, moreover, will attest to the unacknowledged modernism of the *Critique of Judgment*.

Perhaps we can now determine to what extent Kant is able to help us think through the paradoxical formulation of modernity as described by de Man, and exemplified in the texts of Nietzsche and Baudelaire. Recall that what is so troubling for these modernists is reconciling the absolute demand for new beginnings with the historical consciousness that such a demand characterizes the very tradition that is to be overcome. In other words, the unhappy modernist consciousness realizes that its own status as “original” inexorably undermines itself with the simultaneous acknowledgment of its own belatedness. My claim here is not that Kant was directly responding to such an

explicitly formulated paradox, but I do believe that his attempt actually to *ground* originality or what will later turn into “artistic autonomy” upon the imitation of a regressive series of such claims demonstrates a profound sensitivity to both the integrity of the artist and the inevitable claims of tradition. It is for this reason that Kant never experienced the definitively modernist anxiety displayed by Nietzsche especially in his second *Untimely Meditation*. For Kant, there simply *was* no paradox once this higher mode of *mimesis* could be enlisted to secure the continuity of art-historical traditions without needing to subordinate the freedom and autonomy of genius to the interests of a progressive culture. Kant, accordingly, does not oppose modernity to history, but rather demonstrates in advance why this opposition cannot be maintained, and shows, furthermore, well before de Man, that “[m]odernity turns out to be indeed one of the concepts by means of which the distinctive nature of literature [and all the other fine-arts for that matter - mine] can be revealed in all its intricacy.”¹⁵⁶

I began this study, following Robert Pippin, by mentioning the “dissatisfactions” that arise from the rational constraints or autonomous self-restrictions which Kant places on both legitimate knowing and moral willing. I have attempted to show in this final section, following Paul Guyer, that in the third *Critique* Kant is unable to provide legitimate grounds to justify the imposition of similar “disciplinary” constraints on the creative powers of genius. Artistic creation, consequently, appears to be at least one important human activity that is not accompanied by the sorts of dissatisfactions to which knowing and willing are prone. The emergence of an argument for artistic or aesthetic autonomy does not seem to produce, in Kant, the sort of explicit and conscious

opposition between originality and history that haunts the work of Nietzsche (as we shall see in much more detail), Beaudelaire and other modernists as Paul de Man's essay so rigorously exposes. By covertly deploying a second mode of *mimesis*, as we have seen, Kant attempts to account both for the possibility of artistic tradition and the relationship between artist and apprentice, while maintaining (often despite himself) the integrity and autonomy of artistic creation. It is this mimetic relationship, moreover, which I think becomes virtually constitutive of both Nietzsche's and Heidegger's attempts to determine the nature of "self-creation," understood either as a doctrine of individual sovereignty in Nietzsche, or of authenticity and authentic historicity in Heidegger. In this light, Kant's *Critique of Judgment* should be seen as a crucial text of philosophical modernism, instituting perhaps the paradoxical, mimetic "solution" to the problem of history and modernity that has become a much imitated, self-conscious feature of modernity itself.

CHAPTER 3: Nietzsche

The type of radical self-grounding that Kant sought for knowing, willing, judging, and as I have been arguing, for artistically creating, is perhaps the defining moment of philosophical modernity. But despite Kant's aspirations, his philosophical successors argued that he did not go far enough, that his Copernican revolution was itself still too deeply wedded to the metaphysics from which it attempted to escape, still too grounded in "positivity," and thus unable to defend undogmatically the self-legislative activities of the human subject. Kant's revolution fails, then, because it is not sufficiently revolutionary, and ends up betraying the very modernity that it purportedly establishes. Historically speaking, Kant's victory over the tradition was an ambiguous one - a victory in "spirit" but not, his opponents claimed, in fact.

This ambiguity is discerned, as I have tried to show, in Kant's figure of genius who, on the one hand, is still aligned with a "nature" within that makes possible the production of aesthetic ideas, but on the other hand, is capable of free, original creations that are completely undetermined by preceding artistic traditions. Moreover, even though aesthetic ideas are irreducible to any conceptual determination, they are ultimately

designated to serve an end outside of a strictly aesthetic domain, which ultimately compromises any strong claim of aesthetic autonomy in the third *Critique*.

With Nietzsche, many of these motifs recur in a variety of different ways, but Nietzsche's self-consciously modernist attempt to emancipate aesthetics from moral, political and epistemic ends, particularly after *The Birth of Tragedy*, coupled with his ultimate rejection of Romanticism, leaves him immune, in certain respects, from the difficulties which beset Kant's critical philosophy. Although Nietzsche is deeply concerned with individual sovereignty, he wants nothing to do with Kantian faculties, or self-critical reason, or the moral law according to which our practical maxims ought to be constrained. While Nietzsche's philosophical preoccupations vary throughout his "career," I hope to show that he grows into a defense of a radical, individualistic, "self-creative" autonomy, and by extension, a defense of modernity, despite the many passages and asides wherein more traditional, or Kantian-style defenses of autonomy and modernity are subjected to withering attacks. As with Kant's figure of genius, I will show that Nietzsche's self-creative individual similarly requires a model or exemplar of self-creation in order to choose freely to become who he is. Consequently, what is otherwise an affirmation of aesthetic autonomy, of an increasingly radicalized philosophical modernity, is at least partially betrayed and undermined by its inevitable reliance on the past, namely past exemplars of the very freedom that can never be simply asserted or established *ex nihilo*.

Just as importantly, however, I want to defend the claim that much of Nietzsche's writings on art and aesthetics can be best understood as responses to Hegel's notorious

claim that art is dead. In this chapter, consequently, I will examine three of Nietzsche's most important books: *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Human, All Too Human*, and, especially, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.¹⁵⁷ I will attempt to show that despite his early flirtations with Romanticism and Kantian aesthetics in an attempt to overcome Socratic/Alexandrian culture, Nietzsche reversed his course in his "middle period" work and utterly rejected this earlier position for the sake of rather "un-Nietzschean" philosophical allegiances, before finally adopting, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, a strikingly modernist affirmation of autonomous self-creation - a thoroughly aesthetic determination of the self - that marks a final break from the Hegelian problematic of the "death of art." In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche interprets the limits Kant places on legitimate knowing as the terminal point beyond which even Hegel's rational, self-correcting movement of claims about our deepest values and beliefs cannot proceed. Just as Socrates "exposed" the moral and epistemic limitations of art in ancient Greece and helped inaugurate a radically new type of reflective practice, so too did Kant and Schopenhauer reveal the limitations of Socratic/philosophical reflection and open the way, as Nietzsche initially hoped, for the return of art - specifically Wagner's mythico-poetic operatic works - as the medium through which the spiritual content of German culture could once again be expressed. In *Human, All Too Human*, given the context of Nietzsche's broader argument against metaphysics and the possibility of knowing things as they are in themselves, this truth-disclosing capacity of art is flatly rejected. Modern science is now championed as the only legitimate truth-disclosing practice, once the metaphysical pretensions of religion and art (to reverse the Hegelian order) have been debunked. Consequently, in the wake of

these two almost contradictory texts, the central philosophical task of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is difficult to determine. On the one hand, Nietzsche again seems to accept the negative evaluation of Socratic/theoretical culture developed in *The Birth of Tragedy* (although the terms of his critique have changed), yet on the other hand he has similarly retained his anti-metaphysical stance from *Human, All Too Human*, and thus he cannot be charged with simply reintroducing his “artist’s metaphysics” or his aesthetic theodicy from that early work. By moving beyond the philosophical positions of each of these previous books, I believe that with *Zarathustra* Nietzsche is undertaking an even more radical critique of metaphysics in the name of what I have been calling philosophical modernity. But Nietzsche realizes here that such a project can only be accomplished by re-thinking the meaning of the aesthetic itself, particularly in contradistinction to its Hegelian inscription, which I shall now briefly examine.

According to Hegel, the self-reflective practices of human communities from the tragic age of the Greeks to modern European life have revealed the “highest values,” the deepest interests or “essence” in each successive shape of absolute spirit.¹⁵⁸ These highest values, of course, have themselves changed radically over time and history as internally generated sceptical doubts about their authority have arisen for which no reassurances could be provided from within the particular reflective practices of these communities. Consequently, as these highest values successively lost their authority within the particular forms of life with which they were identified, new reflective practices were generated out of which a community could determine a different essence for itself, one that was at least immune from the sceptical doubts that undermined the authority of

previously held beliefs and values. As this social and epistemological process unfolded historically, teleologically, different institutional contexts for the practices of communal self-reflection were inevitably required.

For Hegel, the three historically and logically successive institutional settings for the reflection of absolute spirit are art, religion and philosophy. Although art and religion are treated together in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, it is clear in the final chapter that philosophy alone can be the appropriate type of fully conceptual, reflective practice capable of providing the sorts of reassurances that our modern life demands. Art, conversely, is relegated to a mere stage, an initial step, in the processual development of spirit, since its sensuous apprehension of the absolute - the statue of a divinity, for example, in which the "truth" of Greek identity is uniquely revealed - is unable to break fully with the contingency of its sensible expression and satisfactorily articulate its spiritual content. Thus, even though the production of artworks continues after the fall of the ancient Greek world, art no longer remains this privileged site of metaphysical knowledge. Art, in fact, becomes inessential during the Christian era wherein the symbolic practices and rites of the religious service are better suited to express this universal, spiritual content of social life. In turn, the mental images through which the Christian religion conveys knowledge of the divine are likewise supplanted by a purely philosophical, conceptual reflection that is now entirely removed from the contingencies of the sensible world. This dialectical movement inevitably betrays the latent Platonism of Hegel's aesthetics in which the progression from belief to knowledge, sensibility to conceptuality, is realized historically by the passage from art to philosophy as the setting

adequate for the reflection upon our most fundamental beliefs and values.¹⁵⁹ The connection of art to a devalued sensibility, and the philosophical need to transcend what is sensible, are perhaps the two central organizing motifs of “logocentric” Western philosophy. From this perspective, then, it appears that in the very act of comprehending this tradition, Hegel in fact reproduces its most prominent “biases.” This, of course, is not to say that Hegel is unable to defend his project, biases or not. Indeed, by the end of the *Phenomenology*, we are supposed to appreciate, retrospectively, exactly why art (and religion) can no longer be taken as the sorts of reflective practices capable of furnishing the type of fully-mediated, authoritative account of our modern identity that philosophy, as absolute knowing, is able to provide.

For Hegel, then, what characterizes our modernity is the historical overcoming of these intuitive or representational accounts of our highest beliefs and values by the account-giving practices of reason. It was Kant who first enlisted reason to give an account of itself in response to the still dogmatic attempts of self-grounding articulated by his rationalist and empiricist predecessors. However, as Hegel was at pains to show, even this latest, critical attempt to reassure modern science and philosophy that its moral and epistemic commitments could be authoritatively justified is still too rooted in positivity and dogmatism. As such, it is still unable to provide a thorough-going account of how thought determines itself without recourse to any metaphysical principle or some other external foundation required ultimately to vouchsafe the “autonomy” of reason. Because Hegel argued that such an appeal could not be made without reproducing the dogmatism of metaphysics, he sought to justify our modern practices by giving an

account of how previous discourses of legitimation have successively failed. What distinguishes modernity, then, is our ability to provide an “account of the accounts,” a phenomenological story of how these “failed” accounts have finally produced the philosophical-historical circumstances wherein we are ultimately able to reassure ourselves that our current critical standards can be assessed without appealing to ahistorical standards that exist independently of the ways in which we have come to know them.¹⁶⁰

Hegel’s phenomenological project thus presents a monumental obstacle to Nietzsche’s early attempt, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, to reassert the centrality of the aesthetic in modern life. It logically accounts for, generally speaking, the very transition from tragic to Socratic culture - the death of art - that Nietzsche is at this early stage of his career attempting to reverse.¹⁶¹ Moreover, the terms of Nietzsche’s reevaluation of the aesthetic are still not sufficiently radical at this point to resist an Hegelian critique. Since tragedy, I would argue, is understood as a an essentially “spiritual” practice which can furnish metaphysical knowledge of the way the world is behind its deceptive appearances, Nietzsche is at least partially abolishing the Kantian separation of the aesthetic from cognitive and practical spheres and endorsing Hegel’s cognitivist account of art according to which art must once again “compete” with other reflective practices.¹⁶² If insight or truth-disclosure is the purpose of art, then Nietzsche must be able to respond to Hegel by showing exactly how art as a social practice can provide a more satisfying determination of our modern identity than either religion or philosophy. He must be able to show why art can provide us with the most comprehensive and most

transparent account of “who we are,” if it is to “serve life” in a way that Socratic/Alexandrian cultural practices cannot. In this next section, accordingly, I will attempt to show quite briefly and schematically how Nietzsche might respond to such Hegelian challenges. This will involve showing how Nietzsche both takes over and simultaneously repudiates Hegel’s account of art, focusing primarily on the pivotal, yet largely undiscussed relationship between the tragic artist and the supersensible realm - a relationship that importantly situates Nietzsche’s discussion within the horizon of Kant’s theory of genius, and calls into question the “modernity” of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Tragedy, Mimesis, and the Artist-God

Although puzzling and often obscure in places, the general theses of *The Birth of Tragedy* are quite straightforward and generally uncontroversial.¹⁶³ At its heart, the text seeks to re-assert the authority of the tragic, yet life-affirming, insight of the ancient, pre-Socratic Greeks over against the hollow rationalism of optimistic, Socratic culture, which has inexorably run its course. Nietzsche argues that despite the cultural attunement of the Greeks to the finitude and suffering of human life, they were still able to confront the abyss of existence and say “yes” to life nevertheless. This psychological achievement was made possible by the uniqueness of Greek cultural life, specifically the development of Attic tragedy wherein a comprehensive view of existence was disclosed through the interplay of the two art deities, Dionysus and Apollo. Dionysus, of course, symbolizes darkness, excess, strife, becoming, and the destruction of individuality; Apollo, conversely, represents light, measure, constraint, being and the principle of individuation. In early (that is, pre-Euripidean) tragedy, the Greeks gained insight into the contradictory,

intoxicating world of primordial unity and pain, but were redemptively returned from this Dionysian experience by the calm and repose, the illusion and order, furnished by its Apollonian correlate. The Greeks thus managed to achieve both terrifying insight and “metaphysical comfort” from tragic drama, a sense that, despite the endless suffering written into the order of things, life was ultimately still pleasurable and justifiable from this “aesthetic” perspective. It is precisely this life-affirming, aesthetic perspective, however, that has been lost to the West, Nietzsche claims, particularly in modern Enlightenment culture, thanks to the massive historical influence of Socrates’ theoretical optimism and its related suite of life-denying Christian values. Modern European philosophy and science have, like Goethe’s Faust, reached the limits of our finite human knowledge, but Dionysian insight can transport us beyond appearances to the very world - the “true world” - subtending the illusory structures of empirical “reality.” Art, therefore, derives its metaphysical significance from precisely this ability to disclose what is in principle inaccessible to Socratic/theoretical cognition. Nietzsche thus agrees with Kant by assigning limits to scientific knowledge, but he further exploits the critical framework in a radically un-Kantian fashion by attributing a superior mode of metaphysical insight to the tragic artist, who, in turn, translates this insight back into the (Apollonian) language of phenomenality for the spectator. The subordination of scientist to artist and the Kantian “two world” theory that it presupposes thus become the bases for the possible re-birth of tragic culture - a hope which the young Nietzsche hangs on the operatic works of Richard Wagner.

The thematic links which bind *The Birth of Tragedy* to Kant and Hegel are multiple, and my examination of them here does not suggest that the more proximal influences of Schopenhauer and Wagner are any less important. These latter relations are well known and have received a great deal of scholarly attention, so I do not intend to contribute further to that discussion, except in passing.¹⁶⁴ As a circuitous introduction to the text itself, however, it is instructive to examine Nietzsche's own retrospective look at *The Birth* which he wrote almost ten years after his own personal break with Wagner and his intellectual break with Schopenhauer. In section four of his "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," a section itself divided into four parts by the repetition the question, "How now?," Nietzsche implicitly compares the dissolution and decline of the ancient Greeks to the dissolution and decline of modern European culture:

Could it be possible that, in spite of all "modern ideas" and the prejudices of a democratic taste, the triumph of *optimism*, and the gradual prevalence of *rationality*, practical and theoretical *utilitarianism*, no less than democracy itself which developed at the same time, might all have been symptoms of a decline of strength, of impending old age, and of physiological weariness? (*BoT*, p. 22)

Nietzsche's suggestion here is that the modernity we take to be unique and decisive for our self-understanding is in fact yet another repetition of an ancient conflict between tragic and Socratic cultural orientations. This description itself, however, already betrays Nietzsche's sympathy with the tragic world-view, which denies the progress and teleology of "so-called world history" (*BoT*, p. 59), and instead understands existence as the cyclical *agon* between opposing cultural-historical forces. On the one hand, therefore, we see how Nietzsche is attempting to deny the radical break of modernity with pre-modern epochs, while on the other hand attempting to show that the "modern ideas"

which we presently cherish are in fact responsible for the death of tragic culture, and, by extension, the denial of life itself.¹⁶⁵

From this perspective, it is difficult to see how the basic orientation of *The Birth of Tragedy* is even remotely connected to the problem of philosophical modernism in Kant and Hegel. This connection is manifest, however, in the modernist impulses latent within Nietzsche's overcoming of what he takes modernism to be. In Nietzsche's own words, he "tried to express by means of Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulas strange and new valuations which were basically at odds with Kant's and Schopenhauer's spirit and taste" (*BoT*, p. 24). This, however, is not a particularly helpful way of looking at *The Birth of Tragedy*. In fact, I believe that a virtually opposite view is correct. I think that Nietzsche's valuations were *not* "strange and new" in a significant way, but only *seemed* radically unique, largely due to the striking vocabulary of Dionysus and Apollo which provided the rhetorical cover for claims about modernity that are generally continuous with the philosophical purview of Kantian and post-Kantian thought. As I suggested in the introduction of this study, Nietzsche's project in *The Birth of Tragedy* ought to be read as a response to the philosophical dissatisfactions originating in the wake of Kant's critical philosophy. However, whereas other post-Kantian thinkers argued that the limit Kant determines for all legitimate cognition (and the dualism that follows therefrom) is in fact the central source of philosophical "dissatisfaction" with the critical project, Nietzsche actually hails Kant for his courageous claim that knowledge is restricted to the finite world of phenomena, which means, of course, that the scientific/theoretical man of Socratic culture is unable to know the world as it is in itself. Because Nietzsche's

response to Kant's critical philosophy involves finding a way of circumventing the Kantian limits without simultaneously returning philosophy to its dogmatic, pre-critical slumbers, it should be seen as broadly continuous in spirit with the philosophical projects of Schopenhauer and the post-Kantian German Idealists. *The Birth of Tragedy*, in fact, attempts to secure metaphysical insight by essentially bypassing the epistemological issues raised in the first *Critique* and exploiting instead the highly suggestive relationship between the artistic genius and nature described in the *Critique of Judgment*. In other words, it is precisely by remaining "Kantian" that Nietzsche hopes to overcome the restrictions of critical philosophy and furnish a legitimate response to Hegel's "death of art" thesis. In what follows, then, I will attempt to show how Nietzsche remains Kantian in the very moment at which he attempts to exceed Kant, and thus how he remains philosophically "modern" even as he attempts to break with the very modernity to which *The Birth of Tragedy* is so ambiguously related.

In this text, Nietzsche is not *primarily* concerned with articulating an historical account of the birth and death of Greek tragedy. When he turns in section two to the question of how the Dionysian and Apollonian art impulses or drives [*Kunsttrieb*] developed specifically within the ancient Greek world, he does not do so as a philologist, but as a diagnostician of modern German culture. More specifically, for Nietzsche the focus is not the nature of the Dionysian and Apollonian "artistic energies" considered unto themselves, but only as they manifest themselves through the mediation of the culturally and historically situated human artist. Nietzsche turns to the Greeks because their collective cultural effort to synthesize and harness these natural "energies" was

exemplary, and even if the Greek world is forever lost, this paradigm of cultural renewal and social “health” stands as a model for the modern world to imitate.¹⁶⁶ Greek tragedy represents the highest, but not necessarily the last attempt to confront existence in a comprehensive fashion without recoiling in horror and denial from what we have experienced. As a permanently possible “solution” to the very practical question of how our lives ought to be lived, *The Birth of Tragedy* is an attempt to open up a new future for modern culture through a creative transvaluation of the past. Paradoxically, then, Nietzsche is implicitly hinging the possibility of a uniquely German “re-birth” of tragedy, of a definitive break from Socratic/Alexandrian culture, on the active imitation of the originary Greek birth itself. He is attempting, that is, to found the re-birth upon the birth, to model the creativity of the present upon the creativity of the past.

It is crucial, therefore, to separate the Dionysian and Apollonian artistic energies understood independently of their cultural inscriptions from the ways in which these energies can be transformed through various artistic media:

Apollo overcomes the suffering of the individual by the radiant glorification of the eternity of the phenomenon; here beauty triumphs over the suffering inherent in life; pain is obliterated by lies from the features of nature. In Dionysian art and its tragic symbolism the same nature cries to us in its true, undissembled voice: “Be as I am! Amid the ceaseless flux of phenomena, the eternally creative primordial mother, eternally impelling to existence, eternally finding satisfaction in this change of phenomena.” (*BoT*, p. 104)

The Dionysian “in itself” offers a description of reality as fundamentally non-individuated, as a primal unity unlimited by the constraints of space, time and causality, moral and legal convention, or divisions between man and man, man and nature. The feelings induced by this sense of primal oneness include intoxication and terror,

sensuality and rapture. Because this experience is produced by the collapse of a sense of individuation, it has historically found expression in collective rituals, dances, festivals, mystical cults, musical dances, and sexual practices - practices which successfully allow for the sublimation of the "horrible... 'witches brew'" (*BoT*, p. 39) of the Dionysian without threatening the very destruction of social life itself. The Dionysian thus offers redemption through the possible identification with that which is non-individual, with the primal ground of all being wherein the illusory divisions of phenomenality are no longer operative. Conversely, the Apollonian, metaphysically speaking, offers a description of reality as governed by the *principium individuationis*, which means that reality must appear as delimited, formed, separated, and multiple. This is the world of Schopenhauerian "representation," the world of illusion which the Apollonian impulse seeks to render beautiful in its various aesthetic expressions. Redemption is accomplished precisely through the beautification of phenomena in which individuals are aesthetically transformed into "archetypes," such that life itself is enhanced and glorified - justified, in fact - even if only in this illusory way.

In the ancient Greek world, Nietzsche attempts to delineate a series of historical phases during which one or the other of these "metaphysical" outlooks was dominant.¹⁶⁷ For example, after the original dominance of the Dionysian in a lengthy pre-Hellenic period, the Apollonian spirit of the Homeric world developed, followed again by the reassertion of Dionysian impulses in the seventh century BCE, a return to the hegemony of the Apollonian in Doric art and architecture, and finally a synthesis of the Dionysian and the Apollonian in the tragic age of the Greeks, which lasted only from the sixth to the

fifth century BCE. But how did these conflicting artistic energies come together to produce tragic drama? Again, for Nietzsche this is not merely a question of philological importance, since the answer to this question will provide the key to the future cultural health of Germany.

Following Schopenhauer, Nietzsche argues that different modes of artistic expression are either essentially Apollonian or Dionysian. All the non-musical arts, which to a greater or lesser degree are mere copies of the spatio-temporal world of phenomena, are aligned with the Apollonian. Schopenhauer argued that the aesthetic experience offered by the non-musical arts afforded the intellect the opportunity to dissociate itself from the will, and contemplate the Platonic forms residing within the work of art. Since music, on the other hand, is a direct copy of the formless, striving will itself, it is neither "about" empirical reality - for it simply cannot "represent" particular entities - nor the Platonic forms. Music, as a copy of the will, the thing-in-itself, is thus alone aligned with the Dionysian. Nietzsche qualifies this claim somewhat by arguing, now following Schiller, that the "*musical mood*" [*Stimmung*] preceding the creation of, say, the lyric poetry out of which tragedy developed, suffices for this Dionysian identification. Music, accordingly, has the capacity to bring forth and communicate Dionysian ecstasy; the other arts bring forth and communicate Apollonian measure and restraint. Together, Apollonian and Dionysian art combine such that tragedy is able to express the content of Dionysian insight in such a way that the audience finds metaphysical comfort. More specifically, it means that the music of the tragic chorus, combined with the beautifully measured speech of individual characters and tragic plot,

are able to produce, in tandem, the uniquely redemptive features of early Greek tragedy, and, by extension, the great operatic works of Richard Wagner.

As John Sallis has recently shown, these sorts of claims complicate the sort of break Nietzsche is attempting to effect with the history of theoretical determinations of art developing out of the mimetic theories of Plato and Aristotle. Even if Nietzsche's goal here is to break with the conceptual determination of art as an imitation of nature, his reliance upon the Apollonian and the Dionysian as natural artistic energies (*Kunsttriebe der Natur*) means that the artist must imitate these basic artistic states. On the surface, it appears that only the Apollonian artist's dream-world of images is unwittingly implicated in the reproduction of mimetic operations, but even the Dionysian artist's non-imagistic work seems unable to exceed the horizon of *mimesis* insofar as it too is mimetically tied to the proto-artistic energies that burst forth from nature.¹⁶⁸ Art, then, is still related to nature in the very moment at which it is supposed to surpass it.¹⁶⁹ In tragedy, the mimetic relation is the mechanism through which the abysmal structure of existence, preceding all phenomenal division, is disclosed. Yet because this Dionysian insight finds representation in the beauty of Apollonian dream-images - the delimitations of action and speech - our very relation to the abyss is transformed. The tragic audience, therefore, no longer recoils before the horrors of Dionysian depth, but senses instead these ostensibly superficial Apollonian features which simultaneously conceal and reveal the conceptually irreducible "enigmatic depth" of Dionysian wisdom:

We are to recognize that all that comes into being must be ready for a sorrowful end; we are forced to look into the terrors of the individual existence - yet we are not to become rigid with fear: a metaphysical comfort tears us momentarily from the bustle of the changing figures. We are really for a brief moment primordial

being itself, feeling its raging desire for existence and joy in existence; the struggle, the pain, the destruction of phenomena, now appear necessary to us, in view of the excess of countless forms of existence which force and push one another into life, in view of the exuberant fertility of the universal will. (*BoT*, p. 104)

If Nietzsche is to counter Hegel's death of art thesis, it is precisely this insistence that Dionysian insight offers something inaccessible to theoretical knowledge upon which his argument will either stand or fall. Nietzsche claims of Aeschylean tragedy that even "the clearest figure always had a comet's tail attached to it which seemed to suggest the uncertain, that which could never be illuminated" (*BoT*, p. 80). The analogue of Nietzsche's "comet's tail" is Kant's aesthetic ideas. Both prompt "much thought," to use Kant's terms, but in each case, there is no concept that is adequate to convey the content of the thought. What is revealed, therefore, is a "deeper wisdom than the poet himself can put into words and concepts" (*BoT*, p. 105). Tragic or Dionysian art presents existence as it is in itself; science, however, can only describe a phenomenal world determined by the illusory structures of space, time and causality. The theoretical man can thus furnish only the empirical truths of our finite, phenomenal world, whereas art can disclose the transcendent truth underlying the illusory appearances. Moreover, since this wisdom does not seek to "correct" existence through theoretical illumination, it is ultimately even more "honest" than the truth-driven strategies of Socratic/theoretical man, who implicitly seeks redemption from existence by negating and repudiating its abysmal nature. Not only, then, is it possible for art to disclose more than science, but it can do so without resorting to the illusory practices of theoretical optimism, as exposed by Kant and Schopenhauer, which combats pessimism by simply refusing to acknowledge its abysmal sources.

The preference for art over science stems from its ability to affirm existence without resorting to the seductive illusions of theoretical man. Nietzsche, accordingly, seems at least to have a plausible answer to Hegel's charge that art is of the past, given that it can be shown to surpass science at its own game - the disclosure of truth. To conclude this discussion of the *Birth of Tragedy*, however, I want to show how this claim unravels in two related ways. First, Nietzsche undermines the distinction between the non-illusory redemption or metaphysical comfort offered by tragedy and the illusory redemptions of both strictly Apollonian beautification and of science/philosophy by asserting, in section eighteen, that tragic redemption is likewise implicated in the production of illusion:

These three stages of illusion are actually designed only for the more nobly formed natures, who actually feel profoundly the weight and burden of existence, and must be deluded by exquisite stimulants into forgetfulness of their displeasure. All that we call culture is made up of these stimulants; and, according to the proportion of these ingredients, we have either a dominantly *Socratic* or *artistic* or *tragic* culture..." (*BoT*, p. 110)

This claim appears to undermine the grounds upon which Nietzsche's preference for the aesthetic values of tragedy could be sustained. If Dionysian insight is an "exquisite stimulant" as much as Socratism, then its purported access to the world-in-itself behind illusory appearances must be called into question. Either it can give us this access but its claims are inexorably distorted by language, or it cannot, in which case its claims of greater truthfulness than competing modes of redemption should be rejected. In any case, the metaphysical consolation supplied by the Dionysian "solution" to the suffering of human life is on par with the Apollonian, Socratic, or even the Christian "solution" which Nietzsche notoriously vilifies and rejects.¹⁷⁰ Each of these "solutions" is a response to the

intolerability of existence, and each seeks a remedy for human suffering through the production of illusions. Given these structural similarities, there is nothing Nietzsche can ultimately offer to justify the acceptance of aesthetic values, or convince either the Christian or the scientist that the affirmation of existence afforded by tragic wisdom is preferable to religious or theoretical modes of coping with a life that, without salutary illusions, is not worth living. In the end, Nietzsche cannot explain why “it is *only* [my italics] as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*” [denn nur als *aesthetisches Phänomen* ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig *gerechtfertigt*] (*BoT*, p. 52). Furthermore, Nietzsche’s admission likewise compromises his case against Hegel, which rested on the epistemological and psychological advantages of the aesthetic over religion and philosophy. In the absence of “logical” grounds for the re-establishment of aesthetic values (which at best is a deeply paradoxical project), Nietzsche can only offer a descriptive account of different cultural epochs, governed as they are by either Alexandrian, Hellenic, or Buddhistic principles, which leaves him at least discursively unable to recommend a re-birth of tragedy.

Second, I want to suggest how Nietzsche’s affirmation and justification of aesthetic values founders in another way. In section five, Nietzsche demarcates his own position from Schopenhauer’s by claiming that the subject-object opposition “is altogether irrelevant” in aesthetics, from which he then derives an essentially Kantian/Romantic determination of the artist as “the medium through which the one truly existent subject celebrates his release in appearance” (*BoT*, p. 52). Instead of re-articulating a relationship between the artist and nature, however, Nietzsche here invokes

the “true author” of the world - a supranatural “artist-god,” perhaps - for whom both we humans and our works of art are but mere “artistic projections.”¹⁷¹ This means that in addition to the claim that human existence is itself illusory, Nietzsche is also asserting that *human* creativity has no foundational role in the production of works of art. Because the human artist is but the medium through which supranatural artistic energies are conducted, we humans - Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Shakespeare included - are not “the true authors of this art world” (*BoT*, p. 52). In fact, it is not clear from Nietzsche’s argument at this point just what the human contributes to the work of art, if anything at all. There is certainly no discussion of why some people are “chosen” to act as artistic conduits, whereas others are not. A corollary of this is Nietzsche’s passing claim that the work of art is not produced for the sake of human betterment or education: works of art are not human works which can offer insight into how life ought to be lived. In the absence of any such moral or pedagogical end, Nietzsche is able to conclude, as I cited above, that “it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*” (*BoT*, p. 52). Restored to its context, this often-quoted line now reveals the typically overlooked anti-humanism of *The Birth of Tragedy*. Life may well be justifiable only as an aesthetic phenomenon, but as the preceding passages suggest, this justification is only available to the world creator - not his created beings. Our “dignity” as humans resides solely in the fact that our existence as works of art justifies existence for the artist-god. The human artist, conversely, is not redeemed by his own (illusory) artistic creations, because like the figures painted on an artist’s canvas, we are

unaware that our only significance derives from our unwitting participation in a work of art of which we have no knowledge.

This, however, raises important epistemological problems for Nietzsche. If we are unaware of our participation in this cosmic work of art, then on what basis is Nietzsche even permitted to make this claim? Nietzsche's "solution" to this problem is to argue that "the eternal essence of art" is disclosed to the genius who "coalesces with this primordial artist of the world" [Urkünstler der Welt] in acts of artistic creation (*BoT*, p. 52). In addition to the implication that Nietzsche himself must be a genius in order to understand this eternal essence and write about it in *The Birth of Tragedy*, this also entails that while the genius is afforded metaphysical insight through the act of *creation*, the receptive audience, which only has access to the *created* work, is denied the artist's epistemic privileges. If the true content of tragic wisdom is only available to some, and there is no human mechanism in place to disseminate this knowledge (as Nietzsche implies here, at least), then it becomes unclear just how tragic *cultures* or *ages* are to be characterized, let alone founded. Nietzsche's extended argument in this text is on behalf of tragedy as a social phenomenon, as a spiritual practice, but in this important passage it appears that Nietzsche's characterization of the creative process as the identification of the artist with an artist-god or world-creator calls into question the possibility of translating the *private* insight of the artist into the shared world of *public* meaning wherein cultural redemption would again be possible. From this perspective, Nietzsche's later claim that we (the audience) "are really for a brief moment primordial being itself" (*BoT*, p. 104) cannot be accepted, for it is precisely this identification that is explicitly denied here. The inability

of the artist to negotiate this rift between the artist-god and the audience would thus account for Nietzsche's almost belated concession, as described above, that even the Dionysian, and hence tragic, response to the claim that life is not worth living is itself illusory. Since the artist cannot communicate the world-creator's secrets to a larger audience, then the content of the work of art, the tragedy that *is* presented to the audience, must be a distortion or a disguised version of that insight. Nietzsche's retrospective claims from his "Attempt at a Self Criticism" aside, it is clear that he is surreptitiously reproducing in his philosophy of art the very Platonic/Christian claim of a metaphysical "true" world that gets distorted in its artistic, historical articulation which he is simultaneously at pains to overcome.

The confusions, however, do not end there. Nietzsche concludes this remarkable passage with a highly suggestive description of how the artist's identification with the artist-god occurs: "for in this state he is, in a marvelous manner, like the weird image of the fairy tale which can turn its eyes at will and behold itself; he is at once subject and object, at once poet, actor and spectator" (*BoT*, p. 52). It is important to keep in mind that this radical self-reflection is only possible in that moment of creation wherein the metaphysical identification between the two artistic "producers" - the human and the divine - is secured. Nietzsche's human artist thus resembles an aestheticized version of the Fichtean subject. It is only through the spontaneous, active "I" that the world, in this case the metaphysical world, is rendered intelligible. Unlike the Fichtean subject, however, Nietzsche's genius is not an unconditioned, self-positing "I," since the ostensible self-presence described above is conditioned by the metaphysical ground

which both precedes and exceeds the finite subjectivity of the artist. This also differentiates Nietzsche from Jacobi, for example, who argued some seventy years earlier that the self-transparency of the "I" was undermined by the existence of God, since God is both the ground of, yet inaccessible to, human reason.¹⁷² For Nietzsche, the same essentially theological structure remains in place, but Nietzsche's artist-god vouchsafes, rather than undermines, the self-presence of the (artistic) subject. This reliance on what is other, therefore, does not radically compromise the autonomy of the artistic subject, but in fact serves as the condition of this very possibility.

How does this occur? The answer lies, I believe, in the mimetic relationship tacitly established between the artist and the natural artistic energies described above. Read in the context of this typically concealed mimetic relationship, the passage in question begins to make more sense. The human artist is able to become "at once poet, actor and spectator" (*BoT*, p. 52) precisely because he is able, apparently, to reproduce the freedom of production attributed to the artist-god. Although Nietzsche has earlier stated that the artist is actually released from his individual will, he has been granted a different will, a different sort of freedom through which he is able to replicate the artist-god's almost blind, reckless, amoral freedom. This is what Nietzsche means by the "eternal essence of art." It should be noted that this relationship does not imply that the human artist will better understand that which has been created, since the changing, historically contingent works refracted through the artist do not seem to belong to the "eternal essence," the artistic energies from which all great works of art originate. The mode of *mimesis* operative here, therefore, is, like it was in Kant's articulation of genius,

a *mimesis* of nature understand as *physis*, as the eternally creative and freely productive ground of all that is, rather than a *mimesis* of nature in its passive, created state. This implicit distinction enables Nietzsche to maintain a creative autonomy for the artist, even if this autonomy has been paradoxically conditioned by a higher artistic/metaphysical ground, while simultaneously preserving the Kantian “two-world” structure which provides the basis for Nietzsche’s questionable claim that the artist’s tragic insight exceeds the epistemic limits of all theoretical inquiry. However, since this mode of *mimesis* can only account for the relationship between two artistic *producers* and not two artistic *products*, there is no mechanism in place for the dissemination of metaphysical knowledge - at least in a non-distorted fashion - to those non-producers, the audience, who are officially supposed to be the beneficiaries of the disclosure of tragic wisdom. In order to break with the mimetic theories of Plato and Aristotle, Nietzsche has perhaps unwittingly enlisted a second mode of *mimesis*, but this move ultimately prevents him from asserting the priority of aesthetic values in a new tragic age, since the “truth” on which those aesthetic values paradoxically depend is only available without illusion to the creative artist. This definitively shows, I believe, that a Nietzschean response to Hegel’s death of art thesis cannot be sustained, since the epochal transformation upon which this response depends cannot be executed by a small group of (tragic) artists who are unable to convey the metaphysical knowledge which they alone can know.

“Un-Nietzschean” Nietzsche? The Egalitarianism of *Human, All Too Human*

Of the many books Nietzsche wrote in his rather brief philosophical life, *Human, All Too Human* is one of the longest and most complex, yet it is one that has received

comparatively little scholarly attention. One reason for its marginal status has been the almost clichéd periodization of Nietzsche's work according to which *Human, All Too Human* (1878) along with *The Dawn* (1881), and the first four books of *The Gay Science* (1882) are consigned to Nietzsche's "middle" period. These texts are often viewed as transitional works, connecting the much discussed early writings on tragedy and the Greeks with the "mature" and deservedly notorious books of the mid to late 1880s. As a result, the central philosophical terms within the vocabulary for which the proper name "Nietzsche" typically stands - the "Übermensch," the "will to power," the "eternal recurrence," the figure of Dionysus - are nowhere to be found in these "middle-period" works.¹⁷³ In the case of *Human, All Too Human*, this apparent identity crisis is compounded since one of the explicit missions of this text is to "put a sudden end" as Nietzsche retrospectively claims in *Ecce Homo*, "to all my infections with 'higher swindle,' 'idealism,' 'beautiful feelings,' and other effeminacies" that characterized his general philosophical orientation in *The Birth of Tragedy*.¹⁷⁴ This suggests that Nietzsche's task here is generally negative, destructive, and yet he has not, by 1878, developed his own distinct philosophical "doctrines," which means there is little to say "yes" to or positively affirm in this book, and even less, apparently, that is of intrinsic philosophical interest. But I believe this is unfair. In what follows, consequently, I will take a second look at *Human, All Too Human*, focusing in particular on the ostensibly "un-Nietzschean," egalitarian spirit that pervades the text. More specifically, I want to show that Nietzsche's critique of Romantic genius - irreducible, I believe, to the biographies of Nietzsche and Wagner - has important moral and political consequences.

By connecting Nietzsche's philosophy of art and politics in this way, I think it is possible to detect not only the seeds of Nietzsche's later conception of art, explicated under the aegis of the will to power, but also a distinct and coherent "aesthetics" in *Human, All Too Human* that has remained largely unnoticed by contemporary Nietzsche scholarship.¹⁷⁵

What is perhaps most striking about *Human, All Too Human* is not so much the massive repudiation of Nietzsche's earlier philosophy, but the very manner in which this repudiation is conducted. Whereas *The Birth of Tragedy* had the audacity "to look at science in the perspective of the artist" (*BoT*, p. 19), *Human, All Too Human* overturns this interpretive stance from the outset and attempts instead to interrogate its subject matter from the suspicious, yet dispassionate eye of the scientist. In only the third aphorism of the book, entitled "*Estimation of unpretentious truths*," Nietzsche programmatically endorses the very Alexandrian/Socratic culture whose demise he prematurely celebrated in *The Birth of Tragedy*. He now writes:

It is the mark of a higher culture to value the little unpretentious truths which have been discovered by means of rigorous method more highly than the errors handed down by metaphysical and artistic ages and men, which blind us and make us happy. (*HAH* I, 3, p. 13)

The terms of the reversal could not be more clear: the "artist's metaphysics" of the *Birth of Tragedy* have been consigned to the epoch of metaphysics and superstition from which only the methodical, incremental progress of Enlightenment science can save us, even if the cost of this awakening is the abandonment of those very illusions that provide comfort and happiness. This problematic notion of metaphysical comfort is perhaps *the* organizing claim of Nietzsche's first book, but it is one which relies upon the "two-world" metaphysics of Kant and Schopenhauer.

Within six years, however, Nietzsche comes to reject utterly the explicit dualisms of his earlier philosophy, which means that those aspects of his work that rely on his modified Kantian framework - his aesthetics and cultural politics in particular - must likewise be abandoned or re-fashioned in a "non-metaphysical" way. In fact, Nietzsche's aesthetics in *Human, All Too Human* is both consistent with, and a function of, his newly embraced epistemic agnosticism. This new position entails that even if we had knowledge of a world behind appearances it would be utterly useless and unable to serve human life.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, and more radically, it means that we are not in a position epistemically even to make a distinction between the world as it is in-itself and a world of appearances. What we must forego, indeed, is just this sort of idle metaphysical speculation, including the back-door metaphysics of Kantian practical reason. At least two important consequences follow from this claim. First, if the in-itself world, supposing it exists, is inaccessible not only to priests but also to scientists and artists alike, then whatever prestige and authority that is hereafter conferred to these figures will have to be based on something other than their claims of metaphysical insight. Second, because the highest values of European culture were supposedly located in this higher, in-itself world, Nietzsche must furnish an alternate explanation of how our higher values (whatever they may be) can be vouchsafed in the absence of any underlying metaphysical curriculum. It is not so much the values themselves, but the authorization or *evaluation* of values that is (and will continue to be) Nietzsche's overriding philosophical concern. Such a *transvaluation*, accordingly, is precisely what Nietzsche is doing in his discussion, "From the Souls of Artists and Writers," which, like so many of Nietzsche's texts, has

both a destructive and constructive agenda. Nietzsche must both expose the illusion of previous metaphysical philosophies, including his own earlier claim that art is “the truly metaphysical activity of man” (*BoT*, p. 22), and replace it with his own newly christened, ostensibly scientific “historical philosophizing,” which denies the “*eternal facts*” of the metaphysicians and practices instead “a *chemistry* of the moral, religious, and aesthetic conceptions and sensations” (*HAH I*, 1 and 2, pp. 12 and 13).

Applied specifically to art, the central task of this “historical philosophizing” is to undermine the cult of Romantic genius by piercing the illusion of the “miraculous suddenness” (*HAH I*, 145, p. 80) of the artist’s creation. Nietzsche in fact begins his discussion by contrasting the perfection of the work of art with its temporal development, its process of becoming. Given our mythological and metaphysical heritage, we are accustomed to assume that whatever achieves perfection must be either eternal or instantaneously created by some divinity. We have come to see the poet, Nietzsche writes later, as the “mouthpiece of the gods” (*HAH II*, 176, p. 256) because we have been seduced by, or willingly accepted, the artist-assisted illusion of creation *ex nihilo*. Nietzsche’s “science of art,” however, sets out to unmask the artist’s deceptive and self-deifying practice of concealing both the time and labour of production - a practice employed to sustain the illusion of miraculous, effortless creativity. Although artists have an interest in passing off their labour as a “ray of divine grace,” in actuality, Nietzsche argues, the finished and perfected work which “tyrannizes” (*HAH I*, 162, p. 86) the audience is really the product of a continual process of “rejecting, sifting, transforming, ordering” and “knot[ting] together” all the diverse elements, the “good, mediocre and bad

things,” the “many beginnings” out of which the work emerged in its final form (*HAH I*, 155, p. 83). As evidence of his demythologizing claims, Nietzsche directs us to Beethoven’s notebooks which attest to the *gradual* completion of the “most glorious melodies,” not the effortless vision of a mystic, unconstrained by the rigorousness, discipline, and work involved in fashioning original artistic ideas.

Even those cases in which the artist’s productive powers have been blocked and then finally released, resulting in “effusion so sudden” (*HAH I*, 156, p. 83) that any laborious development appears to be absent, are merely analogous to the accumulation of capital in modern economic life. Even if this capital is spent at once, it “did not fall from the sky” (*HAH I*, 156, p. 83) Nietzsche observes, but is rather the result of much preliminary labour, preserved in anticipation of a single dramatic expenditure. There is, moreover, a political analogue to Nietzsche’s line of argument here, one which connects his aesthetic concerns to more overtly political issues. In “The Wanderer and his Shadow,” Nietzsche writes:

If property is henceforth to inspire more confidence and become more moral, we must keep open all the paths to the accumulation of *moderate* wealth through work, but prevent the sudden or unearned acquisition of riches; we must remove from the hands of private individuals and companies all those branches of trade and transportation favorable to the accumulation of *great* wealth, especially the trade of money - and regard those who possess too much as being as great a danger to society as those who possess nothing” (*HAH II*, 285, p. 381).

Against both modern socialism, which repeats “Plato’s utopian basic tune” (*HAH II*, 285, p. 381), and aristocratism, Nietzsche’s position here seems most akin to the welfare statism he elsewhere so famously criticizes. In *Human, All Too Human*, the target is not the “blinking” last men of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* but rather the false idols who

determine their own superiority by subordinating the masses to an undeservedly lowly position. Historically speaking, the political “reverence for gods and princes” is recapitulated in modernity as the “cult of genius” which “is an echo” of earlier forms of domination (*HAH I*, 461, p. 168). Both political and aesthetic “class divisions” thus fall within Nietzsche’s more general critique: “Wherever there is a striving to exalt individual men into the suprahuman, there also appears the tendency to imagine whole classes of the people as being coarser and lower than they really are” (*HAH I*, 461, p. 168).

Nietzsche’s ironic, yet more “truthful” characterization of the “genius” as an “efficient workman” (*HAH I*, 163, p. 86) not only challenges the salutary myth of the “superior,” supernaturally attuned creator perpetuated by the artist, but also the existence of an unbridgeable rift between the artist and the audience perpetuated by *our own* “vanity” and “self-love” (*HAH I*, 162, p. 86). Here, Nietzsche’s focus shifts from the artist to the spectator. It is efficacious for us, the public spectators, Nietzsche argues, to likewise affirm the remoteness and miraculous creativity of the genius: if we can convince ourselves that we are radically distinct in kind from the great artist, then we can avoid making those psychologically damaging comparisons in which our own inferiority is mercilessly exposed. As Nietzsche writes, “To call someone ‘divine’ means: ‘here there is no need for us to compete’” (*HAH I*, 162, p. 86). Thus, by exempting genius from learning and hard work (as Kant did)¹⁷⁷, an ostensibly natural, hierarchical relation is deceptively established between the non-laboring and laboring classes in the interests, paradoxically, of maintaining a general sense of equality and containing public envy. Now, on the one hand, by comparing genius to brick-laying and “exposing” the concealed

labour of creativity, Nietzsche is apparently seeking to collapse the distinction between the artist and audience that he willingly concedes is democratically enjoyed. But on the other hand, Nietzsche shortly thereafter champions the real, non-illusory equality of artist and audience, arguing that if a gulf exists between a remote artist and his public, and if the public is “no longer able to attain to that height,” then it “at length disconsolately climbs back down again deeper than before” (*HAH I*, 168, p. 89). The audience, therefore, has an interest in *not* recognizing any naturalized difference between itself and the artist, since this may well result in a loss of self-esteem and confidence and exacerbate “class consciousness” - consequences the illusory sense of difference was introduced to prevent. Nietzsche’s warning here is not against the “new” or the “modern” per se, but only against those avant-gardist leaps which abandon art-historical traditions and disconnect the world of art from its audience. This suggests that Nietzsche’s concern lies not in preserving the vain illusions of an insecure public, but in the public’s deeper, yet unacknowledged interest in elevating itself through (to almost quote Schiller) an “artistic education” (*HAH I*, 167, p. 89) - an education that proceeds slowly and deliberately as all education must.¹⁷⁸

Although Nietzsche indicates throughout this section that the ascription of genius to artists and the concomitant subordination of scientists “is only a piece of childishness in the realm of reason” (*HAH I*, 162, p. 86), he has not left art without a function in this text, as Julian Young has recently claimed.¹⁷⁹ In fact, there is good reason to believe that Nietzsche’s final polemical claim about the evolutionary replacement of the artistic by the scientific man - surely a dig at Wagner’s music of the future - is directed against a

certain *type* of art only, namely, the supernaturally endowed creations of Romanticism. Nietzsche is *not* engaged in a wholesale critique of art from the perspective of science as his rhetoric at times suggests, but he *is* challenging - as Kant ostensibly did before him - the propagandistic elevation of the artist above his actually *less* childlike and *more* truthful audience. In Kantian terms, he is merely constraining the activity of genius with the claims of taste. Charging Nietzsche with “aesthetic *Platonism*,” therefore, is hyperbolic at best.¹⁸⁰ True, it is hard to miss the Socratic zeal of Nietzsche’s deflationary critique, yet the grounds of his critique are, despite superficial resemblances, completely un-Platonic. In fact, whereas Plato explicitly employs a myth-based account of ostensibly natural difference to justify the division of labour in his *Republic*, the very force of Nietzsche’s reading is to undermine precisely this type of deceptive explanation. The continual comparison and systematic conflation of manual, scientific and artistic “labour” and the refusal to confer an intrinsic freedom or nobility to either one of these “modes of production” indicates, I believe, the strictly anti-Platonic nature of both Nietzsche’s “aesthetics” and “politics” not only in this chapter, but throughout the entire book.

The “free spirits” for whom *Human, All Too Human* is written are not “born free;” rather, like the novelist who must spend ten years of “many-sided exercise” in the “workshop” before the created work is “fit to go out into the world,” they must “*acquire*” their greatness over time regardless, and often in spite, of natural giftedness (*HAH* I, 163, p. 87). Nietzsche is not, of course, claiming that talent is equally distributed amongst people and that hard work alone can turn the tone-deaf into a Mozart, but he is arguing that nobility and genius are not conferred by nature, and cannot be ascribed to any of us

at birth. There is no evidence that Nietzsche even covertly endorses a metaphysically vouchsafed division of labour, which speaks against the type of social “rank ordering” that Nietzsche infamously champions in his later works.¹⁸¹

Furthermore, Nietzsche’s de-naturalization of genius is consistent with his important denial of epistemic access to a metaphysical world behind appearances. Nietzsche is not so much reproducing the Platonic charge that art is “thrice removed” from truth and reality, but he is separating the tasks of scientist and artist in a Kant-like fashion such that art need no longer “compete” with science for truth - either successfully or unsuccessfully. The denial of insight into a metaphysical world does not, therefore, unduly cramp the artist’s vision, but in fact rescues the artist - no longer in quest of unknowable and useless “truths” - from a priest-like obsolescence in the wake of scientific progress. From this more “sober,” anti-Romantic perspective, then, Nietzsche is able to divorce the artist and artwork from all extramundane sources of insight and inspiration, which means that the artist alone must take full responsibility for the entire creative process. The metaphysical deflation of the artist thus opens up the possibility of a much more radical artistic autonomy - an autonomy that is still different from, yet importantly anticipates, Nietzsche’s later, Zarathustrean ideals of self-creation and self-overcoming which similarly demand nothing beyond the self for their movement and actualization. In *Human, All Too Human*, however, the restriction of the artist’s metaphysical activity is even more relentlessly pursued, especially if the subsequently conceived will to power is read as a metaphysical principle in the service of which artistic creativity is crucially enlisted. Even if the will to power is determined as an unconscious,

driving impulse which underlies or conditions artistic creation, this too entails a certain distancing of the creative process from the intentional, laborious, incremental activity that Nietzsche associates with the artist in *Human, All Too Human*.

We can see, consequently, that the “egalitarianism” of this text serves not as some exoteric claim or rhetorical ploy to undermine the escalated claims of Wagner and the Romantics, but as a principle which ultimately serves to establish a true meritocracy wherein greatness and distinction must without exception be *learned* and *earned*. In *Human, All Too Human*, this thesis applies to aesthetics and politics alike; what is consistently criticized in this text, accordingly, is not art or politics per se, but only those versions which claim certain privileges, distinctions, powers, and insights without any genuine authority or legitimacy. Science generally escapes criticism here because for Nietzsche it is the one “discourse of modernity” that has gone the furthest to combat and overcome superstition and mythology by importantly narrowing the scope of its own insight.¹⁸² At times, this almost singular praise of science runs the risk of sounding like positivism, but once the context of Nietzsche’s critique is understood, as I have tried to show, the force of such a charge is considerably reduced. Let me conclude by suggesting that what is most deeply affirmed in *Human, All Too Human* is arguably neither science nor art, nor any other possible discipline or vocation, but a somewhat traditional cluster of virtues including modesty, tenacity, responsibility, patience, courage, wit and moderation that can be embodied in any number of theoretical pursuits or practices. To the extent that modern artists can display these human, all too human virtues, they can expect to be treated - qua *artists* - no better, yet no worse, than anyone else.

Zarathustra and the Problem of Imitation

My intention in this section is not to offer yet another comprehensive interpretation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, but I do want to pursue a question which sheds considerable light on the overall sense of this notoriously elusive text. I will argue that Zarathustra's political-philosophical failures in the first two books can be explained by his lingering commitments to a Platonic pedagogy which is completely unsuitable for the "teaching" of self-creation that Zarathustra is attempting to offer. More specifically, I will show that what Zarathustra comes to prohibit and mock by the end of the text, despite an initial complicity, is the sort of master-disciple relationship forged according to the operations of a traditional, Platonic understanding of *mimesis* wherein pupils are taught to believe, act, and evaluate the way the master believes acts and evaluates. Indeed, this is the same imitative relationship that Kant explicitly rules out between the artist and apprentice in the third *Critique*. To insist that the apprentice should slavishly copy what the master has created only guarantees that the apprentice can never approach the condition of freedom which is constitutive of mastery itself. That is why Kant, and Zarathustra here, both require a second, implicit sense of *mimesis* to both account for the master/pupil relation *and* the possibility of the pupil's freedom.¹⁸³ What is required, therefore, is a *mimetic* relation between two distinct self-legislations, two freedoms that are unconstrained by the operations of the other. Although this sort of relationship is not explicitly referred to in the text of *Zarathustra* itself, I believe that both its plot and its philosophical sense can be most completely understood if we begin to appreciate the

degree to which Zarathustra's pedagogy and his "doctrine" of self-creation are informed by this second sense of *mimesis*. In what follows, I will attempt to defend this thesis by carefully examining a number of episodes from the text, particularly those in which Zarathustra is confronted with distorted imitations of his own teaching and inferior versions of himself, in order to show how he both implicates and frees himself from the pedagogical horizons of Platonic political philosophy.

I should state at the outset that the interpretation of *Zarathustra* that I am offering here conflicts decisively with the most recent, book-length study of the text, Stanley Rosen's *The Mask of Enlightenment*.¹⁸⁴ According to Rosen, Nietzsche is first and foremost a political thinker: "His most comprehensive intention is to transform the collective circumstances of human existence in order to breed a new race of mankind."¹⁸⁵ Given this assumption, the parallels between Nietzsche and Plato are obvious. Just as Plato inaugurated Western history and civilization on the basis of the philosophical ideas defended in the *Republic*, so too does Nietzsche seek to destroy that very tradition, now exhausted, through an equally comprehensive - yet concealed, esoteric - philosophical pedagogy. What other commentators and philosophers have been predictably attracted to, however, Rosen argues, is Nietzsche's own version of the noble lie, in this case a "positive" doctrine of creativity and the hope that decadent European values can be replaced by the "active" values of the coming *Übermensch*. But this merely "exoteric" doctrine of creativity is vitiated by Nietzsche's esoteric articulation of Being as chaos, which in effect denies that any call to activism can overcome the fatalistic structure of

existence. *Zarathustra* thus presents itself as a “handbook for revolution,” yet in its deepest sense it is a claim that all philosophical revolutions must fail.¹⁸⁶

Although I agree with this final claim (but for different reasons), my own reading of *Zarathustra* rejects both Rosen’s “fatalistic” interpretation of Nietzsche *and* the claims of revolutionary activism to which Rosen himself objects. I contend that *Zarathustra* does address, at its most basic level, the Platonic political question of how the philosopher must relate to his less-wise and often base audience, but I think that Nietzsche’s philosophical answer to this question, as the drama of *Zarathustra* reveals, is that this *political* question cannot be resolved *politically*. In fact, I believe that the ostensibly exoteric “doctrine” of self-creation that Rosen essentially dismisses is the axiological bridge between the philosopher and politics which *Zarathustra* must ultimately learn to affirm. This does not mean that the perhaps eternal tension between philosophy and politics is resolved in book IV, but it does indicate, I believe, that *Zarathustra* suggests an alternative to both the fatalism and the revolutionary politics that we also encounter in the text.

A more promising interpretation of *Zarathustra* has been recently offered by Daniel Conway.¹⁸⁷ Like Rosen, Conway also situates the question of *Zarathustra*’s politics and pedagogy within the context of Nietzsche’s philosophical relationship with Plato. According to Conway, “the ironic structure of the book is thus generated by the gap that obtains between *Zarathustra*’s intentional parody of Socrates and his unintentional self-parody.”¹⁸⁸ In other words, *Zarathustra*’s teaching fails in the first half of the text because of the schism between *Zarathustra*’s anti-Socratic rhetoric, the content

of his new teaching, and the still highly Socratic practice of attempting to improve his audience. Both Socrates and Zarathustra “fail,” Nietzsche is suggesting, by virtue of their shared presupposition of their audience’s deficiency and implied need of “redemption.” This indicates that Zarathustra’s pedagogical experiment with his own version of the Socratic *katabasis* - his *Untergang* - ends in failure because it is still too closely tied to a model of Platonic political agency.

While I agree with much of Conway’s interpretation of *Zarathustra*, I believe that what is equally crucial here is the link between the *Untergang* theme and its presuppositions of authority and deficiency, and the problem of imitation in a text which seeks to offer a teaching of authenticity and self-creation. In other words, I believe that given the content of Nietzsche’s teaching, his deeper point is that all modes of *untergehen* must fail as pedagogical models since they assume a nature which is incapable of responding to that very teaching. Zarathustra is continually disappointed that his teaching only seems to generate bad imitations of his teachings and himself, and his response to this in the first two books especially is to blame his audience instead of modifying his own still-too-Socratic teaching practices. In order to get others to become who they are, Zarathustra must first overcome the problem of *mimesis* and the pedagogical practices to which it is tied. He cannot, that is, “teach” self-creation while simultaneously promoting and demanding allegiance to his *own* values and beliefs without falling into the most blatant performative contradiction. Zarathustra’s failure, then, to convey his teaching of self-creation through this classical model thus serves as an

important prelude and contrast to Zarathustra's/Nietzsche's "solution" to this seemingly intractable paradox in book four.¹⁸⁹

The doctrine of self-creation that I have been referring to here is the key to understanding both the failures and successes of *Zarathustra* as a pedagogical-philosophical text. But it is also the key to understanding both Zarathustra and Nietzsche as "literary" characters. As Alexander Nehemas has written, Nietzsche is a creation of his own texts, and has attempted to create an artwork out of himself by offering himself (and Zarathustra, I should add) as a model of the very self-creation that he consistently advocates.¹⁹⁰ In other words, Nietzsche's own attempt to become who he is involves teaching others to become who they are. This, I believe, is the insight that Nietzsche attempts to convey dramatically through the complex pedagogy of *Zarathustra*, yet as I have been suggesting, it is the impossibility of *teaching* self-creation (in the manner that we teach, say, classical mechanics or Latin grammar) which accounts for the failure of Zarathustra as a revolutionary figure. This *political* failure, however, to which Nietzsche both implicitly and explicitly draws our attention, opens up the possibility of self-creation understood as a radically individuating practice that is utterly divorced from external claims about history, morality, or any other mode of social reassurance, including Zarathustra's initial political call to prepare the Earth for the coming *Übermensch*. This gradual withdrawal of personal identity from all the usual metanarratives marks the "aestheticization" of Zarathustra's teaching to the point that he is left with no positive "content" or "doctrine" in any traditional sense (or determinate concepts, to speak Kantian) to communicate by the end of the book. Zarathustra fails as a revolutionary, as a

harbinger of new social practices and beliefs, in order to show that what is of ultimate philosophical and existential concern - one's highest values and beliefs - cannot be taught in any conventional way. What remains, accordingly, is merely the *example* of Zarathustra, who, increasingly unable and unwilling to tell others what to believe or how to live, is left with offering himself as a model of the type of life that he thinks is possible for those truly "higher men." It is as if Zarathustra realizes that genuine freedom, independence, and the capacity to create one's own values cannot be collectively achieved, given that the socially inculcated "herd" values of the masses cannot be transformed through political means, as the earlier episodes of Zarathustra in Motley Cow demonstrate. Zarathustra thus finally repudiates any "spiritual" solution to the problem of modern European nihilism, and turns away in book four from the city, from public life, in favor of the company of the dissatisfied higher men who would otherwise be subject to those same herd values which they too have come to (partially) reject. Consequently, Zarathustra's movement from an attempt politically or spiritually to overcome European nihilism to a non-spiritual, aesthetic practice of self-creation not only opposes the Platonic subordination of art to truth, but also the Hegelian characterization of art as a communal, reflective practice wherein the highest truths of a community could be sensuously expressed.

The Problem of Philosophical Legislation: Zarathustra's "Prologue"

Zarathustra's decision to leave his cave, "*go under*," and return to man is apparently devoid of any Platonic consideration of justice or the calculation of costs and benefits. Zarathustra does not need to be convinced that his descent is needed, that the

city requires philosophical legislation, but returns simply because, like a “cup that wants to overflow” (Z, p. 122), he has much to give mankind and does not seem even to doubt that his gifts will be accepted and appreciated. At this initial point of departure, Zarathustra does not anticipate the problems of reception that will insistently recur in his subsequent encounters with man, but his happiness and optimism turn quickly to incredulity following his brief conversation with the old saint. With his “singing, crying, laughing and humming,” (Z, p. 124) the saint is at once a comic figure, yet he too has attempted to teach man and been rebuffed. This has led to his present psychological state of *ressentiment*, a hatred of man characteristic of (yet repressed by) Christianity that is at least honestly stated here. What Zarathustra can hardly believe, however, is that despite the present irrelevancy of Christianity as a world-historical movement, the saint continues to have faith in God: he has “not yet heard anything of this, that *God is dead!*” (Z, p. 124). In addition, therefore, to drawing self-consciously comparisons between Zarathustra and Plato’s philosopher-king, Nietzsche is also setting up an even more explicit rivalry with Christianity. Zarathustra’s atheistic incredulity indicates, in Hegelian terms, that religion has long since lost its status as an authoritative spiritual practice in late-modern Europe. It can no longer provide the institutional space wherein our highest values can be reflectively determined. In fact, by having the saint “confess” that he actually “hates” man, Nietzsche is in effect suggesting that Christianity has utterly lost its message of love, and is now reduced to a cartoonish existence at the margins of public life. Despite the fact that Zarathustra “loves” man, he evasively qualifies this remark

since he does not want his own “overfullness” to be conflated with the false love of Christianity, which has now been exposed as hate.

Although Zarathustra has apparently left the old saint and Christianity behind, various representatives of Christianity - both religious figures and their ideas, the fragments of European culture - will re-emerge throughout the course of the text. When Zarathustra likewise encounters replicas and distorted imitations of his own teaching later on in the work, we should consider the implicit comparison Nietzsche is drawing between Zarathustra’s early teaching and the teaching of Christianity. Both attempts to teach mankind “the way” end in failure, which motivates Zarathustra, at least, radically to modify his pedagogical strategies. At this point, however, Zarathustra believes that he is strictly the rival of a Christian teaching; in fact, so much of what preoccupies Zarathustra in his speeches is the moral-view of Christianity which persists beyond the death of God, its metaphysical support. The saint may seem irrelevant; the churches may well have become “the tombs and sepulchers of God,”¹⁹¹ but the values of Christianity continue to live on unquestioned in this late-modern epoch. What Zarathustra overestimates, accordingly, is the degree to which the public is able or willing to reflect on the connection between the transcendent guarantor of Christian values and the values themselves. Part of this overestimation, I would argue, motivates Zarathustra at first to replace “God” with the worldly ideal of the *Übermensch*. He thinks that once the people have a new ideal, a new purpose or telos in human history, then their values will change accordingly. He thinks that the way to effect great historical change, to overcome a tradition, involves simply convincing people to substitute one ideal for another. But this

is merely a *philosopher's* revolution, and Zarathustra quickly learns that radical change cannot be inaugurated at this abstract level, the level of metaphysics. Great events take time, and the inertia of history and tradition will always impede the revolutionary change that Zarathustra at first desires. Thus, like the madman from *The Gay Science*, Zarathustra cannot get his various audiences to realize the implication of their existential predicament, and consequently they do not understand the urgency, or even the point, of Zarathustra's teachings.

This point is strikingly evident in Zarathustra's first public speech. Upon arrival in the town of Motley Cow, Zarathustra immediately begins to address a crowd gathered in the market place. That Nietzsche has Zarathustra appear in the midst of a crowded market without any knowledge of his audience's philosophical understanding is not without philosophical significance. Zarathustra seems to think that the late-modern public of Europe is ready for his words, and believes that his speech about the crucial historical circumstances of the present will be recognized for its universal importance. What Zarathustra offers, without argument, are philosophical claims, yet he is articulating those claims to an audience of non-philosophers. This will not produce genuine understanding, but only, at best, the echolalic reiteration of Zarathustra's words. Moreover, given Nietzsche's ostensibly anti-metaphysical stance, it appears that his philosophical teaching is itself already compromised. As an ideal, as a *telos*, the coming of the *Übermensch* appears to be inconsistent with the implications of the just-articulated claim that God is dead. If all metaphysical horizons have collapsed, then any suggestion of a higher being

to come or a new “meaning” for humanity is tantamount to a resurrection of metaphysical thinking.

That Nietzsche has Zarathustra offer this doctrine in the city directly after saying to himself in the forest that God is dead, suggests that Nietzsche wants to draw our attention to the apparently contradictory nature of Zarathustra’s teaching. Like other readers of *Zarathustra*, I believe the dramatic setting of the speech indicates that the public teaching of the *Übermensch* should not be construed as the center-piece of Nietzsche’s philosophical pedagogy.¹⁹² It is rather a doctrine that is designated for public consumption, for initiating wholesale political change, as Zarathustra’s preacher-like rhetoric attests, but even this “noble lie” falls on deaf ears. It is for this reason that the speech about the coming *Übermensch* is misconstrued as a preamble to the subsequent tightrope-walking performance. From the public’s perspective, philosophy is easily mistaken for groundless, verbal acrobatics, and is merely one of many distractions/attractions in the market square. What is interesting, however, is how Zarathustra attempts to re-teach the *Übermensch* doctrine in light of the public’s response. Now Zarathustra claims that man “is a rope, tied between beast and overman - a rope over an abyss,” (*Z*, p. 126) an image which suggests that Zarathustra is already having to accommodate his (already compromised) philosophical teachings to the immediacy of his situation. In order to make the general public pay attention, he employs a rhetoric that appeals to them and is understandable, yet he quickly slips back into a speech resembling the first one, and his teaching once again falls on deaf ears.

Zarathustra now realizes that his teachings have not been understood; he realizes he is “not the mouth for these ears,” and turns from the doctrine of the *Übermensch* to a description of the “last man.” But again, Zarathustra has not adequately considered the nature of his audience: instead of recoiling in horror from what they have become, the people unwittingly celebrate the last man, who, having “invented happiness,” represents the ideal type to the unreflectively utilitarian market crowd. The problem is not that Zarathustra cannot get the crowd’s attention, since the people clearly respond to his rhetoric, but Zarathustra is unable to get his audience to respond to the content of his teaching - a content that Zarathustra himself will later implicitly repudiate. For this reason, Zarathustra decides to abandon his indiscriminate public teaching. From this point on, Zarathustra must be selective about his audience, although he has still not abandoned his desire for a revolutionary transformation or transvaluation of European culture. What Zarathustra learns in the “Prologue,” consequently, is that his new ideal cannot be realized in the traditional political sense, given the inherent limitations involved in the communication of philosophical doctrines to a mass audience.

The “Prologue” is also important because it implicitly introduces the theme of imitation, which, I believe, enables us properly to articulate the central relationship between the philosopher and politics in *Zarathustra*. After Zarathustra’s perversely received speech, our attention returns to the tightrope walker’s performance. While on his way across the rope, a jester suddenly appears and starts mocking the tightrope walker, suggesting that his methodical crossing is merely impeding the progress of those who are more able. The jester then causes the tightrope walker to fall to his death beside a

motionless Zarathustra. This scene is significant because it presents us with a crass imitation of Zarathustra's teaching, one which seems to be the result of how his teaching was received by the crowd. From the public's perspective, the jester is just another version of the laughable Zarathustra, yet he is also "devilish" [*wie ein Teufel*], out to destroy the highest achievements of their culture.¹⁹³ In the "Prologue," Zarathustra is also seeking to overcome the vulgar *Bildung* of late-modernity, but as his compassionate response to the dying tightrope walker indicates, he is importantly respectful of uniqueness, daring, and courage, even in their all-too-human guises. This episode is thus representative of many similar episodes in the book wherein different versions or imitations of Zarathustra's teachings are wrongly identified or conflated with his own. The deployment of these caricatures once again attests to the difficulties of Zarathustra's pedagogical task; namely, to teach others to become who they are, a project that should not be confused with becoming a poor replication of Zarathustra himself.

In virtue of how his initial teaching was received, Zarathustra resolves to seek disciples, companions, "who follow me because they want to follow themselves - wherever I want" (Z, p. 135). He no longer will play the role of "shepherd and dog of a herd" (Z, p. 135), for his newly self-assigned task involves shepherding of a different sort. Now Zarathustra will attempt to lure the few away from the many; he declares that he will leap over "those who hesitate and lag behind" and seek instead "fellow harvesters and fellow celebrants" (Z, p. 136). There is, however, something deeply paradoxical about Zarathustra's resolution here: on the one hand, he claims to be no longer preaching to the many, yet on the other hand he must still seek audiences in order to draw those

higher men, his proper companions, away from the herd and the state.¹⁹⁴ Zarathustra is thus still acting in a highly political manner insofar as many of his subsequent speeches are directed at the moral, political, educational and religious practices of late-modernity. The comment, then, that his companions will follow him “wherever I want” announces the central pedagogical tension in *Zarathustra*. Much of what follows in the plot of *Zarathustra* involves Zarathustra’s gradual disengagement from “political” life and his concomitant realization that this “wherever I want” condition ultimately conflicts with the pedagogical task of teaching others to “become who they are.” In the first two books, Zarathustra is still the teacher of the *Übermensch*, which, if not a literal ideal of a new type of man, is at least a figurative projection of Zarathustra’s desire for a “higher humanity,” a political goal that betrays the sort of revolutionary itinerary only abandoned in the second half of the book. Because Zarathustra believes that the immediate task of modern Europe is to “prepare” for the subsequent overcoming of man, many of his speeches in the first two parts advocate the destruction of extant cultural practices and social institutions. In light of this revolutionary context, it is clear that Zarathustra’s seemingly innocuous “wherever I want” claim takes on a whole new meaning. In addition to pulling the few away from the many and fragmenting the herd, Zarathustra’s role as a sort of existential savior must be appreciated from this macropolitical perspective organized around the *Übermensch*-ideal. Zarathustra has declared war on man in the name of a “higher type,” and his new companions are but the first foot-soldiers of the coming revolution.¹⁹⁵ As we shall see, when Zarathustra begins to understand his own historical mission as determined by *his own* principle of revenge, his own hostility to

time and the “it was,” then only does he abandon the doctrine of the *Übermensch* and the political agenda that follows therefrom, but also, gradually, the leader-disciple relationship with his companions.

Zarathustra’s Pedagogical Failure: Parts One and Two

Much of Zarathustra’s attempted philosophical seduction in parts one and two involves challenging the highest values or virtues of late-modernity and the institutional practices within which they have become authoritative. For example, in his speech, “On the New Idol,” Zarathustra explicitly links the herd-values and the “tongues of good and evil” (Z, p. 161) with their political correlate, the modern state. Unlike both Zarathustra’s new concern for the few and their relationship to the state, the state itself is exclusively concerned with the masses and only flatters the higher man for the sake of his allegiance and affection. The purpose of Zarathustra’s speech here is to expose this false flattery and draw attention to the rift between the interests of the higher men and the interests of the state. It is, after all, “for the superfluous [*Überflüssigen*] the state was invented” (Z, p. 161). Unlike the philosophical legislation described in the previous speech “On War and Warriors,” the new idol rules by policing the uneducated appetites of the many with the sword, the fear of death. Much of its false authority, moreover, derives from its appropriation and imitation of “the language of customs and rights” from different peoples. Each people has its own “good and evil,” its own set of authoritative values and beliefs, but the modern state lacks the unity of style which characterizes genuine cultures and seeks only its own survival through whatever mixed-bag of goods and evils it can assemble in order to extend its authority to as many different peoples as possible. As

such, the modern state's existence is antagonistic to the development and education of those who are capable of living apart from the normalized, routinized herd existence actively cultivated by modern, democratic politics. Like Rousseau, Nietzsche clearly understands the irony of a modernity which explicitly champions both independence and freedom, but in actuality produces conforming masses who are not capable of realizing precisely those virtues which they ostensibly affirm. The opposition between the state and the individual could not be more clear:

Only where the state ends, there begins the human being who is not superfluous...
Where the state *ends* - look there, my brothers! Do you not see it, the rainbow and the bridges of the overman? (Z, p. 163)

What is striking about Zarathustra's utopian rhetoric is the dramatic severance of this future possibility from the traditional site of politics, the state. Unlike both Rousseau and Kant, for Nietzsche the sovereign individual is not produced through the alignment of his will with a general will or a universal law. As Nietzsche suggests here through Zarathustra's speech, the sovereign individual must be able to create his own table of values, and thus he cannot blindly submit to the previously formulated values of others, especially the incoherent, leveled-down values of the modern state. Because the demands of autonomy exceed any social or political setting, it is only as an aesthetic practice, the practice of self-creation, Zarathustra negatively implies, through which autonomy can be achieved.

Zarathustra's practice of destroying old values in order to facilitate the creation of new ones is thematized in many similar sections in the first two books. The relationship between the individual and the state in "On the New Idol" is reproduced at the economic

level as an antagonism between the individual and the values of the market place. In "On the Tarantulas," Zarathustra targets the spirit of revenge latent in all preachers of equality, and again alerts us to the false imitations of his teachings by the revolutionary "Left." In "On the Land of Education" [*Bildung*], Zarathustra criticizes the way in which the "dappled and motley" learning of today sterilizes the cultural development of modern Europe and inhibits the sort of revolution that Zarathustra is demanding in preparation for the coming *Übermensch*. Even modern science is taken to task for its claim of "immaculate perception," its hypocritical renunciation of the will in favour of a supposedly "pure" contemplative stance. The scientist, however, loves the earth the way the moon does: disengaged and from a distance. In an aside we can interpret as Nietzsche's voice, Zarathustra confesses that he too once attributed godliness to pure perception but has now discovered the sickliness and life-denying features of modern scientific work. Thus, in contrast to the moon's love, Zarathustra again affirms the sun whose "solar love is innocence and creative longing" (*Z*, p. 236). It would be difficult to find a more explicit repudiation of the pro-science stance of *Human, All Too Human* than the passages from this important section.

Nietzsche's rejection of his earlier philosophical position does not, however, imply that his criticisms of Romantic poetry from *Human, All Too Human* have likewise been abandoned. Evidence of this can be found in "On Poets," wherein Zarathustra's speech begins with his evasive refusal to give a philosophical account of his earlier, Platonic position that "the poets lie too much." By explicitly refraining from speaking as a philosopher, yet still accepting this philosophical conclusion, Zarathustra is forcing his

disciple/reader to confront the implications of his blatant performative contradiction: “we do lie too much” [*wir lügen zuviel*] - a flippant but significant response to his disciple’s declaration of faith in Zarathustra’s teachings. In what follows, Zarathustra’s self-identification as a poet is especially significant since he proceeds to recapitulate the essence of Nietzsche’s previous criticisms of Romantic poets and poetry from *Human, All Too Human*. Zarathustra now writes that poetry is written specifically to lift us “to the realm of the clouds;” however, he then surprisingly claims that “upon these [clouds] we place our motley bastards and call them gods and overmen” [*auf diese setzen wir unsre bunten Bälge und heissen sie dann Götter und Übermenschen*]. What is striking about this passage is that Zarathustra does not withdraw his sarcastic portrayal of poetry’s metaphysical agenda and delusions, but in fact implicates his teaching of the *Übermensch* in that very critique. Is Zarathustra thus revealing here that his pedagogical mission is on par with the worst metaphysical excesses of Romanticism? I would hesitate to make this strong claim given Zarathustra’s preceding remark that as a poet he lies too much, but I think this is yet another clue left by Nietzsche that the doctrine of the *Übermensch* cannot be taken at face value, and *a fortiori* cannot be construed as Nietzsche’s own philosophical position. As for Zarathustra’s ambiguous assessment of poets, I think it is significant that this section occurs *after* speeches on scientists and scholars, which suggests that the creative poet is the higher of the three types, but is ultimately still an active, even if unwitting, participant in the revenge against time that Zarathustra himself still needs to overcome. Zarathustra affirms the creativity of the poet, but not that which poets, including Zarathustra, have so far created.¹⁹⁶

These speeches from part two all belong to Zarathustra's second descent to mankind. After his first journey, Zarathustra returned to his solitary mountain life for several more years, but went "under" again after learning that his teachings were in danger. This is not to say that his teachings were being ignored or replaced; rather, they were "in danger" because they were being badly *imitated*. Zarathustra learns of this in a dream during which a child holds up a mirror to Zarathustra's face: "when I looked into the mirror I cried out, and my heart was shaken: for it was not myself I saw, but a devil's grimace and scornful laughter" (Z, p. 195). The imagery of the mirror is deployed by Nietzsche to draw our attention to the problem of *mimesis* operative here, and the constitutive role it plays in the drama of *Zarathustra*. What motivates Zarathustra to return to man is the distortion of his teachings; the "weeds pose as wheat" and his disciples are now ashamed of Zarathustra's gifts. As a result, Zarathustra needs to develop a new way of speaking, a new pedagogy, so that he too does not simply become another version of his earlier teaching. This realization leads to the somewhat more direct and philosophically sophisticated teaching of part two in which Zarathustra and an apparently new, more receptive band of disciples journey to a series of distant islands, importantly removed from the concerns and demands of public opinion.¹⁹⁷ The paradox from which Zarathustra still cannot escape, however, is the need to teach and be understood on the one hand, and his desire to immunize his teachings from the imitations and distortions of his words that will inexorably occur on the other. Zarathustra has not yet realized that insofar as he remains an authority figure - still very much the Platonic teacher of virtue in parts one and two - he is preventing his disciples from discovering

their own virtues, their own “good and evil,” and thus from becoming who they are. Moreover, as a gift-giving authority figure, Zarathustra cannot help but see his disciples as deficient, as lacking his own ability of self-creation. Thus, from his perspective, the reception of his teachings enacted by his disciples will inevitably be disappointing, as all inferior replications are in contrast to the “real thing.” Nietzsche’s intention here, I believe, is to expose the limitations of a Platonic pedagogy as practiced/imitated by Zarathustra. Zarathustra’s Platonic pedagogy assumes that once his audience *knows* what is true, namely, that God is dead, they will then freely will the coming of the *Übermensch*, but time and again we see Zarathustra’s disappointed reactions to how his teachings are interpreted and put into practice. This suggests that Nietzsche is having Zarathustra initially use the very sort of *mimesis* that Plato criticizes in order to reveal the inherent limitations of philosophical legislation as depicted in the *Republic*.

At the end of part two, a crisis occurs which provokes Zarathustra gradually, yet fundamentally, to re-examine the nature of his own teaching. The nature and cause of this crisis cannot be easily summarized, for Zarathustra’s words are particularly indirect and ambiguous in these particularly important sections. In “The Soothsayer,” Zarathustra is introduced to what will become his own “doctrine,” the eternal return of the same: “All is empty, all is the same, all has been!” (*Z*, p. 245). The mere mention of this doctrine has an adverse affect on Zarathustra. He immediately becomes sad and weary; his heart is grieved and he gives up food and drink for three days. After a deep sleep, Zarathustra’s first speech “came to his disciples as if from a great distance,” (*Z*, p. 246) suggesting that Zarathustra has either learned something about himself or his disciples that has changed

their relationship. The dream he recalls suggests that his *Untergang* has turned him into a “night watchman and a guardian of tombs upon the lonely mountain castle of death” (Z, p. 246). In other words, the Soothsayer’s mention of the eternal return “doctrine” has forced Zarathustra to realize that his teachings cannot change man. He cannot simply proclaim a new ideal for man - the over-man - and expect to inaugurate a new and higher human history. Zarathustra’s dream, as I interpret it, is a dream revealing the impotence of his current pedagogy. This is poignantly exhibited by Zarathustra’s favourite disciple’s misinterpretation of the dream: presumably, if Zarathustra were a successful teacher, then his best disciple would not be such a poor interpreter of Zarathustra’s inner life. Significantly, the misinterpretation sounds like something Zarathustra might have said earlier or might have wanted to hear, but the shake of his head indicates that producing well-intentioned, ingratiating mimicry is not what Zarathustra wants from his disciples.

This point is sharpened somewhat in the chapter “On Redemption” wherein we get a glimpse of how Zarathustra’s teaching is understood by man through the words of a hunchback. He tells Zarathustra that his teaching will only succeed when he is able to “persuade us cripples,” and in order to be persuasive, Zarathustra must first “heal the blind and make the lame walk” (Z, p. 249). It is in this section that Zarathustra first gains a sense of the inadequacy of his own teachings when he realizes that his own *Untergang* is implicated in the production of the very “fragments and limbs of men” (Z, p. 250) he has sought to redeem. Zarathustra has produced “cripples” precisely through the assumption that his teaching is needed in order to overcome man. The relationship of dependency this creates is just what it means to be a “cripple” (or an “inverse cripple”

who is only self-sufficient and capable in one respect) in need of redemption. What Zarathustra finds “most unendurable” is the present and past condition of man as “fragments and limbs and dreadful accidents” and he confesses that without his redemptive projection of a future *Übermensch*, he “should not know how to live” (*Z*, p. 250). Zarathustra thus realizes that he, too, is a cripple because he too believes in redemption from a distant, transformative ideal - a futural being who will justify the manifold deficiencies of all past and present existence. But again, it is clear that even Zarathustra’s doctrine of redemption through creative willing is still a doctrine of redemption and must, therefore, presuppose the deficiency of the natures it seeks to transform. This means, in effect, that what is lowest (the cripples) and what is highest (the *Übermensch*) are dependent upon one another and cannot be unproblematically separated.¹⁹⁸ Zarathustra begins to realize, however, that *he* is responsible for this condition, that his teaching has produced both the deficiency and the redemptive possibility of its overcoming. From this point on, I believe the importance of the *Übermensch* is diminished as the sort of redemptive, post-historical ideal against which the present condition of man will inexorably seem lacking.

Zarathustra’s realization that he has been deceiving himself prompts him to return “without joy” to his mountain. In the final chapter of part two, Zarathustra’s “stillest hour” (his conscience? his most private speech?) specifies explicitly the connection between nobility and baseness that Zarathustra has just learned: “he who has to move mountains also moves valleys and hollows” (*Z*, p. 258). But as Zarathustra responds, he has been unable to move mountains because his teaching is yet to reach men; his

Untergang has been a failure not because of his *audience*, but because of the assumptions and strategies of his own *teaching*. In the first two parts, Zarathustra's teaching has only managed to produce imitations of himself, mere fragments of a complete human being, since, paradoxically, in order to recognize Zarathustra's authority his audience had to understand itself as needing such an authority, as deficient kinds or types of human beings. The illumination of this contradictory pedagogy reveals, of course, the limitations of Plato's philosophical legislation while affording Zarathustra an Er-like¹⁹⁹ chance to "redeem" himself through the adoption of a new teaching in the second half of the text. Unlike Zarathustra, Christ would not encounter this dilemma since the moral deficiencies of his audience and their collective need of redemption is consistent with both the content and practice of his teaching. The task of becoming a Christian is to be as Christ-like as possible. For Nietzsche, however, no possible mode of *Untergang* is appropriate for the promotion of autonomous self-creation that belongs at the center of Zarathustra's final "teachings."

The Imitation of Freedom: Zarathustra's Aesthetic Politics

In part three, Zarathustra leaves his disciples and begins his journey home from the Blessed Isles. It is this intensely poetic, reflective third part in which Zarathustra spends much of his time alone questioning his own authority and attempting to reconcile himself to the fact that mankind cannot be overcome through any mode of political discourse. He too must overcome his own resentment of time and the "it was," the fact that his own historical circumstances and identity seem to be so intimately bound up with what he most despises - unredeemed humanity. Zarathustra's concern here thus shifts

from a concern for other human beings to a concern for himself. What he must formulate is a way of affirming who he is without simultaneously willing to transcend or negate that which he wishes to overcome. The section entitled "On Passing By" is important because it clearly shows that Zarathustra's entire political and pedagogical orientation has unquestionably changed. While wandering from town to town, Zarathustra is confronted by a "foaming fool" at the gates of a great city. Significantly, in light of the theme of *mimesis* that I have been articulating here, the foaming fool is known by the people as "Zarathustra's ape." Not only has the fool borrowed from Zarathustra's teachings, but also from his "phrasing and cadences," his entire manner of speech. He thus represents the product of Zarathustra's teaching from the first two parts of the text, and is consequently another reminder of the failure of the *Untergang* which Zarathustra is presently in the process of reversing. The fool launches into an embittered, yet Zarathustra-like denunciation of the great city in which he repeatedly implores Zarathustra to spit on the city and turn back. Counseling revenge of this sort quickly angers Zarathustra because he recognizes the psychology of revenge that was latent in his own earlier teachings. Like the fool, Zarathustra is nauseated by the great city, but the ethos of Zarathustra's teaching has changed from its previous nomothetic orientation. His "new" doctrine specifies that "where one can no longer love, there one should *pass by*" (Z, p. 290). The crucial suggestion here is that Zarathustra has extricated himself, if not from the desire, then at least from the practice of seeking a collective transformation of mankind. This section, therefore, ought to be read as a repudiation of his earlier teaching

- when Zarathustra refused to “pass by” - and a preparation for part four in which those who seek his company must *go up* to him.

The continual reduction of strictly political concerns in part three is countered by what is arguably the most famous and important doctrine of the text - the doctrine of the eternal recurrence. As Alexander Nehamas has persuasively argued - and I fully endorse his interpretation - the eternal recurrence “is not a theory of the world but a view of the self.”²⁰⁰ This teaching, therefore, signals a pivotal turn in *Zarathustra* from a concern with a “political” solution to the sickness of modern European “spirit” to an “aesthetic” solution to the private task of becoming who one is. This is not to say that this “private” task does not have political implications; in fact, I am arguing that the *only* satisfactory practice of politics offered in *Zarathustra* is possible solely on the basis of this aesthetic task of self-creation.

Although this is not the place for a detailed reading of the eternal recurrence as it is presented in *Zarathustra* and elsewhere, I do want to highlight one dramatic feature of the teaching which attests to both Nehamas’ insight and its link with the motif of imitation that I have been examining here. The passage in question is richly poetic and notoriously difficult to interpret; however, I think that the dramatic setting of the presentation of the doctrine furnishes much of the needed context to read this teaching correctly. In the second section of “On the Vision and the Riddle,” Zarathustra and a dwarf - his spirit of gravity - stand before a gateway named “Moment” from which two eternal paths depart in alternate directions. Before Zarathustra can offer his interpretation of the gateway and the significance of the two infinite paths, the dwarf murmurs his own

trivial teaching of the eternal recurrence: "All that is straight lies...All truth is crooked; time itself is a circle" (Z, p. 270). The dwarf's teaching is trivializing because he deflates the existential force of the doctrine by reducing it to a series of categorical judgments without attempting to work through the implications of these "truths" for his own life. What is furnished, then, is the mere simulacrum, the bare husk of Zarathustra's teaching that is not strictly "wrong," but merely a weak imitation of what Zarathustra will subsequently illuminate. The fact that the dwarf speaks as a philosopher issuing claims about the nature of existence indicates, furthermore, that this is not what Zarathustra's teaching offers. As an imitation, the dwarf's reading still conceals the deeper, existential "truth" of Zarathustra's teaching precisely by refusing to acknowledge that the eternal recurrence offers above all a "view of the self." By drawing our attention to the inadequate imitation of Zarathustra's teaching, Nietzsche is attempting to immunize his readers in advance from misinterpreting the doctrine of eternal recurrence.

According to Nehamas (and others), the teaching of eternal recurrence should not be interpreted as a cosmological theory, nor as a metaphysical claim seeking to offer an a priori determination of the truth of beings as a whole. The eternal recurrence does not, on this (correct) reading, theoretically vouchsafe the infinite repetition of one's own empirical life exactly as it has been, as that would not lead to a joyous affirmation of one's existence but only to a sense of resignation and indifference. Since what is crucial for Nietzsche is the self-understanding we must have in order to affirm our lives in this ultimate way, Nehamas suggests that we read the eternal recurrence in a strictly conditional manner: "If my life were to recur, then it could recur only in identical

fashion.”²⁰¹ This means that everything that is ostensibly accidental, trivial, evanescent, or momentary about one’s existence can no longer be opposed to, or juxtaposed with, a substantial understanding of the self. If Zarathustra’s identity is the result of *all* his “properties,” as the conditional reading of the eternal recurrence implies, then he cannot artificially separate a series of contingent features from a stable essence that he identifies with his “true” self, as metaphysicians have traditionally taught. If Zarathustra (or anyone else) must affirm all of his properties in order to be who he is, then to hope for one thing to be different is tantamount to hoping for all things to be different. In other words, the desire to change one thing is the equivalent of the desire to be a completely different person. What nauseates Zarathustra (as the episode with the shepherd and the snake attests) is that his own existence and destiny is inseparable from that of “the small man,” which means that in order to submit fully to the demands of the eternal recurrence doctrine, Zarathustra must learn to overcome his disgust with the herd (and subsequently, his pity for the higher man.)²⁰²

It is this existential sense that Zarathustra captures in his own interpretation of the doctrine, which he “presents” through a series of questions to the dwarf. Of particular importance is Zarathustra’s suggestion that all things are “knotted together so firmly” (Z, p. 270) that it is only possible to affirm one moment by affirming all moments. This rules out any selective “reading” of one’s life in which certain intolerable or ostensibly insignificant episodes are repudiated or dis-owned while others are celebrated for their continuing meaning and importance. Most importantly, however, the doctrine means that each life is radically unique and, as a consequence, inimitable. If the sum-total of all

experience, including that of “this slow spider” and “this moonlight itself,” is inextricably a part of who Zarathustra is, then Zarathustra, and everyone else for that matter, has experienced life from vastly distinct, non-exchangeable points of view. The uniqueness of the self is compromised or sacrificed only when one lacks the will or self-understanding to consider existence in this way. If, for instance, one seeks an identity by engaging in stereotypical activities or by self-consciously aligning one’s values and beliefs with those of others, then this is tantamount to disavowing the very contingencies of experience out of which alone each self is constituted. To substitute even one part of another’s life for one’s own, the teaching of eternal recurrence implies, is to abandon one’s self in its entirety. The deeply individualizing import of the doctrine is dramatically exemplified by the disappearance of the dwarf, the gateway, etc. after Zarathustra has fully articulated his teaching. This helps emphasize the fact that each life is radically unique and non-exchangeable, and that there are no metaphysical formulas (like the dwarf’s) to which we can appeal in order to become who we are. The teaching of eternal recurrence is thus anathema to the spirit of imitation, which explains why this doctrine replaces the teaching of the *Übermensch* in the second half of the text. Zarathustra may still mention the *Übermensch*, for this teaching still belongs to Zarathustra, but he realizes that he can no longer insist on the public’s recognition or acceptance of the *Übermensch* since this would entail that other people take over or imitate Zarathustra’s teaching - a possibility that is ruled out by the doctrine of eternal recurrence. The teaching of the *Übermensch* may well have been Zarathustra’s priority, but to insist that it become a priority for others is to violate the eternal recurrence’s prohibition against any

universalizing claim about what the self should do, believe, value, or hope, as this comes dangerously close to reproducing the substance/accidents division that Nietzsche is attempting to undermine.

In the chapter entitled “On the Spirit of Gravity,” Zarathustra’s change of both tone and pedagogy as the result of the full realization of the doctrine of the eternal recurrence becomes evident. Picking up his polemic against the dwarf and the categorical spirit of the dwarf’s teaching, Zarathustra juxtaposes the dwarf’s “Good for all, evil for all” maxim with his own teaching: “This is *my* good and evil” (Z, p. 306). More famously, Zarathustra concludes the chapter with yet another implicit critique of his own earlier position, the teaching of the *Übermensch*: “‘This is *my* way; where is yours?’ - thus I answered those who asked me ‘the way.’ For *the* way - that does not exist” (Z, p. 307). In addition to calling into question the authority of all transcendent values - be they Platonic or Christian - this new teaching also rules out the sort of collective mobilization required for the imminent arrival of the *Übermensch* that Zarathustra was advocating in parts one and two especially. “The way” of the *Übermensch* can thus no longer be recognized as an authoritative appeal to the modern European community, since by implication it is now construed as Zarathustra’s private ideal, one which he can no longer imperialistically present before his audiences without simultaneously undermining the possibility of others discovering or creating their own “ways” too. This new teaching, however, should not be misconstrued as Zarathustra’s resignation in the face of his inability to transfigure collectively modern European culture, or, for that matter, as an endorsement of relativism in response to the absence of metaphysically guaranteed

values. Although the teaching of eternal recurrence does not entail the affirmation of any particular actions, values, or beliefs, it does entail a self-understanding opposed to that of traditional metaphysical (especially pre-Kantian) views of selfhood and human subjectivity, which tend to posit an unchanging, substantial ego or monad that is disengaged from the (external) world. In this sense, then, it would be impossible to reconcile Nietzsche's view of a radically contingent sense of self with a Christian belief in a created, eternal soul. The Christian, moreover, would not be able to affirm "sin" in order to conform with the demands of eternal recurrence to say "yes" to all of life's moments, no matter how intolerable they may seem.²⁰³ The doctrine of eternal recurrence, therefore, while it does not set out a new table of values or offer a straightforward guide to a higher mode of human existence, does rule out any life-denying interpretations of the self much like Kant's categorical imperative rules out any maxims that cannot meet the formal requirements of universalizability.²⁰⁴ Consequently, the doctrine of eternal recurrence enables Nietzsche to deny absolute, metaphysical values while simultaneously maintaining a standard by virtue of which the distinction between high and low, noble and base, can be sustained.

It is the fourth and final part of *Zarathustra* in which the most radical and final turn in the entire text is enacted. Zarathustra's *Bildungsgang* has now come to fruition, and it is here alone, I believe, that any positive identification between Nietzsche's philosophical position (at this time) and Zarathustra's can be defended. Part four begins many months and years later with Zarathustra again on his mountain. The chapter is entitled "The Honey Sacrifice" even though Zarathustra confesses that the mention of

sacrifice to his animals “was mere cunning and, verily, a useful folly” (Z, p. 350). In conformity with the eternal recurrence doctrine, we learn almost immediately that - noble lies aside - Zarathustra is no longer interested in the promulgation of ideals that require the sacrifice or negation of some aspect of existence in order to be realized. Who we encounter here is indeed a “new” Zarathustra, a “squanderer” rather than a sacrificer, one who is more concerned with his “work” than his happiness, yet one who is “neither patient nor impatient”(Z, p.351) for the sort of political revolution he was cultivating during the first cycles of his failed *Untergang*. From the solitary heights of his mountain, Zarathustra is free to divulge the central features of his new relationship with mankind. Instead of descending to man and haranguing the masses to transform themselves for the sake of a coming new and higher being, Zarathustra now wants to play fisherman, casting his golden rod down to the human world in order to catch those higher beings who are attracted to the sweet honey bait - the honey that Zarathustra has already declared runs in his veins.

With my best bait I shall today bait the queerest human fish. My happiness itself I cast out far and wide, between sunrise, noon, and sunset, to see if many human fish might not learn to wriggle and wiggle from my happiness, until, biting at my sharp hidden hooks, they must come up to *my* height - the most colorful abysmal groundlings [*Abgrund-Gründlinge*], to the most sarcastic of all who fish for men. For *that* is what I am through and through: reeling, reeling in, raising up, raising, a raiser, a cultivator, and disciplinarian [*ziehend, heranziehen, hinaufziehend, aufziehend, ein Zieher, Züchter und Zuchtmeister*], who once counseled himself, not for nothing: Become who you are! (Z, p. 351)²⁰⁵

A new strategy is thus adopted for teaching others to become who they are, which is not based on the content of any new, determinate doctrine, but on the example of Zarathustra’s own life. Zarathustra now self-consciously understands himself to be the

very bait to which the higher men, those queer fish, will be attracted. Instead of descending to man and concerning himself with the spiritual life of mankind *as a whole*, Zarathustra is now only concerned with individuals to whom he exemplifies the transformative capacity of self-overcoming.

What Nietzsche is appealing to, yet simultaneously parodying, is the erotic ascent articulated in Plato's *Symposium*. Zarathustra's exemplary self-creation that we have been witness to throughout the text is now implicitly invoked as the highest moment of a reversed erotic ascent. Unlike the Platonic ascent which begins from an erotic attachment to particular beautiful objects and moves toward the world of forms, the inverted Zarathustrean ascent begins by drawing people away from an attachment to a metaphysical "true world" and the various ascetic ideals derived therefrom, to the worldly yet still ascetic ideal of the *Übermensch*, and finally to the full and unconditional endorsement of the self in all its connected, contingent moments. Because the eternal recurrence stipulates that one cannot affirm one moment without also affirming all moments, it is impossible to will to become who we are if we still cannot affirm the entirety of our existence.²⁰⁶ The last stage of the ascent thus means, in effect, submitting to the "test" of the eternal recurrence; Zarathustra is thus such an "attractive" figure because he too has had to learn that in order to be who he is, he must say "yes" to life in all its questionableness and suffering, including the great nausea of the small man's recurrence. Whereas Plato sought to channel eros away from the tangled and imperfect world of particularity and becoming, Nietzsche now terminates Zarathustra's *Untergang* and explicitly connects the erotic ascent of the higher men to Zarathustra's own aesthetic

project of self-creation which is determined by a will that is capable of affirming all the imperfections and sensuality of the flux. Zarathustra thus represents a new and inimitable ideal of human being/becoming, and unlike Socrates, he actively acknowledges his solicitation of erotic attachments.

Zarathustra's "retreat" to his mountain may well be a retreat from the political macrosphere and an abandonment of an attempt legislatively to impose a new "table of values" on a disinterested and fragmented European culture, but as he explicitly states from the outset of part four, he has not abandoned either his concern with mankind or politics, despite this radical reassessment of his pedagogy. What has changed is the scope of Zarathustra's immediate goal and its mode of execution. Having reconciled himself to his inability to reach mankind as a whole, Zarathustra now confines himself to exemplifying the teaching of the eternal recurrence. As a squanderer, a term Nietzsche often associates with artistic genius, Zarathustra's over-fullness mimics the over-fullness of the sun, which means that Zarathustra's creative expenditures always reach beyond the self toward others for whom this excess becomes an erotic attachment. The true squanderer, however, is not primarily concerned with how his offerings are taken up by others, since this is not the telos but only one important effect of Zarathustra's self-creative practices. Zarathustra is not an artist in the conventional sense of creating distinct, original objects with aesthetic qualities, but insofar as he has created himself as a unique, original and complete being - qualities vouchsafed by the test of eternal recurrence - it is legitimate to say that his self is first and foremost an artistic production.²⁰⁷

In the first parts of *Zarathustra*, the emphasis is placed on *what* Zarathustra taught; here in part four the focus shifts to *who* Zarathustra is. If Zarathustra is reducible to a series of doctrines or ideas about mankind and its future, then such a teaching is prone to imitation (as Kant claimed in his discussion of how science is learned in the third *Critique*). Learning *is* imitation if what is to be learned is nothing more than a set of determinate claims. This implies, as Kant observes, that “the greatest discoverer differs from the most arduous imitator and apprentice only in degree.”²⁰⁸ The first parts of *Zarathustra* dramatically confirm Kant’s claim, since we are witness to the production of multiple mob-like hybrids and versions of Zarathustra throughout the text. Moreover, as a teacher of the *Übermensch* and by virtue of his own complicity in the ascetic ideal and the politics of *ressentiment*, there is still much of the mob in Zarathustra too. The continuum which Kant describes and Zarathustra despises is precisely the result of Zarathustra’s early pedagogical strategies. This changes in part four wherein Zarathustra is now apparently unconcerned with his public reception in order, paradoxically, to be received in any way at all. He has distanced himself from man precisely in order to have an influence upon him. He offers himself as the model of an exemplary being, one who can affirm all aspects of who he is, in order to seduce others to do the same. Although this too may engender a desire to imitate Zarathustra, a full understanding of the implications of the eternal recurrence, as I have indicated above, would reveal the incompatibility of this teaching with the self-denying will to imitate. Zarathustra thus overcomes the problem of imitation by offering himself as an exemplary figure to be *imitated as a self-creating* being, not as a finished product to be copied by others. This

“solution,” of course, recalls Kant’s attempt to account both for the originality of the fine arts and the relationship between the fine-artist and his apprentice (and thus for art-historical traditions) by specifying that while the *mimesis* of artistic products is contrary to the spirit of genius, the *mimesis* of production is not. It is the split between these two modes of *mimesis*, I believe, which must be taken into account in order to understand Zarathustra’s final transformation in part four. Zarathustra thus still wants to be imitated or followed, but now in a way that is compatible with his denial in part three that there is a single “way” of becoming who one is.

It should be noted that in part four Zarathustra also encounters a rival “fisherman,” the modern scientist who is at least ostensibly free from the dogmatic ideals of metaphysics and is likewise at home in nature. There is a comic suggestion here that the scientist is in fact too close to the Earth and consequently unable to make important distinctions (between, for instance, the high and the low), for Zarathustra inadvertently steps on him while on a solitary walk. The scientist is a crank whose expertise is the brain of the leech - a field of inquiry which constitutes his entire world. Zarathustra finds him lying down with his arm in a swamp “like a fisherman” attempting to attract leeches. Because only leeches and Zarathustra matter to the scientist, Nietzsche is indicating that the higher man of modern Europe is still too imperfect, still too ensnared by the ascetic ideal, even though he has a conflicted sense of what his life might be lacking. That he has been bitten and his arm is bloody, however, indicates that he still finds meaning and satisfaction in small, life-denying pursuits. He acknowledges that science cannot distinguish between the great and the small, which I think should be read as a

misunderstanding of the eternal recurrence doctrine's affirmation of totality - the great and the small - which importantly does not imply the reduction of the one to the other. The scientist's misunderstanding thus manifests itself in the distinction between Zarathustra's attempt to lure the higher man back to his cave and his own efforts to catch leeches with his bare arm. Both Zarathustra and the scientist are thus the "bait," but the difference between what they are attempting to catch points to the depth of the rift between Zarathustra's ideals and those of modern science. Nevertheless, Zarathustra invites the scientist back to his cave, which indicates that the scientist - like all those other curious figures Zarathustra attracts in part four - is at least recognized as distinct from the mob, even if he has not yet begun to dissociate himself from the mob's highest ideals.

The sort of autonomy Zarathustra is attempting to cultivate is an aesthetic autonomy, a radical will to self-creation utterly unencumbered by external constraints, including science, politics, religion, universalizing reason, or submission to the *Übermensch*. The higher men Zarathustra attracts are the dissatisfied modern representatives of these previously authoritative practices, who, like Zarathustra, cannot overcome themselves while living amongst men. Their speeches suggest that they are familiar with Zarathustra's teachings from his previous *Üntergange*, and as could be expected, they have partially and incompletely learned to imitate both the style and content of Zarathustra's earlier speeches. This indicates once again the failure of Zarathustra's first encounters with man, for he only managed to change the higher men into fragments of himself. Their collective cry of distress thus demonstrates that

Zarathustra is still needed, but now Zarathustra refrains from elaborating a set of teachings or furnishing a single “way” of self-overcoming. The connection between this new pedagogical stance and Zarathustra’s overcoming of pity for the higher man should not go unnoticed. Clearly, the implication of this connection is that Zarathustra’s previous descents to mankind were motivated by pity, for he has still not overcome his pity until the last part of the text.²⁰⁹ Instead of attempting to impress his own doctrine of virtue upon a recalcitrant, impoverished audience, Zarathustra’s response now is simply to model the virtues that he would otherwise attempt to teach. In one conversation with the ugliest man, Zarathustra says: “You self-exiled exile, would you not live among men and men’s pity? Well then! Do as I do. Thus you also learn from me; only the doer learns” (Z, p. 379). Zarathustra is not, therefore, cultivating a passive imitation of his own beliefs and values; rather, he is offering his own self-creation as an alternative to the conformity and self-denial which the ugliest man has already chosen to reject.

It is important to emphasize, *pace* Rorty, that Zarathustra is not attempting radically to divorce the private ideal of self-creation from a public concern with justice.²¹⁰ Furthermore, unlike Diogenes, Zarathustra does not endorse *autarkeia* at the expense of *arete*. In fact, it is the unity of these ideals which motivates Zarathustra to formulate an ethic of exemplarity in book four wherein the virtue of self-sufficiency is offered as an example of a more perfect life than other alternative ways of being. If there is a trace of Hegel in Zarathustra’s teachings, it lies in the fact that Zarathustra inhabits a world of “absolute knowing;” he cannot offer any independent reassurances to the higher men that his way of life is a legitimate response to the crisis of nihilism of modern Europe. What

he can at least suggest (but not logically demonstrate) is that the various institutional practices of modern Europe - science, religion, and democratic/nationalistic politics in particular - are all committed in various ways to the ascetic ideal, and thus cannot provide the context in which the individual's life can be unconditionally affirmed. These practices, Zarathustra circuitously argues, have failed life, and we can only expect nihilism to be perpetuated if we keep blindly adhering to the same old suite of rationally/metaphysically/democratically vouchsafed beliefs and values. To be persuasive, however, Zarathustra has learned that he cannot simply offer new ideals that are external to what and who he himself is. That is why the ideal of the *Übermensch* loses its political force in the second half of the book, at the hands of the eternal recurrence doctrine.

The obvious objection to the reading of Zarathustra's pedagogical transformation that I have developed here is that this new teaching of self-overcoming by *exemplifying* self-overcoming fails to change the higher men from weak imitations of Zarathustra to their own unique selves. Zarathustra, in fact, leaves the higher men while they are still asleep: "*these* are not my proper companions. It is not for them that I wait here in my mountains" (Z, p. 437). The implication of this abandonment is that even Zarathustra's un-Socratic pedagogy was unable to produce companions worthy of Zarathustra's company. He is unable, therefore, to teach others to become who they are. Conway responds to this problem by arguing that Zarathustra's failure should not be read as a rejection of Zarathustra's new brand of political education. On the contrary, because Zarathustra is no longer committed to viewing human nature as deficient, he does not,

like the still-too-un-ironic Socrates, choose death in the wake of his pedagogical and political failures. "As a self-conscious fool," Conway states, "he [Zarathustra] readily squanders his teaching on a potentially unreceptive audience."²¹¹ Because he no longer believes in "the way," Zarathustra cannot take himself seriously enough to "go under" once again and initiate another futile attempt to change mankind through his teaching of virtue.

I think, however, that there is a different way to read Zarathustra's abandonment of the higher men in part four that does not acknowledge these events as a "failure" of Zarathustra's teaching, and does not, therefore, leave Zarathustra with the choice of either Socratic demise or ironic detachment. I resist Conway's conclusion, therefore, because it is not clear to me that Zarathustra's teaching has failed. Zarathustra may well have succeeded as a teacher here, but learning is time-consuming, and the expectation of witnessing an immediate transformation of the higher men would in fact violate what Nietzsche writes elsewhere of the temporality of revolutionary events, such as the death of God. What I am suggesting, then, is that Zarathustra can finally leave the higher men because his departure is precisely what needs to occur before his "teaching" can be "complete." Zarathustra's absence indicates that the project of self-overcoming involves no safe resting places along the way; Zarathustra's disciples, consequently, will realize that they too are capable of setting off in their own unique directions, and need no longer look to Zarathustra to exemplify the self-overcoming of which they too will perhaps be capable. The departure thus represents precisely the sort of individuated freedom that Zarathustra has been attempting to inculcate in his various audiences throughout the text.

This act of radical abandonment, perhaps, is the final moment of a pedagogical engagement that has attempted to confront individuals with the most profound implications of their autonomy and self-creative possibilities. As readers, we too may have become (erotically) attached to Zarathustra, and because Zarathustra has come to fully grasp the complexities of the master/disciple relationship, he understands that it is his overwhelming self-presence, above all else, that will preserve this relationship and prevent his disciples from fully becoming who they are. In other words, it is overcoming the problem of imitation, once again, that lies in the background of Zarathustra's departure. Although the text ends before we know what becomes of the higher men, of modern European culture, it is not obvious that they will not at some future time benefit from the example of Zarathustra, and, ultimately, from his absence, even if at this point they are still speaking "with a single mouth" (Z, p. 438).

What might explain Zarathustra's final impatience with the higher men and a resumed search for his "children" at the end of the text is the recurring Nietzschean problem of reconciling revolution, the quest for the radically new, with the inexorable demands of history, our inability to ever fully leave the past behind. The higher men have grown up with a knowledge of Zarathustra's teachings, including the early teaching of the *Übermensch* that is later rejected, which means that they have not received an education that is free from the distortions of Zarathustra's crass, public pedagogy of the initial *Untergang*. Even as higher men, they have been "spoiled" by their early affiliations with Zarathustra's teachings, which may explain the persistence of buffoonish and imitative behavior even after Zarathustra has transformed his relationship to them, and no longer

solicits disciples or adherents to specific philosophical doctrines. The children Zarathustra seeks at the conclusion of the book thus represent the next "generation" of possible "disciples," a future audience who will be supposedly uncontaminated by exposure to false, exoteric teachings, and will accordingly be more able to affirm their own autonomy in the absence of any distorting memorial influences. As in the *Republic*, Zarathustra has doubts about the success of his teachings in the "first generations," but sees in his children - the "second and later generations" - the possibility of overcoming all history prior to his articulation of the eternal recurrence. The text ends, therefore, with an echo of critical historical optimism, the belief that children or youth - always the next generation - can get us beyond our present historical impasse, because they may be unburdened of memories tying them to the past. It is the teaching of autonomy and self-creation through the "doctrine" of eternal recurrence, therefore, that appears to be the remedy for the opposition between history and modernity that Nietzsche describes in his second *Untimely Meditation*. Because self-creation cannot be modeled on affirming or accepting specific beliefs, values or practices, it does not have to depend on the imitation of the past in this slavish sense. A teacher like Zarathustra, however, who ultimately eschews this sort of mimetic relationship and instead offers his own autonomy and self-creation as the appropriate "model" for becoming who one is, can serve, for Nietzsche, as the harbinger of a philosophical modernity in which all reassurances of authority and legitimacy must lie within itself. The death of God, *Zarathustra* tells us, means that tradition is no longer relevant, and this, in turn, opens up the possibility of a new understanding of selfhood. As a result, Nietzsche's preoccupation in the second *Untimely*

Meditation with the opposition between history and modernity has been subordinated, in *Zarathustra*, to the question of what type of self is required to live in a world in which there is nothing authoritative to imitate except for the very freedom that makes becoming who one is possible.

CHAPTER 4: Heidegger

In the movement from Kant to Nietzsche, we have seen how the reflective efforts of reason to determine its own limits have given way to various projects of self-definition and self-creation that are best understood as philosophical assertions of what I am calling “aesthetic autonomy.” I have been arguing, following Robert Pippin, that it was Kant’s inability to defend adequately the spontaneous self-legislation of reason in the wake of his destruction of traditional and early-modern formulations of self-grounding which best accounts for both the foundering, and the “aesthetic turn,” of philosophical modernism. In Pippin’s words, the “link between spontaneity and law was too fragile to preserve, and, in effect, spontaneity ‘won out.’”²¹² Although Pippin does not himself pursue the details of this aesthetic turn, he does offer a somewhat pessimistic assessment of any attempt to actualize the modernist ideals of autonomy in specifically artistic projects. He claims, in fact, that once modern art is deracinated from any context of dependence - be it a moral or philosophical frame of reference - then we are faced with the following unhappy dilemma: art must be construed as “either a purely formal game, self-enclosed, reductionist, sterile...or as an eventually exhausted, co-opted, everywhere displayed and commercialized ‘culture of rupture.’”²¹³ In the last chapter, it is possible to see how these

alternatives are likewise determinate for the possibility of “self-creation.” With Zarathustra, for instance, his own attempts to turn his life into a unique work of art, a radically inimitable sovereign being, meant continually feeling the tension between these two extreme possibilities. After fearing that his own private values and beliefs were being “co-opted” by the herd, Zarathustra retreated to his mountain in order to live his life on his own terms, but he could never find a way of relating to others that afforded him a satisfying release from an otherwise “self-enclosed” existence.

So far, then, I have attempted to focus on both the modernist “hopes” that Nietzsche especially has placed on the aesthetic, and the problems which have continued to attend this philosophical project, particularly the ambiguous operations of *mimesis* which in its various, often unwitting, deployments has both enabled and destabilized the defense of a purely aesthetic autonomy. Turning to the exceedingly complex and controversial work of Martin Heidegger - arguably the greatest critic and beneficiary of this paradoxical, modernist tradition - I will attempt to show how his meditations on human existence, history and poetry offer a way out of Pippin’s either/or by uniting again the work of art with the disclosure of truth.²¹⁴ Against the modernist determination of the work of art from the “subjective” perspective of aesthetics, Heidegger attempts to re-think art as an origin (*Ursprung*), an unfolding power that can quite literally *save us* from the dangers of the all-encompassing, “technological” mode of revealing constitutive of modern metaphysics. Although the details of this position will be clarified later, it is already evident that Heidegger’s relationship with “modernity,” particularly in its philosophical determination that is under consideration here, is fraught with tension and

ambiguity. On the one hand, Heidegger's pivotal claim that metaphysics itself is determined by the history (more precisely, the "forgetting") of being means that the trajectory of post-Kantian aesthetics (up to and including Nietzsche) represents the culmination of the very "history" that Heidegger is at pains to overcome with an ostensibly "new" mode of thinking.²¹⁵ For Heidegger, the essence of modern technology cannot be disentangled from the movements of modern aesthetics; consequently, the impetus to find in art a saving power with the resources to resist technological revealing means that art must somehow be "thought" independently of the categories of post-Kantian aesthetics. On the other hand, just as modernity is a metaphysical problem for Heidegger, his own philosophical work is continuous with the spirit of philosophical modernism in a number of crucial respects, from his early concerns with authenticity and historicity, to his guiding claim that the West has exhausted its metaphysical possibilities, to the philosophical significance he invests in art (rather than science), to his abiding interest in poetry and the nature of language. As Robert Bernasconi has recently argued²¹⁶ (and I will be touching on this theme later in the chapter), Heidegger's task of overcoming aesthetics is put in jeopardy by his inability to question philosophically the concept of art without implicitly relying on the inherited categories of the aesthetic tradition. In many other respects, I will attempt to show, Heidegger's philosophical "use" of art both reproduces, and even radicalizes, some of Nietzsche's aesthetic motifs, despite the fact that Heidegger ultimately consigns Nietzsche's thought to the history of metaphysics, to the consummation of Western nihilism.²¹⁷

In this chapter, specifically, after generally outlining the continuity of Heidegger's philosophical undertaking with the problematic of modernity, I will attempt to track his gradual attempts to dissociate his thinking from the categories of modern aesthetics, although I will also show how this task is never fully accomplished. This will include an outline of Heidegger's attempts to oppose the Greek *technè* to the essence of modern technology, which is increasingly accomplished through his meditations on art and poetry, from "The Origin of the Work of Art" onward, and his voluminous lectures on Nietzsche. I will then undertake a reading of *Being and Time* wherein Heidegger articulates the relationship between Dasein and history in terms of the process of "repetition" [*Wiederholung*], which I argue reinscribes the mimetic relationship developed (ontically) in *Zarathustra* into the project of fundamental ontology. For Heidegger, to repeat or claim a tradition anew involves the choice of "heroes," but this choice does not involve the inauthentic emulation of one's favourite predecessors, but engenders instead a response to, and a struggle with, the hero who opens up the unique possibilities of Dasein. I will show that Heidegger's reinscription of *mimesis* in the existential operations of repetition is itself repeated at the communal level, the level of the *Volk*, in Heidegger's controversial and politically charged texts of the early and middle 1930s. Here, Heidegger's call for a specifically German renewal of the Greek beginning - a beginning in which a philosophical questioning and a unique comportment to beings as a whole in terms of *technè* was first opened up - became disastrously contaminated by his balefully naive belief that the gutter nationalism of National Socialism was the modern reactivation of that ancient metaphysical stance. Finally,

following the recent work of John Sallis²¹⁸ and others, I will attempt to show how even Heidegger's turn away from Nietzsche and the history of aesthetics (through his concern for the ontology of "art" itself, rather than the creating or judging subject) is itself determined by a further implicit appropriation of *mimesis* which decisively calls into question the very possibility of "overcoming" the tradition.

The Question of Heidegger's Modernism

The claim that Heidegger's thought belongs within the trajectory of philosophical modernism is not universally, or even widely accepted. This question has become especially crucial in the last decade or so, when the depths of Heidegger's involvements in National Socialism finally became the focus of sustained scholarly (and not-so-scholarly) attention. At stake, of course, is whether Heidegger's idiosyncratic or "spiritualized" Nazism, his attempt to give National Socialism philosophical content,²¹⁹ was either permitted or authorized by his philosophical thought,²²⁰ and if so, whether "modernity" itself is likewise implicated in this horrendous episode of world history. Much has been written about this, and I cannot engage in an extended discussion of Heidegger's "politics" or even his philosophical displacement of the political here, but I do want to turn briefly to one recent commentator who alleges that Heidegger's political commitments were informed by "an anti-modernist world-view to an extreme."²²¹ If this is true, then my own thesis that Heidegger's thought, particularly his remarkable essays on art and poetry, belongs within the cycle of (German) philosophers who have contributed to our reflection on the nature of modernity from within the horizons of philosophical modernity itself, cannot be right.

Central to the “anti-modernist” reading of Heidegger, as expressed by Richard Wolin and others, is the claim that Heidegger’s disastrous political engagement was the result of his abiding critique of modern philosophy, politics and art. Moreover, Wolin claims that this pre-modern orientation should be construed as a continuation of the German tradition of *Kulturkritik*²²² originating in the nineteenth century and most articulately expressed in the fervent revolutionary pitch of Nietzsche’s work:

There, a far-reaching critique of modern philosophy, politics, and culture - which are viewed essentially as manifestations of decline - is combined with a nostalgic idealization of the pre-philosophical (i.e., pre-Socratic) Greek polis and the quasi-apocalyptic expectation that a nihilistic Western modernity will soon be supplanted by a new heroic ethos, in which the much vaunted “self-overcoming of nihilism” reaches a point of crystallization.²²³

What Nietzsche and Heidegger share in common, accordingly, is the “glorification of the pre-Platonic polis,” and the conviction that it is art rather than science that indicates the essential path along which an authentic ‘overcoming’ (“*Überwindung*”) of modern nihilism must proceed.²²⁴ These commonalities, Wolin argues, supercede Heidegger’s extreme reservations about Nietzsche’s work that he developed in his “Nietzsche” lectures from 1936 to the mid-1940s. It is this ideological context, therefore, in which we must situate Heidegger’s meditations on poetry that are so crucial to his later thinking. Wolin then goes on to compare Nietzsche’s initial enthusiasm for Greek tragedy and its modern musical analogue, Wagnerian opera, with Heidegger’s enduring enthusiasm for Hölderlin, who is seen as the German equivalent of Sophocles. Heidegger’s nostalgia for the Greeks and his reverence for Hölderlin in particular thus coalesce and culminate in the claim, to borrow Wolin’s citation, that “the essential disposition [*Grundstimmung*], that is, the truth of the Dasein of a nation [*Volk*], is originally founded by the poet.”²²⁵ It is no

surprise, then, that the values which we typically associate with modern life, such as cosmopolitanism, liberalism, and the value of science are so readily dismissed by Heidegger even long after the war and the crucial “turn” in his later thought. Indeed, as Heidegger flatly states in a 1939 Nietzsche lecture, “The essence of modernity is fulfilled in the age of consummate meaninglessness.”²²⁶

The case made by Wolin and others that Heidegger’s Nazi involvement was the result of his criticisms of modernity rather than its endorsement cannot be easily dismissed, but just as these commentators accuse Heidegger of relying on a monolithic determination of modernity as a foil for his ostensibly “anti-modern” values, I believe that Heidegger’s critics reductively construe what counts as modern (not to mention Heidegger’s thought) in their own attempts to disentangle Heidegger’s Nazism from the spirit of modernity to which they are philosophically and politically committed. I say this in light of the guiding theme of philosophical modernism that I have been developing here; namely, that what is one of the decisive features of philosophical modernism is its recurring sense of dissatisfaction with modernity itself, particularly with the grounds to which it appeals in order to furnish a justification of its values and beliefs (for Heidegger, evaluative thought itself), and its own uniqueness as an historical epoch. Consequently, when Heidegger specifically targets certain features of modern life and indicates that these features are merely the institutional manifestations of a deeper, metaphysically governed epoch of nihilism, this should not be taken as “proof” that his entire philosophical project can be essentially characterized by its anti-modernist orientation. If Heidegger’s critics refuse to thematize his deeper claim about the essence of modernity

and instead focus exclusively on his passing assessments of those values, beliefs and institutional practices that fit into our usual understanding of what it means to be modern, then these critics are, technically speaking, merely begging the question. To prevent such a “rush to judgment,” it is instructive to think of Heidegger’s philosophical project in very general terms, in order to ascertain its proximity to the central concerns of philosophical modernism that I have been expounding here. I think Heidegger’s thought, from start to finish, must be characterized by 1) a general recognition (shared by Hegel and Nietzsche especially) that the Western philosophical tradition from the ancient Greeks to the present is now at its “end,” 2), a profound aching for a fundamental renewal and transformation - often described as an “overcoming” or “turning” - of this Western tradition,²²⁷ and 3) the recognition that such a renewal cannot be initiated by appealing to a different set of transcendently vouchsafed values and beliefs, marked by the formulation of yet another word for being (as *a* being or as *beingness* [*Seiendheit*]) that would only reproduce the very epoch of metaphysics²²⁸ which Heidegger so radically calls into question. I will take up these three points together, before turning to Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, and then to his lectures and essays from the 1930s, arguably the locus of Heidegger’s “high” modernism, which ought to be read, I think, against the background of these more general claims.

Before assessing Heidegger’s claim that we have reached the end of the Western philosophical tradition, I will briefly explain why the suppression of ontological difference by metaphysics is so crucial to this determination. Central to Heidegger’s thinking is the difference he identifies between being [*Sein*] and beings [*Seiende*]. This

should not be construed, as Heidegger makes clear right from the beginning of *Being and Time*,²²⁹ as the difference between a particular entity and a universal category or general type of being under which the entity can be subsumed. Such a formulation of ontological difference would only erase the question of *being*, since the difference preserved would only recognize the difference between two more or less general sorts of *beings*. What Heidegger is at pains to uncover, conversely, is the being of the entity which makes possible the articulation of an entity *as* an entity. Being itself, however, is not an entity. This revealing of the entity *as* an entity occurs prior to the usual sorts of truth-claims we can think of making about the entity in question. This distinction thus allows Heidegger to further distinguish between truth as unconcealment or *aletheia*, and truth as correspondence, which rests on the ontological foundation of the former.²³⁰ Because this primordial determination of truth allows the being of beings to be revealed, the historical suppression or concealment of truth as *aletheia* by truth as correspondence is coextensive with, and in fact constitutive of, the history of metaphysics itself.²³¹ Metaphysics, for Heidegger, is defined by the hegemony of this derivative determination of truth, and thus it has been unable to think ontological difference *as* a genuine difference.²³² In Plato, for example, the opposition between forms and temporal, material entities is articulated merely ontically, since the determination of being as *eidos* means that being is still thought as a merely exemplary or general type of being, an idea. Thus, when Heidegger asks, "What is being?," we should not hear it as a straightforward reiteration of an ancient question already posed by Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas and others, for these thinkers are part

of the metaphysical tradition that has failed to pose Heidegger's *Seinsfrage* in an ordinary way.

Although strictly a development of his earlier fundamental ontology, one of Heidegger's central insights of his "middle" period is that the revealing of entities as entities must be understood in terms of the historical play of the concealing and unconcealing of being. The historical character of this play ensures that what it means for an entity to be will change from one "epoch" to the next. During the 1930s, Heidegger turns to a sustained examination of the texts in the history of metaphysics for evidence of these changes in the "truth of being." The history of metaphysics is a history of the hiddenness or concealedness of being, which Heidegger, at the end of this history, attempts to think as a unity. What this means is that the great metaphysical thinkers all employed specific words to name being, but these unique being-words, as I indicated above, are but repeated instances of the disavowal of thinking being as being, of the ontico-ontological difference. Despite the differences, then, between Plato's determination of being as idea and Nietzsche's as will to power, for example,²³³ the logic that is common to each of these metaphysical determinations of being as beingness is this disavowal, and is described at different times by Heidegger as the "forgottenness of being" [*Seinsvergessenheit*] or the "abandonment of being" [*Seinsverlassenheit*]. The different "epochs" of being, accordingly, should not be understood as a certain time span or historical period during which a group of philosophical texts were written; rather, by "epoch" Heidegger means the actual holding-back of being, its concealment, beneath the ontic language of metaphysics.²³⁴ Heidegger's task is to think the "unsaid" of these

philosophical texts, to recover the “truth” of being that is both concealed and revealed in this language. It is important to keep in mind the dual nature of Heidegger’s task. Since Heidegger cannot re-pose the question of being somehow independently of the history of metaphysics which forgets to question and thus conceals being, part of the very task of repeating this question means that a *Destruktion* of the history of ontology must be undertaken through which the “positive possibilities of that tradition”²³⁵ are revealed for the first time. Heidegger’s project is not aimed at the past, but rather at today: it is not so much backward-looking, governed by the principles of philological research as it is concerned with renegotiating our philosophical relationship with the history of metaphysics, which continues implicitly to guide our contemporary treatment of philosophical issues, even if we are unaware of it. Heidegger’s task is thus to read the texts of the history of metaphysics not only in order to see how the question of being has been systematically disavowed, but also to reveal the trace of this question which, in fact, is necessarily presupposed even in the very moments of its suppression.

Like Hegel, Heidegger attempts to read the history of philosophy *philosophically*. This means that his study of the history of metaphysics is an attempt to account for this history and to move beyond it. Heidegger shares this end of philosophy thesis with Marx, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, Freud perhaps, and especially Hegel, although his reasons for this claim are unique. Unlike Hegel, Heidegger does not believe that the history of philosophy exemplifies a logical movement through which the internally generated skeptical doubts about the European community’s highest beliefs and values are progressively resolved. For Heidegger, such an attempt to explain history is still

wedded to a metaphysical standpoint which seeks to furnish a ground for beings.²³⁶ Moreover, because Hegel's phenomenology of spirit attempts to reveal the continuity of the history of philosophy from the ancient Greeks to Kant's critical undertaking, it is able to evaluate that historical progress from the privileged perspective of absolute knowing, which furnishes an account of the successive account-giving activities of Western thought. Heidegger, conversely, believes that although he is able to determine the unity of metaphysics at the *end* of metaphysics, he does not claim that the disengaged purview of modern metaphysics, the "gathering" and culmination of our Western tradition, provides us with an absolute knowing-like perspective from which the earlier epochs of metaphysics can be judged.²³⁷ All Heidegger is able to show is that the different metaphysical grounds which arise and wither away from one epoch to the next all repeat the same philosophical gesture, the same forgetting of being. Since the principles which govern each epoch lack any inter- or meta-epochal authority, for Heidegger to furnish yet another ground on the basis of which it would be possible to "privilege" modernity or "evaluate" the previous metaphysical epochs would only repeat the gesture of metaphysics, and thus would return Heidegger to metaphysics in the very moment of his attempt to account for and transgress its limits.²³⁸ This is why Heidegger will claim that Plato's metaphysics is no more, yet no less, nihilistic than Nietzsche's.

The unity of metaphysics that Heidegger discerns can be concretely exemplified by attending to the texts of the history of philosophy. By demonstrating this unity, Heidegger is able to justify his claim that the technological nihilism constitutive of modernity was prefigured by the inaugural determination of the beingness of being by

Plato's *idea*.²³⁹ At first blush, this claim appears to be remarkably similar to Nietzsche's claim in *The Will to Power* that nihilism is an historical process during which the highest values ("the categories 'aim,' 'unity,' 'being'"²⁴⁰) have "devalued" themselves, such that the world now looks valueless. The highest values of which Nietzsche speaks have hitherto been anchored in a "true" world, and thus the value of *this world*, which receives its aim, unity and being from this opposing transcendent domain, is similarly devalued. For Nietzsche, it is the still historically unfolding "death of God," meaning the death of all metaphysical horizons and "true worlds," which most succinctly names and accounts for this process. Nihilism is thus completed when the entire suite of metaphysically (that is, otherworldly) vouchsafed values and beliefs have lost their authority, and the opportunity to "revalue" or "transvaluate" our values again becomes an historical possibility. What is at stake, however, is not so much the metaphysical task of replacing one set of values with another (a tactic which Nietzsche refers to as "incomplete nihilism"); instead, it is the nature of evaluation or valuative thought itself. Metaphysics determines values as values-in-themselves; Nietzsche's revolutionary move is to determine a measure for values without resorting to yet another two-world doctrine according to which values are secured through a Platonic recourse to transcendence. This measure, for Nietzsche, is the will to power. According to Heidegger's reading, this means that beings derive their value from their ability to preserve and enhance power. Nietzsche is thus able to grasp the essence of metaphysics as the positing of values, as an effect of the will to power, yet his own position ostensibly overcomes metaphysics because it transforms the essence of values in terms of the will to power.²⁴¹

Nietzsche believes that his reversal of Platonism is sufficient to free his own thinking from the limits of metaphysics. He believes that once transcendence has been abolished, then the only legitimate criterion left to evaluate or validate our beliefs and values is their ability ceaselessly and limitlessly to expand power. Since there is no goal above or beyond the preservation and enhancement of power, then power must continually seek to overcome or overpower itself.²⁴² Overpowering, in fact, is the essence of what Nietzsche means by power. With this new criterion in place, it appears that Nietzsche is able to both exceed or twist free from metaphysics and account for the “progress of an idea” - Plato’s *eidos* - through the successive epochs of metaphysical thinking. Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche, however, puts Nietzsche’s supposed passage from metaphysics into serious question. First of all, despite his renunciation of transcendence, Nietzsche’s “metaphysics” reproduces in its logic a transcendental gesture continuous with the sorts of identifications of “conditions of possibility” typically associated with modern philosophers from Kant onwards. In his explanation of Nietzsche’s claim that “‘Value’ is essentially the viewpoint for the increase or decrease of these centers of domination,” Heidegger writes:

It is made explicit in this definition that values as *conditions* of preservation and enhancement are always related to a “becoming” in the sense of waxing and waning power. In no respect are values “for themselves,” having only a subsequent and occasional relation to the will to power. They are what they are - that is, they are conditions - only as *conditioning*, and are therefore posited by the will to power itself as its own condition of possibility. Thus they provide a standard of measure for the appraisal of degrees of power of a construct of domination and for judging its increase and decrease...According to their essence, values are conditions, and therefore never something absolute. (*NIV*, p. 66)

In addition to serving as conditions, values are paradoxically also *conditioned* by the will to power: “values are essentially conditioned conditions” (*NIV*, p. 67). This means that values are posited by the will to power, yet also make this positing possible. Values are essentially conditioned conditions - categories, in fact²⁴³ - since they must be understood both as quanta of power *and* as the conditions of possibility of their own overcoming. Accordingly, despite this seemingly unique introduction of values into the history of philosophy, Heidegger believes that the logic of Nietzsche’s position is still metaphysical, still wedded to the project of transcendental philosophy even as it seeks to transform the nature and criterion of the idealist quest for “conditions of possibility.”

Second, despite Nietzsche’s claim that he can understand the history of metaphysics in terms of its essence as “value-positing,” Heidegger quite remarkably turns the tables on Nietzsche’s revolution and shows that, in fact, it is Nietzsche’s recourse to valuative thought which itself must be understood in terms of the subjectivism of modern philosophy.²⁴⁴ Heidegger traces the origins of subjectivism back through German Idealism to its inaugural determination of modern philosophy in Descartes’ *ego cogito*. Although Nietzsche believes that his own question of values is prior to Descartes’ question of certainty, Heidegger attempts to show that Nietzsche’s appropriation of the human subject as the inconcussible measure of beings as a whole merely “completes” the anthropologism of Cartesian philosophy in a radical way. For Descartes, the thinking subject is the standard which determines what is to count as a being and is the arbiter of objective truth; for Nietzsche, the willing or value-positing subject extends its dominion over beings by determining the ends, purposes, uses, roles, positions, deployments, and

ranks of such beings in terms of its preservation and enhancement of power. What is crucial for Heidegger's reading, then, is not so much Nietzsche's rejection of Descartes' criteria of clarity and distinctness for determining the objectivity of our mental representations, but rather his (Heraclitus-inflected) retention and radicalization of Descartes' subjectivism according to which only the transient "truths" of each subjective perspective are valued in a strictly sensible world wherein, to paraphrase Zarathustra, one experiences only oneself. Far from overturning Descartes' foundationalist stance, Nietzsche merely deepens the mastery of the human over the non-human world, and subjects the totality of beings to the unconstrained will in a way that prefigures Heidegger's very understanding of the technological nihilism characteristic of the modern age.

Against Nietzsche's still "metaphysical" determination of metaphysics which fails to reveal the historical essence of nihilism, Heidegger attempts to trace this essence from the inauguration of metaphysics in Plato to its culmination in the still metaphysical thought of Nietzsche and the metaphysics of modern technology. What unifies the history of metaphysics, as I have already explained, is the forgetting or abandonment of being, the repetitive transformation of being into Being – understood as the most universal or exemplary type of being. According to Heidegger, we can discern the exclusion of being as the *presencing* [*Anwesen*] through which entities are revealed as entities in Plato's determination of being as *idea*, understood as *visuality* or *presence* [*Anwesenheit*]. It is, in fact, this decisive, yet ultimately arbitrary fixation on "presence" which from the dawn of metaphysical thinking has determined what it means for a being to be. Additionally,

once we grasp the essence of *idea* as *agathon*, which Heidegger interprets as the “suitable,”²⁴⁵ then we can see how, for Plato, being “comes to be what makes a being fit to be a being” (*NIV*, p. 169), that is, it becomes an a priori transcendental condition of possibility (even if, before Kant, it was never named as such). After Plato, the most general and highest being receives an “onto-theological” determination. In Christian thought, the highest Platonic *idea*, the *agathon*, is construed as the *summum bonum*, and is renamed as God: the ground that determines what it means to be, and the condition or cause of beings. The beingness of being, therefore, does not simply reflect the createdness of creation, but also the role causality now plays in the determination or explanation of all that is, including the self-causing God. Once the world is understood as an intricate causal arrangement, it is possible for man to assume God’s role within the world, to be the ground that brings beings before himself, and determines the objectivity of the objects that he now confronts in accord with the demands of human *logos*. Heidegger thus claims that Descartes paradoxically both appropriates and transforms the scholastic tradition: “Thus all being is seen from the point of view of *creator* and *creatum*, and the new delineation of man through the *cogito sum* is, as it were, simply sketched into the old framework” (*NIV*, p. 115). Yet what is unique and revolutionary in Descartes’ transformation of *idea* into *perceptio*, however, is the clarification of the hitherto concealed determination of being as the condition of possibility of beings. Heidegger writes:

Representedness as beingness makes what is represented possible as the being. Representedness (Being) becomes the condition of the possibility of what is represented and presented-to and thus comes to stand; that is, the condition of the possibility of the object...Only through the metaphysics of subjectivity is the at

first largely veiled and reserved essential trait of *idea* - the trait of being something that makes possible and conditions - transposed into the free region and then put into uninhibited play. What is innermost in the history of modern metaphysics consists in the process through which Being preserves the uncontested essential trait of being the condition of the possibility of beings; that is, in a modern sense, the possibility of what is represented; that is, of what stands over against us; that is, objects. (*NIV*, p. 174)

Man, the subject qua thing that thinks, is thus installed as the centering ground of all that is. This is not to say that, like God, man is the cause of the totality of beings, as if this task of creation or production had fallen from God to man; instead, it means that for anything to be, meaning that which can be represented, human reason is required as the determining basis of this representation. From this movement, we can see how the rise of subjectivism coincides with, and is paradoxically the ground of, the objectivism that makes modern science possible. Heidegger describes this relationship between subjectivism and objectivism a “necessary interplay,” a “reciprocal conditioning”²⁴⁶ that is both prepared in advance by the history of metaphysics and points toward the completion of metaphysics in Nietzsche’s implicit determination of being as will to power.

Nietzsche’s basic metaphysical position, as I have outlined above, moves within the horizon of subjectivism announced and secured by Descartes:

For Descartes, man is the measure of all beings in the sense of the presumption of the de-limitation of representing to self-securing certitude. For Nietzsche, not only is what is represented as such a product of man, but every shaping and minting of any kind is the product and property of man as absolute lord over every sort of perspective in which the world is fashioned and empowered as absolute will to power. (*NIV*, p. 137)

The expansion of the subject’s “power” signifies the radicalization of early humanist positions, yet once all that is falls entirely under the dominion of subjective projects and

purposes, then being itself passes into oblivion in this age of modern “thoughtlessness.” In this epoch, even philosophy itself can do no more than attack or defend different sets of beliefs, ideologies and world-views, and accordingly must continually demonstrate its “relevance” by accommodating itself to the demands of business, science and “higher education.” From the perspective of these institutional practices, Heidegger’s question of being and the thinking of ontological difference have no “value” - a claim that would only, for Heidegger, confirm his identification of being with “machination” [*Machenschaft*]²⁴⁷ and its groundless projection of “values” in the modern age.

Beginning in the late 1930s, particularly in the *Nietzsche* lectures, Heidegger deepens his meditation on the modern age, and begins to suggest that the dominion of machination points to the overcoming of subjectivism in an era wherein all that *is* is determined by its disposal and exploitation by technology. This means that the hegemonic stance of the subject with respect to “objects” is itself called into question by the inhuman processes of modern technology, which absorb and level both subjects and objects such that all beings are rendered commensurable, uniform and manipulable.²⁴⁸ The extreme radicalization of the humanist tradition, Heidegger shows, ultimately leads to its overcoming. Any act of will, or an attempt to reverse this process by fiat, only confirms and deepens the subjectivism at the very heart of this historical event.

In his later work, Heidegger attempts to determine the essence of modern technology by continuing his questioning of modern metaphysics. The central locus of this inquiry is his essay, “The Question Concerning Technology,” which importantly attempts to separate the “essence” [*Wesen*]²⁴⁹ of technology from the anthropological and

instrumentalist ways in which various “technologies” are deployed in the world. Typically, technology is understood both as a means to an end and as a human activity. Against this current (and strictly speaking, “correct”) conception, however, Heidegger famously claims that “the essence of technology is by no means anything technological.”²⁵⁰ This announcement is followed by an attempt to situate this non-technological essence within the horizon of *aletheia*, meaning that this essence is most properly grasped as the mode of “revealing” or truth-disclosure exclusive to the modern epoch. In this age, all beings are “challenged-forth” and revealed or disclosed as *Bestand* (“stock” or “standing reserve”). The leveling of entities even includes modern man, whose Dasein has been appropriated by the *Wesen* of *Technik* such that representing [*Vorstellung*], producing [*Herstellung*], presenting [*Darstellung*], exhibiting [*Austellung*] etc., have become the definitive, historically destined ways in which human “subjects” are able to relate to their “world.” Heidegger calls the totalizing system within which beings and human beings are ordered, ensnared, and ultimately revealed the “Enframing” [*das Gestell*]. Technology thus names the epoch during which beings as a whole are indifferently yet systematically mobilized and homogenized for the sake of nothing more than the technological appropriation of beings itself. The unquestioned imperative to produce and consume more, however, blinds us to the appropriative event, the presencing of beings in the modern epoch, and we fail to recognize any other “reality” than what falls within the monolithic grid of technological organization. Without any goals or purposes beyond the willful domination of the world, the will is left with nothing ultimately to will but itself; the will to power constitutive of Nietzsche’s metaphysics

thus passes over into the “will to will” of modern technology.²⁵¹ Consequently, the “danger” of Enframing lies not only in its refusal to allow for other possible modes of revealing (in the sense of *poiesis*, for example), but also and most importantly in its concealing of revealing itself. “Enframing blocks the shining-forth and holding-sway of truth,” which means that it is not so much technology as it is the *essence* of technology that poses the greatest danger to modern man.²⁵² Not only have we “forgotten” the question of being, but we have forgotten this very forgetting. This is precisely what Heidegger means by nihilism in its most radical, modern determination.

To bring this preliminary discussion to a close, I should mention that because Heidegger’s own analysis of nihilism in terms of the will to will prevents him from straightforwardly offering yet another plan to “overcome” it, he is compelled to offer a different narrative of transformation that reflects the definitively modernist, revolutionary desire for the “new” in response to specific dissatisfactions with the modern world without simultaneously employing the traditional means of “achieving” (if this is even close to the right word) the desired result. In a late essay, Heidegger famously offers his alternative to willful overcoming:

But will not saying both yes and no this way to technical devices make our relation to technology ambivalent and insecure? On the contrary! Our relation to technology will become wonderfully simple and relaxed. We let technical devices enter our daily life, and at the same time leave them outside, that is, let them alone, as things which are nothing absolute but remain dependent upon something higher. I would call this comportment toward technology which expresses “yes” and at the same time “no,” by an old word, *releasement toward things* [*Die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen*].²⁵³

What Heidegger must avoid, therefore, is either proposing yet another master-word for the Being of beings, or attempting, like Nietzsche, to simply oppose the dominant values

of nihilistic European culture with his own set of values determined by the will to power. Moreover, the “releasement” from valuative thought itself also implies that Heidegger has implicitly ruled out the sort of political “solution” to modern nihilism that he discerned in National Socialism during the 1930s. As a counter-movement to the prevailing ideologies of capitalism and communism, Heidegger believed that the “inner truth and greatness” of National Socialism lay in the “encounter between global technology and modern man.”²⁵⁴ He believed, at this time, that a political opposition to the metaphysics of *das Gestell* was still possible, yet he soon realized that because the politics he supported actually exemplified this essence, he rejected – for “metaphysical” reasons²⁵⁵ – National Socialism and all other willful (that is, political) confrontations with modern technology. What characterizes Heidegger’s later attempts to free his thinking from all voluntaristic political solutions to the problem of nihilism is his recourse to poetic thinking,²⁵⁶ which enables him to “step back” from calculative, representational thought and experience the essence of presencing in an originary way. For Heidegger, thinking the coming to presence of beings in the age of technology is tantamount to thinking the withdrawal of being and the abandonment of man to his worldless oblivion. But it is precisely this thinking of the essence of nihilism, the extreme oblivion of being, that marks the “turning” or “releasement” from metaphysics that Heidegger has in mind.

Is there any rescue? Rescue comes when and only when danger *is*. Danger *is* when being itself advances to its farthest extreme, and when the oblivion that issues from being itself undergoes reversal.

But what if being in its essence *needs to use* [*braucht*] the essence of man? If the essence of man consists in thinking the truth of being?

Then thinking must poetize on the riddle of being. It brings the dawn of thought into the neighborhood of what is for thinking.²⁵⁷

Although this poetic thinking has no empirical or obvious effects on the modern world, it nevertheless detaches us from the challenging-forth of technology and opens us once again to the possibilities of an entirely new constellation of presencing, a new epoch no longer governed exclusively by a forgetting of the claim that being has upon our very essence. In other words, despite the absence of immediate effects, it is only this turning in being and our turning toward being that marks the possibility of a radical transformation of the modern world. Along with the thinker, it is the poet who makes this transformation possible.

Heidegger's own thought contributes to the turning that he seeks, to our openness to the questioning of being, by interrogating the concealed essence of *technè* in the work of art. As Heidegger claims, *technè* is the guiding knowledge governing the human activity through which beings come into unconcealment. As such, it is the originary ground of both technology and art, even if it is never reducible to these more narrow forms of production. For the Greeks, *technè* was a mode of *poiesis* or bringing-forth, revealing. In this epoch of technology, however, because *poiesis* as a mode of revealing is obscured by virtue of the totalizing challenging-forth of *das Gestell*, *technè* itself becomes deracinated from its essence and thus comes to presence not as the knowledge which supports bringing-forth or creation, but rather as a mere production.²⁵⁸ If there is a "privileged" perspective afforded by the epoch of technology, it lies precisely in how a contemplation of its essence helps us to re-think the poetic essence of *technè* in order to re-open the possibility of another mode of revealing that is at once both the same and different from the restricted, modern determination of *technè*. Despite the common

ancestry of art and modern technology, Heidegger wants to resist the one-dimensional revealing of *technè* in technology in order to preserve the opening of being, of an originary truth, in the work of art.²⁵⁹ It is thus only at the end of the history of being, at the closure of the circle, that is possible to re-think the beginning of that history, and to take up the origin again in a radical way. This claim is the basis for Heidegger's familiar employment of Hölderlin's line from "Patmos" in which the convergence of danger and salvation is so astonishingly revealed.²⁶⁰

This brief gloss is by no means an adequate treatment of Heidegger's eschatological history of being and the relationship between early Greek thinking and our present historical possibilities, but in the context of the question of Heidegger's modernism, I think it more than adequately situates him in the post-Kantian tradition of German thought that both enacts an "aesthetic" critique of modern Enlightenment culture, yet appropriates that definitively modernist call for a renewal or overcoming of a tradition that has lost its authority and legitimacy in the modern age. Against those commentators who place Heidegger's thought outside the field of modernity, I would simply counter that Heidegger's ostensibly "quietistic" thinking and his reactionary politics should be read in the context of this thoroughly revolutionary philosophical agenda, which at its deepest level is a call for the liberation of the human essence in the face of those pre-sent forces which have delivered us over to the continuing reign of nihilism. Indeed, despite all of Heidegger's complexity and ambiguity, it would be difficult to find a philosophical thinking in which a certain spirit of modernity is more fully revealed.

In what follows, then, I want to show how Heidegger's thought both relies upon and calls into question the ossified categories of aesthetics in his very attempt to enact this releasement from the metaphysical tradition. More specifically, I will be examining the determination of historicity in Heidegger's thought through a reading of both his early and "middle period" works, including those which do not specifically address the philosophical issues of modern aesthetics and art. In other words, I want to show how Heidegger's non-revolutionary revolution both seeks its philosophical authority from an implicit mobilisation of *mimesis* and ultimately founders upon this aesthetic (which means metaphysical) determination of a new beginning. I will begin this discussion by examining how this logic determines the existential structure of Dasein in *Being and Time*.

***Mimesis* as Repetition: Heidegger's "Aesthetic" Model of Authenticity**

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger's hermeneutical recovery of the being of Dasein is simultaneously a destruction [*Destruktion*] of the received metaphysical determinations of human being (as substance or subject). At first and for the most part, Dasein implicitly understands itself in terms of these sedimented and unproblematized determinations, which attempt to exhibit the being of Dasein in terms of the present or the "present-at-hand." In this everyday sense, Dasein is thus an entity that "is present" in time like other entities – this table for example – which at one time did not exist and will again cease to exist at some time in the future. What makes this sort of understanding possible, Heidegger claims, is a commitment to a particular understanding of time that is constitutive of metaphysics itself. Heidegger refers to this (vulgar) metaphysical

temporalization of time as “now” time, because it is understood as a linear succession of “nows” in which the past and the future are structured by the “now” of the present. If Dasein understands itself as a being that is strictly present [*Vorhanden*], it is because its “futurity” and “having been” have been concealed by this vulgar conception of time. Even the metaphysical conception of transcendence, generally formulated in terms of an eternal presence, is implicitly structured by “now” time. This means that although metaphysics posits Being *outside* of time, so long as Being is understood as eternal presence, it is likewise determined by the generalization of the present. The Being that is opposed to time is thus covertly structured by it: eternity as eternal presence is merely the stationary, infinite extension of the now. Heidegger’s book is called *Being and Time* because it seeks to recover this concealed meaning of being in terms of time,²⁶¹ but before this relation can be articulated, the meaning of the being of Dasein must first be developed in terms of its own temporal structure.

Although inadequate, this brief outline of Heidegger’s completed and projected work serves to situate my own hermeneutical retrieval of Heidegger’s covering-over and reinscription of *mimesis* in *Being and Time* in the existential movement of repetition. I should defend this projected reading from the outset by conceding that Heidegger’s fundamental ontology has no official connection to aesthetics, nor does it uncritically fold the categories of metaphysics back into its phenomenological descriptions of Dasein. Still, as was the case with *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Heidegger is attempting to lay out and formalize the two distinct ways in which Dasein can take up the question of its own being: Dasein can either exist as the “they” [*das Man*] exists, meaning ultimately

submitting to false or external authorities and public ideals in an unreflective, “inauthentic” manner, or it can “resolve” to take up the possibilities latent in its historical situation “authentically.” The first, inauthentic mode of being is what grounds the self-understanding, the values and beliefs, of Nietzsche’s “herd,” who, in *Zarathustra*, refused to confront the implications of the death of God, and sought instead to imitate Zarathustra’s life down to his very gestures and mannerisms. What Zarathustra tried to initiate, in book four, was the possibility of a different sort of mimetic relationship based on the free imitation of Zarathustra’s self-choosing, rather than on the concrete choices he actually made. In *Being and Time*, I believe that what Heidegger means by authentic repetition is precisely this imitation of a free self-choosing, which, as I will show, accounts for the fact Dasein is both factually thrown into a world of historically circumscribed possibilities and yet can resolutely opt to press ahead into those possibilities which are uniquely its own. As such, this authentic repetition is explicitly distinguished from the (inauthentic) re-actualization of what others had previously actualized, that is, from the slavish imitation of previous acts, which posed, as I have already mentioned, the gravest dangers to Zarathustra’s teachings. Although *mimesis* is never thematized nor even mentioned in *Being and Time*, I hope to show that the very distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic cannot be articulated without recourse to the two different modes of *mimesis* that have played such a decisive role in the texts of Kant and Nietzsche, especially in those moments when the ideal of autonomy is (at least implicitly) under consideration.

Unlike Nietzsche, Heidegger attempts to account for the difference between authentic and inauthentic modes of being *ontologically*. This means that for Heidegger there is never a question of a political, economical, or (worst of all) biological determination of authentic and inauthentic Dasein. If these determinations are employed to understand the being of Dasein, then the task of fundamental ontology becomes all the more urgent. The aim of Heidegger's hermeneutics is to recover the being of Dasein, even though, by virtue of the structure of Dasein's being, "care," we tend to conceal this being and concern ourselves instead with what the sorts of entities that are closest to us in the world.

Dasein's *kind of Being* thus *demands* that any ontological Interpretation which sets itself the goal of exhibiting the phenomena in their primordially, *should capture the Being of this entity, in spite of this entity's own tendency to cover things up*. Existential analysis, therefore, constantly has the character of *doing violence* [*Gewaltsamkeit*], whether to the claims of the everyday interpretation, or to its complacency and its tranquilized obviousness. (*BT*, p. 359).

This means that although being is always an issue for Dasein, and that being is always *mine*, Dasein is prone to "falling" (in an ontological sense) and losing itself in the public understanding of the "they." Because Dasein understands itself in terms of its world, of what is construed as "actual," it flees in the face of its ownmost possibilities and merely steps into roles that have been antecedently and anonymously prescribed by others. Although Heidegger's interpretation seeks to recover the primordial structure of Dasein's being, it should not be seen as a moralizing enjoinder to abandon "inauthenticity," for this is precisely the being that we ourselves *are* in our everyday existence (as is thematized in Division I of the text). As such, it is not a state that we can decide once and for all to

leave behind; after all, as Heidegger writes, “we shrink back from the ‘great mass’ as *they* shrink back” (*BT*, p. 164).

In Division II of *Being and Time*, Heidegger moves beyond his analysis of Dasein in its everydayness toward a more primordial articulation of Dasein’s being, which culminates in section 65 with the claim that the meaning of care is temporality. Prior to this tentative conclusion, Heidegger had already attempted to reveal the possibility of Dasein’s being-a-whole in his analysis of Dasein’s being-towards-the-end in the phenomenon of death. By this point, Heidegger has already discussed how Dasein understandingly projects itself in the future, runs ahead of itself into future possibilities, but he has not yet attempted to grasp the being of Dasein as a totality. Dasein, of course, cannot project its being infinitely into the future; we all know that we are going to die, although this “fact” is typically passed over as an abstract event that will happen sometime in the future, and for that reason is not a concern of Dasein’s everyday being. The significance Heidegger sees in the phenomenon of death, however, lies in its “non-relational” character, which means that, for Dasein, “death *lays claim* to it as an *individual*” (*BT*, p. 308). No one can die for Dasein. This is the ownmost possibility of each and every one of us, and when Dasein comports itself toward death as a possibility, and exists for this possibility, then the safety of the “theyself” is shattered in *anticipation* [*Vorlaufen*] of this uttermost end.

In addition to Dasein’s authentic anticipation of its death, Heidegger provides further “attestation” of Dasein’s authentic potentiality-of-being in his phenomenological description of the “call of conscience,” which is ultimately revealed as the call of care

itself. This means that Dasein is both the “caller” and the being to whom the call is made. What I want to focus on here, however, is the way in which this “call” once again manages to disclose the being of the “there” to Dasein, and to summon Dasein, in anxiety, toward its own, unique matrix of possibilities into which it was been thrown. As a thrown basis, Dasein’s possibilities are always particular and concrete, and Dasein’s freedom lies “in the choice of one possibility – that is, in tolerating one’s not having chosen the others and one’s not being able to choose them” (*BT*, p. 331). The radically individualizing thrust of the call of conscience again brings Dasein back from its lostness in the they, much like Dasein’s authentic anticipation of death. Dasein’s openness to the call, its “wanting to have a conscience,” is called “resoluteness” [*Entschlossenheit*]. Although resoluteness itself has no specific “content,” it transforms Dasein’s disclosedness [*Erschlossenheit*] such that Dasein’s understanding of its self, world and others is modified in accordance with the unifying thread of ecstatic temporality. On this basis, Dasein’s concrete, factual decision [*Entschluss*] becomes possible.

Taken together as “anticipatory resoluteness,” these two phenomena capture the “authentic potentiality-for-being-a-whole which belongs to Dasein” (*BT*, p. 357):

Anticipatory resoluteness is not a way of escape, fabricated for the ‘overcoming’ of death; it is rather that understanding which follows the call of conscience and which frees for death the possibility of acquiring *power* over Dasein’s *existence* and of basically dispersing all fugitive Self-concealments. (*BT*, p. 357).

Dasein’s futural projection of death thus enables Dasein to come back to itself resolutely in a primordial way, and existentially vouchsafes, moreover, the *mineness* of Dasein’s resolution. Its pressing forward is thus simultaneously the disclosure of its having-been. Put succinctly, in “stretching *forth*, it comes *back*.”²⁶² Far from overcoming its finitude, it

is rather precisely the recognition *of* finitude that opens up the otherwise concealed possibilities of Dasein's factual existence.

What is particularly interesting about the description of conscience, however, is Heidegger's juxtaposition of the authentic call with other moral interpretations of conscience. Specifically, Heidegger opposes the individualizing call of care with the universalizing force of reason articulated in Kant's moral philosophy:

This interpretation of the conscience passes itself off as recognizing the call in the sense of a voice which is 'universally' binding, and which speaks in a way that is 'not just subjective.' Furthermore, the 'universal' conscience becomes exalted to a 'world-conscience,' which still has the phenomenal character of an 'it' and 'nobody,' yet which speaks – there in the individual 'subject' – as this indefinite something. (*BT*, p. 323).

Heidegger consequently refers to this 'public conscience'²⁶³ as the voice of the "they," since it does not come from the being which I myself am, and thus it is unable to disclose *my* potentiality-for-being. The voice of the public conscience is neither here nor there, yet it is inauthentically taken up as a present-at-hand maxim which will enable Dasein to do the right thing, or conform to the anonymous demands and standards of public opinion. For Heidegger, then, the very criterion of universalizability which, for Kant, determines whether or not a particular maxim ought to be adopted, is precisely the feature of the moral law which, through its complete abstraction, removes Dasein from the particularities of its situation. All external "calls" or abstract prescriptions for how Dasein ought to act or understand its ownmost possibilities merely entrench the dominion of the "they." Hence even Zarathustra's preliminary call to make the *Übermensch* the meaning of the Earth would fall into this inauthentic mode of disclosure too, since it makes present

only the general situation, that of late-modern Europe, and requires only the taking over of another's possibilities and subsequently calling them "my own."

This sort of relationship also resonates with Heidegger's characterization of one of the extreme, positive modes of caring-for²⁶⁴ described in an earlier section (§26) of *Being and Time*. In this instance, Dasein "leaps in" and takes away the Other's "care" such that the Other is displaced from its own projects, and is left in a position of dependence, even if only tacitly so.²⁶⁵ Although Heidegger does not name it as such, his concern in the second division of the text is with formulating an adequate phenomenological description of autonomy that does not depend on a Cartesian or neo-Cartesian determination of consciousness as a free, subjective, self-determining sphere closed in upon itself and substantially distinct from the "external" world. As he shows over and over again, "ecstatic" Dasein is always already "outside" of itself. What is particularly striking about this preliminary description of being-with, therefore, is the way in which Heidegger attempts to show how the possibility of autonomy (as I am calling it), understood as a *freedom for the self*, an appropriation of one's ownmost possibilities, can be affected by Dasein's relationships with others. In the first instance, when Dasein either implicitly or explicitly submits to the plans and projects of others, this freedom for the self is lost. In the second instance, it is made possible, perhaps even for the first time. I shall now turn to Heidegger's repetition of the existential analytic in the chapter on historicity in which the possibility of authentic being-with is articulated with respect to the temporal structure of Dasein.

In the phenomenon of being-toward-death, Dasein is brought face to face with its own end, which, Heidegger shows, simultaneously brings Dasein back to its factual existence. Still outstanding, however, is an appropriate phenomenological characterization of Dasein's *beginning*. This, accordingly, is what Heidegger takes up in the "Temporality and Historicity" [*Geschichtlichkeit*] chapter, wherein the temporal structure of Dasein's "stretching along" between the ends of birth and death opens onto an ontological understanding of historicity.

The specific movement in which Dasein is *stretched along and stretches itself along*, we call its "*historicizing*" [*Geschehen*]. The question of Dasein's 'connectedness' is the ontological problem of Dasein's historicizing. To lay bare the *structure of historicizing*, and the existential-temporal conditions of its possibility, signifies that one has achieved an *ontological* understanding of *historicity* [*Geschichtlichkeit*]. (*BT*, p. 427 – translations slightly modified)

The thematization of historicity at this point is significant because it opens up a consideration of "whence, *in general*,"²⁶⁶ Dasein can draw those possibilities upon which it factually projects itself" (*BT*, p. 434). When Dasein comes back to itself authentically in resoluteness, what is disclosed is not a set of free-floating abstract possibilities upon which Dasein, as an isolated being, can resolve to appropriate for itself alone. As Heidegger shows in section 74, what is disclosed through anticipatory resoluteness is "not to be gathered from death," but rather from Dasein's thrownness or having-been. It is certainly true that Dasein can only authentically come back to itself, as thrown, through this anticipation of death, through its originary future, but it is Dasein's factual "there," not death itself, to which Dasein has been "delivered over" and from which Dasein's existentiell understanding of its possibilities has been drawn. What Heidegger is attempting here, as the above quotation indicates, is a laying bare of the existential-

temporal conditions of the possibility of Dasein's "historicizing." This means, accordingly, that Heidegger must provide a fully temporalized repetition of his previous analysis of thrownness (from section 29) in order to understand how Dasein can "be" historical in this way at all.

As "thrown," Heidegger continues, Dasein has been "submitted to a 'world' [*angewiesen auf eine 'Welt'*] and exists factually with Others" (*BT*, p. 435). The possibilities latent in Dasein's situation, therefore, have been inherited or handed down from a tradition. What is paradoxical about this stretching-forth and coming-back movement, however, is that Dasein must take up as its own the very possibilities to which it has been delivered over. Dasein's primordial "historicizing" thus "lies in authentic resoluteness... in which Dasein *hands* itself *down* to itself, free for death, in a possibility which it has inherited and yet has chosen" (*BT*, p. 435). Heidegger uses the word "fate" [*Schicksal*] to denote this congealed structure of inheritance and choice that is open to each Dasein as its unique, individual possibility, that is, when Dasein resists falling into the pre-given possibilities of its "times" characterized by "comfortableness, shirking, and taking things lightly" (*BT*, p. 435). Moreover, since Dasein is always already *Mitsein*, its own historical narrative or "fate" will also be a "co-historicizing" [*Mitgeschehen*] with others – Dasein's community, for instance – such that the "destiny" [*Geschick*] of a people can likewise be authentically disclosed.

Our fates have already been guided in advance, in our being with one another in the same world and in our resoluteness for definite possibilities. Only in communicating and in struggling does the power of destiny become free [*In der Mitteilung und im Kampf wird die Macht des Geschickes erst frei*]. Dasein's fateful destiny [*schicksalhafte Geschick*] in and with its 'generation' goes to make up the full authentic historicizing of Dasein. (*BT*, p. 436)

This is not the place to address explicitly the latent political sense of Heidegger's officially still ontological determination of Dasein's authentic historicizing.²⁶⁷ Behind this haunting rhetoric is Heidegger's important claim that it is Dasein's historicity from which its ownmost fate and its communal destiny are, in a sense, derived. The temporal movements of Dasein's being – its futural anticipation of death, its thrownness in its factual "there," its present "moment of vision" [*Augenblick*] in which Dasein takes over its thrown possibilities – are now fully revealed and, in a sense, "concretized," in the phenomenon of authentic historicity. As Heidegger formally concludes, "*authentic temporality which is at the same time finite, makes possible something like fate – that is to say, authentic historicity*" (BT, p. 437), but the full meaning of Dasein's temporal structures is only made manifest in light of Dasein's inherent historical dimension.

In the remaining paragraphs of this important section, Heidegger proceeds to characterize authentic historicity as "repetition" [*Wiederholung*]. It is this discussion, moreover, in which I want to locate what is Heidegger's implicit "response" to the problem of how *mimesis* and autonomy can be articulated. This was the problem, of course, which prevented Zarathustra from enjoying what Heidegger might call an "authentic destiny" with others. The question, really, is this: how is it possible to take up freely one's ownmost possibilities when these possibilities are themselves handed down to Dasein by history? Or, put more simply: how is autonomy possible if Dasein is seemingly a plaything of historical circumstances?

To be begin with, it is important to note that by "repetition," Heidegger also means "retrieval." Dasein can only press ahead into futural possibilities by resolutely

returning to or “retrieving” the possibilities of existence that have been handed down to it.

The resoluteness which comes back to itself and hands itself down, then becomes the *repetition* of a possibility of existence that has come down to us. *Repeating is handing down explicitly* – that is to say, going back into the possibilities of the Dasein that has-been-there. (BT, p. 437)

Furthermore, because Heidegger emphasizes that repetition is always the repetition of *possibilities* that have been handed down to Dasein by itself, he is not claiming that Dasein can passively appropriate what has been and simply turn what was actual in the past into what is actual in the present. What Heidegger is ruling out here is in fact the slavish imitation of what has been, the equation of repetition with reproduction. This is how inauthentic Dasein understands itself when it determines its possibilities as merely available or present-at-hand paths which it may arbitrarily decide to follow. Heidegger goes out of his way to state that this is precisely *not* what he has in mind by the authentic repetition of possibilities:

But when one has, by repetition, handed down to oneself a possibility that has been, the Dasein that has-been-there is not disclosed in order to be actualized over again. The repeating of that which is possible does not bring again [*Wiederbringen*] something that is ‘past,’ nor does it bind the ‘present’ back to that which has already been ‘outstripped.’ (BT, p. 437)

The problem Heidegger is attempting to surmount is how repetition can simultaneously be productive of what is “new” without also disavowing the pastness of the past, of Dasein’s factual existence.

The answer to this problem lies, I think, in Heidegger’s implicit appeal under the aegis of repetition to the creative *mimesis*, the *mimesis* of freedom, that both Kant and Nietzsche mobilize in their own efforts to negotiate the relationship between history and

modernity, tradition and the possibility of autonomous self-creation. By showing that repetition can only be originary and inaugurate what is genuinely new precisely through a productive repetition of its thrown, historical possibilities, Heidegger is able to “overcome” the sorts of theoretical difficulties that Nietzsche recognized not only in his second *Meditation*, but also in *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as I have shown. Nietzsche, apparently, has not grasped in a phenomenologically accurate way, Heidegger would want to argue, the essential historicity of Dasein’s being. While Heidegger does not claim that history can be overcome through a radically self-grounding modernity, he can account for the existence of an originary future arising creatively from the past without having to appeal to a next generation or “children” in order to realize this possibility. In a richly suggestive passage, Heidegger indicates that Dasein, as anticipatorily resolute, can even freely relate to its predecessors, its “heroes,” by “following in the footsteps” in an authentic way. Again, “Dasein may choose its hero” not in order to take over that hero’s life and attempt somehow to “re-live” it in the present; rather, Dasein may “loyally follow” its predecessors only by a “struggle” [*kämpfende*] with them. As Heidegger states, “the repetition makes a *reciprocative rejoinder* [*Die Wiederholung erwidert vielmehr*] to the possibility of that existence which has-been-there” (*BT*, p. 438). Dasein’s “response” to its hero is thus the taking up of its own freely chosen possibilities which the hero has previously delivered over to it. The existence which has-been-there before thus opens up possibilities for Dasein, and it is precisely this opening-up-of-possibilities that makes Dasein’s history manifest, and opens up the possibility of a future that need not, Heidegger claims, simply resemble the past.

Dasein's very freedom, consequently, its *freedom for itself*, is dependent upon its unique appropriation of another's possibilities, which Dasein resolutely comes back to through its anticipation of death.

As I have already conceded, Heidegger's description of the possible relationships between Dasein and its predecessors or heroes makes no *official* mention or use of "*mimesis*."²⁶⁸ Still, I think that Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's inauthentic and authentic historicizing would not be possible without at least covert recourse to the conceptual functions of *mimesis*, as was the case with both Kant and Nietzsche. Inauthentic historicizing can be described as Dasein's attempt to make actual again that which was actual before. It is simply reproduction, the sheer imitation of what has been. Authentic historicizing or repetition, conversely, can be described as the retrieval of possibilities, the *imitation* of one Dasein's disclosure of, and projection upon, possibilities by another. What is imitated in this case is thus not something actual; imitation is not about taking up the *same* possibilities as a previous Dasein, but rather involves the disclosure and projection itself which, as constitutive of Dasein's freedom, serves as a model for other, subsequent Dasein. In a nutshell, then, what authentic Dasein imitates is the *freedom* of another Dasein, *not* that upon which Dasein, as free, has authentically resolved.²⁶⁹ Instead of opposing itself to, and attempting to break from, its factual existence, its finite, thrown possibilities, Dasein actually stakes its present freedom for itself in the authentic appropriation, the creative *mimesis* of another Dasein's possibilities.²⁷⁰ Heidegger's repeated claim that possibility stands higher than actuality can thus be seen, in this context, as a preference for an authentic *mimesis* over an inauthentic one.

Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's historicity thus implies that any attempt to found modernity upon Dasein's originary self-grounding and the overcoming of tradition is bound to fail. What Heidegger shows, in fact, resembles what Paul de Man said of modernity in his essay, "Literary History and Literary Modernity," as I discussed in the second chapter. Commenting on Nietzsche's awareness of the apparent opposition between the generative power of modernity and the recuperative power of history, de Man suggests that it is precisely this recognition that attests to the modernism of Nietzsche's thought. However, de Man also claims that it is precisely this sense of belatedness that paradoxically attests to the "modernity" of all literature. Heidegger is similarly aware of the tensions inherent in the relationship between Dasein's thrownness and futurity, but he goes beyond Nietzsche by showing how this ostensible "opposition" is in fact a relation made possible by Dasein's originary temporal constitution. By showing how the "new" is in fact contingent upon Dasein's "having been" (even though, of course, existentiality itself draws its meaning from the *future*), Heidegger in effect reveals, like de Man, that what is thought to be characteristic of modernity alone actually belongs to the very structure of Dasein.²⁷¹ "Modern" Dasein's "longing for total revolution,"²⁷² for a complete overcoming of the past, is thus merely the ontic "symptom" of Dasein's inauthentic temporalizing – a linear temporalizing that obscures the relationships between Dasein's temporal ecstases and fails to reveal the circular structure of Dasein's authentic temporal movements. Dasein can only suffer this "longing" if it fails to grasp how its past, present and future are properly articulated, and how its future possibilities are inexorably linked to its authentic appropriation of its factual existence,

which means, as I have attempted to show, its creative *mimesis* of the freedom already disclosed by Dasein's heroic predecessors.

The Politics of *Mimesis*: Heidegger's Radical Modernism

In this section, I will attempt to indicate how Heidegger's determination of authentic historicity in *Being and Time* was mobilized and radicalized in his philosophical writings during his official political engagement of the early 1930s. I want to show that in his notorious and often-reviled 1933 address, "The Self-Assertion of the German University,"²⁷³ Heidegger attempts to articulate philosophically what I am calling a "politics of *mimesis*" according to which a reactivation of the essence of philosophy was explicitly sought in the willful effort to transform National Socialism from within. In retrospect, the political reasons for the failure of Heidegger's brief campaign seem obvious, but I am more concerned with interrogating the philosophical thinking that Heidegger believed would make this internal revolution even possible, and thus with the reasons for the *Rektoratsrede*'s "failure" as a philosophical text.

My thesis is, essentially, that the "Self-Assertion" speech represents an attempt to superimpose the ontological determination of historicity from *Being and Time* upon the ontic historical situation of 1930s Germany. Quite remarkably (although by no means unique in the history of German thought since Winckelmann), the speech seeks to model the national renewal of Germany at this time upon the eruption into history of ancient Greece. Heidegger is not seeking to re-found the ancient world in a modern setting, but he is trying to open up an heroic new future for Germany based on a philosophical reflection upon the essence of science in its very beginning, although this beginning,

Heidegger problematically claims, actually stands “before us.” He is attempting, then, to convince his political/academic audience that the greatness of Germany’s future lies in the proper philosophical determination of its historicity. This attempt, however, is problematic for (at least) two reasons. First, by mingling the Nazi rhetoric of his day with the vocabulary of his own fundamental ontology, Heidegger lends a false philosophical legitimacy to the revolutionary aspirations of National Socialism. Derrida has already observed this much in Heidegger’s use of “spirit” in this text, but our questioning should extend to the entirety of Heidegger’s scholarly apparatus. Second, in order to accommodate his philosophy to the political context of his day, Heidegger’s fundamental ontology, his theory of historicity, is deformed, twisted by its very “application.” Heidegger’s theory of historicity simply cannot account for the willful self-grounding of a revolutionary politics without slipping back into the proximity of a basically Nietzschean position – a metaphysical determination of “historicity” that has already been called into question, as I have indicated, in *Being and Time*. Wrongheaded and naïve as this approach was, Heidegger should nevertheless at least be commended for attempting philosophically (more specifically, Platonically) to transform National Socialism, even if the result of this effort was politically negligible and philosophically disastrous.

That Heidegger seeks the transformation of National Socialism through a transformation of the German university in general and the University of Freiburg in particular should not go unnoticed. Heidegger begins his remarks by indicating that the rector’s (= Heidegger’s) “following” [*Gefolgschaft*], the students and teachers, must be

properly rooted in the “essence of the German university” in order to be fully equipped and awakened to their “spiritual mission” (*SA*, p. 29). The task at hand, then, is to determine this essence truly before it can be fully willed. In light of Heidegger’s determination of historicity in section 74 of *Being and Time*, one might expect at this point a lengthy historical/philosophical retrieval of the essence of German university through, perhaps, readings of Kant, Fichte, Humboldt and Schleiermacher at least, but such a project is entertained only to be immediately dismissed.

Neither knowledge of the conditions that prevail today at the university nor familiarity with its earlier history guarantees sufficient knowledge of the essence of the university unless we first delimit, clearly and uncompromisingly, this essence for the future; in such self-limitation, *will* it; and, in this willing, *assert* ourselves. (*SA*, p. 29-30)

This historicity of the university seems to lay no claim upon its futural possibilities. It is only the future essence that is of interest to Heidegger, who, as the passage shows, now links the self-assertion of the university with the self-assertion of those who belong to it. Near the conclusion of the speech, Heidegger even asserts that the self-assertion in question here has already been decided by “the young and youngest elements of the *Volk*, which are already reaching beyond us” (*SA*, p. 38). Ignoring the political meaning of this (at best) Nietzschean gesture of appealing to youth in order to effect a decisive rupture with tradition,²⁷⁴ even a *German* tradition, Heidegger is more importantly, philosophically speaking, marginalizing (at best) the constitutive role of thrownness in his determination of authentic historicizing. The resolute willing to which he appeals here finds no factual grounding in the historical unfolding of the essence of German higher (“high school”) education. Although the structure of authentic historicizing in *Being and*

Time likewise privileges the future, and suggests that even Dasein's disposition [*Befindlichkeit*] is drawn from its essentially futural orientation, in the passage above it is clear that neither the history of the German university nor even its present state plays a role in the proper determination of its essence. It is the future *alone* that is at stake, and it is thus the future from which the essence of the university shall be derived.

Where does Heidegger turn, then, to determine what this essence is, once he has denied any historical consideration of the German university itself? The answer given is quite remarkable. Heidegger asserts that it is science [*Wissenschaft*] from and through which the "leaders and guardians" of the German Volk will be able to guide the fate of the German nation.

The will to the essence [*Wesenwille*] of the German university is the will to science as the will to the historical mission of the German Volk as a Volk that knows itself in its state. Science and German fate must come to power at *the same time* in the will to essence. (*SA*, p. 30)

Heidegger will subsequently define science as "the questioning standing firm in the midst of the totality of being as it continually conceals itself" (*SA*, p. 32). This is to say that science as it is actually practiced in university research facilities and laboratories has nothing to do with what Heidegger means here. Heidegger is not speaking of the "sciences" as specific disciplines – biology, chemistry, and so on – or of the "science" which "promotes the mere advancement of knowledge" (*SA*, p. 32), but rather of science in its essence, which, in turn, is identified as the essence of the German university. We shortly learn, moreover, that the essence of science is not itself even anything German, although the fate of the German people, the German nation, depends upon it.

But where, then, does this essence of science, this “questioning standing firm...” come from if it is nothing German, and under what conditions can the existence of science be secured for the future? Heidegger answers by explaining that the essence of science was originally determined by the ancient Greeks, for whom science emerged as a fundamental mode of questioning beyond beings, which thereby enabled Western man to rise up “for the first time against *the totality of what is*” (SA, p. 31). This makes clear that, for Heidegger, the science of which he speaks here is actually philosophy, or more specifically, metaphysics. The questioning that is proper to science thus enables man to transcend the world of beings, of nature, and secure for himself a metaphysical vocation that has become determinative of all science, philosophy, and history since. It is thus what first awakens man to the question of being, prior to the historical forgetting of this question through the epochs of the “Christian-theological interpretation of the world that followed” (SA, p. 32). If science is to be preserved as this originary questioning, then “we” must “submit to the power of the *beginning* of our spiritual-historical existence” (SA, p. 31). In other words, if Germany is to will properly its essence and take hold of its fate, it must learn to re-activate the power of this originary Greek beginning. A repetition of this Greek beginning, of this originary questioning, will have a decisive impact upon the very structure of the university. Once it is shown that all science as it is understood today stands in a forgotten yet essential proximity to the inauguration of Greek metaphysics, the false separation of the disciplines will “shatter.” What is sought, then, is the unifying metaphysical ground, the essence of science, upon which all the distinct, ontic scientific disciplines were historically founded.

This re-grounding of science, however, will not merely have a localized effect upon the academic divisions within the university. Heidegger must also show how the questioning of the essence and the re-grounding of the hitherto isolated disciplines from within will “create for our Volk a world of the innermost and most extreme danger, i.e., a truly *spiritual* world” (SA, p. 33). At stake in this philosophical task is the very fate of the German people, since the re-grounding will re-articulate man’s relationship to those “world-shaping forces” (SA, p. 33) – from poetry to economy, including technology – that will now be understood in light of, or in the lighting of, the truth of being.²⁷⁵ The results of this task are mixed. On the one hand, the linking of the fate of the German people with the transformation of the faculties and departments in terms of their unifying ground appears to confer a remarkably important role to the university at a time in German life during which the role of the university, and philosophy itself, is on the wane. The properly *spiritual* world that is brought into existence by the re-grounding of science is not to be construed as a cultural superstructure or a set of values, but instead as “the power to arouse most inwardly and to shake most extensively the Volk’s existence” (SA, p. 34). Only a spiritual world, Heidegger claims, can vouchsafe the greatness and future history of the German people. That Heidegger speaks of a *metaphysical*, rather than, say, a military or political-economic or “biological” renewal of the German people clearly distinguishes his own intellectual *Führerschaft* from Hitler’s. On the other hand, the linkage between metaphysical questioning and national/historical fates is so out of place, so absurd in terms of the extreme absence of a “spirit” of questioning in such a totalitarian regime, that Heidegger actually leaves the university with no role to play, no

real opportunity to effect the events either inside or outside its doors. We can applaud, as Graeme Nicholson²⁷⁶ does, Heidegger's activism during this time, but on the very real, concrete questions of academic freedom, Heidegger is sarcastic and dismissive.²⁷⁷ His revolution is a metaphysical revolution, yet what is called for is a strictly political decision, and there do not appear to be any resources in Heidegger's thought at this time for directly negotiating the distance between the determinative metaphysical issues, and the actual political and institutional problems confronting Germany at this time.

Heidegger's philosophical problem here is similar to Zarathustra's upon his initial descent to mankind. He is attempting to transform the very spiritual existence of the German people by means of a philosophical questioning that is, after all, *his* questioning. At no point does Heidegger claim that the university community [*Körperschaft*] is unilaterally constituted by his own leadership [*Führerschaft*], but since the teachers and students only "awaken and gain strength" (*SA*, p. 29) through their proper rootedness in the essence of the German university, *Wissenschaft* in its originary sense – as only Heidegger's philosophical questioning has revealed, there is a circuitous claim underlying the entire speech that the German people's destiny can only be secured through *Heidegger's* philosophical project. It is Heidegger, after all, who is the single living philosopher at this time asking the very questions that he is here claiming will "guarantee our Volk greatness" (*SA*, p. 34). The analogous case is Zarathustra's public assertion that the coming *Übermensch* shall be the meaning of the Earth, the ostensibly non-metaphysical "redeemer" of mankind. This declaration, like Heidegger's, falls on deaf ears. Zarathustra realizes that his own private ideal cannot serve as the meaning for

all mankind, since this would only undermine the possibility of his disciples' private tasks of self-creation. He thus abandons this pedagogical strategy of superimposing his own unique teaching upon the European community, and sets out to find a way of teaching, paradoxically, the activity of self-creation itself. In the *Rektoratsrede*, Heidegger has not made such a move. His "teaching" similarly fails because it is an essentially "non-public" teaching that is spoken in public for the sake of that public. It is an attempt to get the community to *repeat* the specific type of philosophical questioning that he has already undertaken, the questioning of being, but it is *not* a call or an endorsement of questioning per se – the sort of generalized questioning within the university which could only be safeguarded by the very privileges of academic freedom that Heidegger goes out of his way here to dismiss.

Heidegger's "teaching" thus implicitly re-invokes the problematic of *mimesis*, for it is once again that unnamed, higher mode of *mimesis* which covertly organizes the entire "argument" of the speech. He has already all but "ruled out" the passive, slavish *mimesis* governed by inauthenticity, which translates politically into the mere obedience of followers to their leaders:

All leadership must allow following to have its own strength. In each instance, however, to follow carries resistance within it. This essential opposition between leading and following must neither be covered over nor, indeed, obliterated altogether. (*SA*, p. 38)

The "resistance" of which Heidegger speaks should be placed in the context of the "reciprocative rejoinder" that Dasein makes to its heroes when it authentically repeats the possibilities of those who have already been there. At no point in the *Rektoratsrede* does Heidegger endorse the simple "reactualization" of another's possibilities, regardless of

who the leader or the followers are. As a political utterance, these are bold words for the time. But what Heidegger calls for elsewhere in the address is the collective willing of the essence of science; that is, for *his* philosophical questioning to be taken up by others. Heidegger speaks of the “we” here, the “we” that is to join him in the willing of this essence, but as de Beistegui has persuasively shown, the “we” in question has been decoupled from the ontological understanding of the *Volk* as described in *Being and Time*, and now “speaks in the name of a specific *Volk* and a definite *Gemeinschaft*: the *Volksgemeinschaft*.”²⁷⁸ What this means, I believe, is that Heidegger is attempting to speak to and thereby bring into being an essentially *political* “we” *philosophically*, and in the name of philosophy. He is trying to put his philosophy to use politically, but this necessary translation of one vocabulary into another, this movement between two distinct rhetorical and conceptual registers, dooms the operations of *mimesis* from the start. There is simply no indication or sense of how Heidegger’s very specific philosophical questioning could be authentically repeated at the political level, the level of the “we,” which speaks to Heidegger’s manifest inability to have any influence upon the political developments of National Socialism.²⁷⁹ His citation of Plato at the conclusion of the address perhaps testifies, in advance, to a philosophical recognition that his intervention (like Plato’s) must fail.

There is, however, another way in which the argument of the address is affected by the logic of *mimesis*. In this case, the mimetic relationship is not disrupted by the aforementioned difficulty of translation between philosophical and political vocabularies, for it involves instead Heidegger’s questioning of the essence of science as a response to

the projected essence of science in its very beginning. As I have mentioned, Heidegger claims that science can only exist as a possibility of the German university, of German fate, if contemporary questioning willingly “submits” to the power of the beginning. In this “Greek” beginning, science was understood as “the innermost determining center of their entire existence as a Volk and a state” (SA, p. 32). Leaving aside the implicit claim here that science (and again Heidegger means “metaphysics”) is “political” from the start, I should stress that Heidegger’s philosophical goal is somehow to return science to its essence, to the power of its beginning, by repeating that beginning in a more originary way than was hitherto possible during the intervening “Christian-theological” epoch. The Greek word, according to Heidegger, which originally designated the essence of science, was *technè*. It is thus *technè* that must now be saved from its historical descent into mere “technicity” by again taking up the radical possibilities of the Greek origin, which, as Heidegger claims, is “its *greatest* moment.”²⁸⁰ In fact, it is because *technè* in its originary sense has yet to be exhausted, emptied and “used up” that science in its modern, segregated forms is even possible. The concealed reserve of the Greek beginning thus simultaneously vouchsafes the possibility of repeating the originary Greek beginning *and* prevents the possibility of simply re-actualizing the philosophical questioning of Greek philosophy. What Heidegger seeks to repeat, as Lacoue-Labarthe has suggested, is that which has not yet occurred, a Greece that has never existed.²⁸¹ By the time philosophy became a fully self-conscious, reflective practice with Plato and Aristotle, *technè* had already lost its originary meaning as the knowledge which guides all bringing-forth, and became exclusively related to art and handicraft. By appealing to its most primordial, and

for the Greeks still “unthought,” determination, Heidegger believes that he is philosophically authorized to retrieve these unthought possibilities of *technè*, and press them into the service of the still yet to be constituted German Volk. It is thus the “surplus” meaning of *technè*, the power of its beginning, that allows for the sort of mimetic relationship between modern Germany and ancient Greece that Heidegger seeks.

But here Heidegger makes a move that does not seem to be authorized by his descriptions of Dasein’s authentic temporalizing in *Being and Time*. He argues that because modern science exists, the greatness of the *beginning* of science must still exist, but it does not, therefore, exist only in the past such that we can only get in touch with the origin historiologically. Heidegger claims, rather, that the beginning “stands *before* us;” it has “invaded our future; it stands there as the distant decree that orders us to recapture its greatness” (*SA*, p. 32). The transcendence (and thus the concealed “reserve”) of metaphysics in its origins certainly means that it is irreducible to its future, ontic determinations as (modern) science, but to claim further that the possibilities still latent in the origin have “invaded” the future and stand “before” us is tantamount to stripping Dasein of its factual existence, its possibility of coming back to itself from its heritage that is resolutely taken over. Having-been is now *reducible* to Dasein’s future, whereas in *Being and Time* the existential priority of the future only meant that Dasein’s past and present flowed from its futural projections. The circular movement of stretching forth and coming back that is constitutive of Dasein’s (authentic) structure of anticipatory resoluteness is thus distorted by an historical temporality, now seemingly disconnected from Dasein’s unique resolutions, that goes beyond the mere articulation of the temporal

ecstases to the sheer reduction of the past to the future. German Dasein is thus presented with an either/or choice of distinct futural possibilities, but the movement of authentic historicizing “in which Dasein *hands* itself *down* to itself, free for death, in a possibility which it has inherited and yet has chosen” (BT, p. 435) seems to be absent from the formal structure of the decision that Heidegger is asking the university community to make.²⁸² Heidegger presents his audience with a decision upon which he himself has resolved, and is now asking for a repetition, as I have already claimed, of that very resolution. The resolute obedience to this decree is not even marked by the presence of *Kampf*, which Heidegger detects elsewhere in his descriptions of leadership and following. It seems as if now the revolutionary demands of Heidegger’s modernist rhetoric of radical beginnings and renewal cannot be accommodated by his fundamental ontology without important philosophical compromises which, for at least his time as rector, he was willingly prepared to make.

The problem of *mimesis* is thus simultaneously a problem of *politics*. First, there is the claim that the university can only assert itself, determine itself, become autonomous, if it rigorously conforms to the essence of science. This essence, however, which was never even fully present to the ancient Greeks, must be repeated, imitated, if the “will to essence” of which Heidegger speaks is to be fulfilled. Autonomy, therefore, depends on *mimesis*; the autonomy of the German university depends on the creative reawakening of an essence that is not itself German. Second, the “we” to whom Heidegger speaks philosophically is in fact a political “we.” Aside from the already noted problems with this failed pedagogical scheme, however, is the temporal dislocation that

seems to structure Heidegger's speech acts. By this I mean that Heidegger already presupposes the existence of the Volk which only the Volk's willing of essence can possibly bring into being. Heidegger thus tries to convince a Volk that is yet to come to will that which it must have already willed if it is to exist in the present. Heidegger thus speaks to an audience in the present which could only exist in the future. He justifies, moreover, the actions required in the present by that which is yet to come.²⁸³ This opens Heidegger's philosophical-political project up the sort of dilemma Plato faced in the "Meno paradox." How can Heidegger's speech bring about the existence of the Volk? If the Volk already exists, then the resolution to will the essence of science is superfluous. If the Volk does not exist, then the resolution is impossible. At the end of the speech, Heidegger suggests that the willing in question has already been decided by the youngest elements of the Volk, but this hardly resolves Heidegger's dilemma. In fact, given the political climate of the time, it only makes matters worse.

In the final section, I want to show how this problem haunts Heidegger's subsequent essay, "The Origin of the Work of Art" wherein we see Heidegger attempting to advance a still fervently modernist theory of historicity under the guise of an overcoming of aesthetics.

Founding History: Reading "The Origin of the Work of Art"

In the "Epilogue" to his 1936 essay, "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger provides us with the philosophical context in terms of which the preceding essay should be read. This takes the form of a series of important claims. First, Heidegger states that aesthetics "takes the work of art as an object...of sensuous apprehension in the widest

sense.” Second, he states that this sensuous apprehension is today called “experience.” Third, he claims that “perhaps experience is the element in which art dies.” The conclusion to which we are implicitly drawn, consequently, is that “aesthetics” and “art” are not compatible. The philosophical dominion of aesthetics has perhaps led to the historical “death” of art – a claim which obviously recalls Hegel’s “death of art” thesis that I considered briefly in chapter three.²⁸⁴ In response to Hegel, Heidegger will only claim that his “judgment has not yet been decided.” The reason for this is that the very nature of Western art is determined by its relationship with the historical transformations of the essence of truth. If the essence of truth changes, a change that metaphysics denies, then so too will the nature of art. Even though aesthetics continually speaks of the immortality and eternal value of great works of art, it can only do so in virtue of the metaphysical categories it employs to determine what art is. Since the concepts of aesthetics – form, beauty, feeling, etc. – are tied to a metaphysical notion of presence which cannot accommodate an historical understanding of truth, aesthetics itself must falsely assert the value of art at the expense of covering over the essentially historical nature of the work. Furthermore, since so much of Heidegger’s philosophical work is devoted to a retrieval of the originary essence of truth as *aletheia*, unconcealment, which metaphysics is unable to think, we are thus left with the suggestion that art need not suffer a long death at the hands of aesthetics, because it is aesthetics, in its very proximity to metaphysics itself, that is here being called into question. Hegel is thus correct to claim that art no longer fulfills our highest spiritual needs, but this thesis must only pertain to

the epoch of metaphysics. It cannot rule out the possibility of a re-birth of art as an essentially spiritual practice in the future.

In the 1936 Nietzsche lecture course, Heidegger offers a more extended discussion of the developments of aesthetics, in which he explicitly reveals the inherent antagonism between the existence of great art and the history of aesthetics. For Heidegger, this is no insignificant concern. At the outset of this historical sketch of aesthetics, he claims, for example, that “the fact whether and how an era is committed to an aesthetics, whether and how it adopts a stance toward art of an aesthetic character, is decisive for the way art shapes the history of that era – or remains irrelevant for it” (*NI*, p. 79). The first of the six stages that Heidegger identifies existed prior to philosophical reflection on the nature of works of art.²⁸⁵ It is this period alone, however, in which the “magnificent art of Greece” was produced, yet ancient Greek Dasein did not relate to works “aesthetically” as merely lived “experiences,” for this only begins once the relationship to works of art is mediated by philosophical concepts. The end of this period significantly coincides with the inauguration of profound philosophical reflection on the work of art in the work of Plato and Aristotle. The epoch of great art ends precisely at the dawn of Western metaphysics. The third stage begins during the modern age when the focus of aesthetics becomes exclusively concerned with the relationship between works of art and the feelings that they produce. Great art, in this period, is on the decline. The fourth stage coincides with the publication of Hegel’s *Lectures on Aesthetics*, and is distinguished by Hegel’s philosophical acknowledgment that the epoch of great art is at its end – just when, Heidegger notes, “aesthetics achieves its greatest height.” Beyond

Hegel's authoritative claims, however, are two further developments. The fifth stage is represented by Wagner's formulation of the "collective artwork," which, despite its religious and mythological pretensions, actually subordinates the work itself to the sheer tumult of the feelings produced. In this moment, aesthetics dissolves into psychology. In the sixth and final stage, Nietzsche radicalizes the Wagnerian psychology of art into a physiology of art wherein "art is delivered over to explanation in terms of natural science." Art, for Nietzsche, is the "most perspicuous and familiar configuration of will to power," but the preservation and enhancement of power in question here can be ascribed not to the audience of the work, but rather to the artist. It is the artist, therefore, through which the work of art must be grasped.

It is quite easy, then, for Heidegger to show how the earliest metaphysical reflections on the work of art are historically and philosophically consummated in the extreme subjectivism of the Nietzschean position. Despite Nietzsche's privileging of art over truth, what is ultimately at stake is the degree to which the will to power is enhanced by the artist's creativity. The history of aesthetics thus culminates in a complete lack of concern for the artwork itself, and in fact, as Heidegger indicates, the apotheosis of aesthetics strictly coincides with severance of art from the spiritual aspirations of modern man. Art in this epoch is merely one commodity amongst many; the work itself has been thoroughly deracinated from its historical world. The clear implication of Heidegger's position, then, is that if art is once again to have a spiritual or world-historical role to play, then the conceptual framework of aesthetics, which has systematically obstructed our ties to artworks themselves, must be somehow "overcome." Hegel's death of art

thesis can only be countered by an overcoming of aesthetics, and a re-negotiation of the relationships between art, history, and truth. This, accordingly, is Heidegger's project in "The Origin of the Work of Art" and in many of his later meditations on the relationship between thinking and poetizing.

"The Origin of the Work of Art" is a long, complex essay. I cannot hope to attend to all of its philosophical details and concerns here, but I do want to take up the crucial claim that because art is truth-disclosive, it is one of the originary ways in which history occurs. I also want to focus on the extent to which Heidegger's overcoming of aesthetics is itself dependent upon the covert employment of the very categories of aesthetics that Heidegger charges have actually blocked our access to the work of art. Taken together, I want then to determine the degree to which Heidegger's epochal understanding of historicity that is articulated here depends upon, in particular, the very conception of *mimesis* that guided his political involvements just a few years earlier.

Let me begin, then, by summarizing and then passing over the philosophical movements in the first parts of the text. Heidegger begins the essay by attending to the nature of art, which is the "origin" of both the artist and the artwork. But he cannot simply commence his meditation on art without first looking at actual works.²⁸⁶ What is evident in all works, however, is their "thingly" feature, the substructure without which the work itself could not exist. Heidegger thus turns to an analysis of traditional thing-concepts in order to gain further clues about the nature of the work. His quick review of the three traditional thing-concepts – "thing as a bearer of traits, as the unity of a manifold of sensations, as formed matter" (*OWA*, p. 30) – reveals that each conception

fails to recognize the being of the thing in a philosophically original way. The third definition, however, is examined in more detail because the form-matter schema has provided the conceptual framework within which Western aesthetics has traditionally attempted to determine the nature of artworks. Heidegger's questioning leads him to conclude that, in fact, this dominant thing-concept obstructs our access to the thingly character of the thing and the workly character of the work, because it is derived from the nature of equipment. Equipment is different in nature from both the thing and the work: "the piece of equipment is half thing, because characterized by thingliness, and yet it is something more; at the same time it is half art work and yet something less, because lacking the self-sufficiency of the art work" (*OWA*, p. 29). At this point, the essay takes an unprecedented turn. In the midst of his interrogation of the nature of equipment, Heidegger almost casually, and without any real justification at this point, attempts to reveal the being of equipmentality in Van Gogh's painting of a peasant's shoes. According to Heidegger's controversial "analysis" of the painting, we are able to understand the being of equipment as "reliability." The usefulness we typically attribute to equipment is but a mere derivation of its more essential nature, that is only revealed here through the work. What has occurred, therefore, in the movement of Heidegger's questioning, is an unexpected reversal. Instead of determining the nature of the work from either the nature of the thing or of equipment, Heidegger argues on the contrary that the nature of equipment can only be disclosed through the work. The inadequacy of the dominant metaphysical framework for determining the nature of the work is the result, Heidegger concludes, of the still metaphysical interpretation of beings which fails to take

into consideration the question of being itself. The privilege of art, its priority over things and equipment, lies in its capacity to open up “in its own way the being of beings” (*OWA*, p. 39).

But what exactly is this ontological disclosure that Heidegger locates in the work of art? Art, according to Heidegger, is the setting to work of truth. This does not mean, however, that the proper task of art is to reproduce or imitate that which already exists. By “truth,” Heidegger does not mean Aristotelian *homoiosis* or scholastic *adequatio*, but rather the play of the unconcealing and concealing of being. In the Van Gogh painting, “the being of the being comes into the steadiness of its shining” (*OWA*, p. 36). The claim that truth as *aletheia* is disclosed in the work is further refined in Heidegger’s description of the Greek temple²⁸⁷ in which we are led to see how the work-being of the temple must be understood as the reciprocal setting up of a world and the setting forth of the earth. As part of Heidegger’s larger project of finding a new, non-metaphysical vocabulary for describing works of art, “world” and “earth” are thus employed here as the apparent replacements of “form” and “matter,” which, as Heidegger writes elsewhere, are metaphysically grounded in Plato’s *eidos*, the “conception of beings with regard to their outer appearance,”²⁸⁸ and are thus inappropriate concepts for determining the nature of the work. By world, Heidegger does not mean the empirically accessible totality of what is; rather, he means “the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into being” (*OWA*, p. 44). The world is thus not anything present, but the horizon within which anything that *is* comes to presence. The “*world worlds*” (*OWA*, p. 44), according to Heidegger, which means that

the world *is* not, yet still opens up the structural fitting-together, the relational context of beings “within” which the historical destiny of a people unfolds. In contrast to world, the earth is that which harbors and conceals being. Earth “shatters every attempt to penetrate into it;” it is “essentially self-secluding” (*OWA*, p. 47). Just as the world is a “self-disclosing openness,” the earth is a “sheltering and concealing” (*OWA*, p. 48). The opposition between unconcealing and concealing is described by Heidegger as a “striving” that is not meant to be overcome within the work, but rather to be preserved in its essential tension.

In essential striving... the opponents raise each other into the self-assertion of their natures. Self-assertion of nature, however, is never a rigid insistence upon some contingent state, but surrender to the concealed originality of the source of one’s own being. In the struggle, each opponent carries the other beyond itself. Thus the striving becomes ever more intense as striving, and more authentically what it is. (*OWA*, p. 49)

The fact that the concealing tendency of earth is preserved as an inalienable feature of the work itself attests to the degree to which Heidegger has moved away from metaphysical thinking, which construes concealing, “untruth,”²⁸⁹ the absence of illumination, as a defect in thinking. In fact, what the work reveals is precisely the concealing movement of being, which is precisely what metaphysics, through its denial of the historical nature of truth, according to Heidegger, has not been able to think.²⁹⁰

Yet, as the above passage shows, despite the anti-metaphysical force of Heidegger’s inquiry, the very language of subjectivism that marked his political entanglements are again present here, but now these subjective features (self-assertion, struggle, striving, originality, authenticity) are ascribed to the work itself. In contrast to this, Heidegger has also written, as I indicated above, that the work discloses the truth, an

“open center” which “encircles all that is” (*OWA*, p. 53). This is anything but the language of subjectivism, and thus there is a potential problem reconciling these two sorts of claims, a problem that comes to the fore in Heidegger’s consideration of the creation of the work. One might assume that if the artwork is capable of disclosing the truth of being, then the artist, the creator of the work, would likewise enjoy this “privilege.” The result of this, of course, would be yet another version of the subjectivism that Nietzsche both invoked (in *The Birth of Tragedy*) and criticized (to some degree, at least, in *Human, All Too Human*). How, then, does Heidegger attempt to articulate the relationship between the artist and the work? Importantly, Heidegger seeks to remove the work from a network of causes, as if it were simply governed like the production of other entities by the principle of sufficient reason. He does not want the work to be merely one more link in a causal chain, temporally succeeding the subjective “intentions” of the artist, and preceding, perhaps, its insertion into the exchange relations of the art industry. By situating the work within such a network of causality, the work would lack the self-sufficiency which demarcates the artwork from equipment. Moreover, this would mean that the work would be the product of history, that history itself is continuous, processual – a claim that Heidegger will decisively challenge at the end of the essay especially in his articulation of the foundational role of art. Heidegger’s response to this larger dilemma is telling, for it highlights the difficulty of surmounting a tradition which has *already* attempted, in different ways and for different reasons, to combat the subjectivism that Heidegger discerns in a Nietzschean, artist-centered aesthetics – an aesthetics of genius.

To gain access to the work, it would be necessary to remove it from all relations to something other than itself, in order to let it stand on its own for itself alone.

But the artist's most peculiar intention already aims in this direction. The work is to be released by him to its pure self-subsistence. It is precisely in great art – and only such art is under consideration here – that the artist remains inconsequential as compared with the work, almost like a passageway that destroys itself in the creative process for the work to emerge. (*OWA*, p. 40)

In order to avoid slipping back into another version of subjectivism, consequently, Heidegger is compelled to dismiss virtually the role of the artist in the creative process. However, in a move that is reminiscent of Kant, he turns the artist into a “passageway” that seems less and less relevant in proportion to the greatness of the work.²⁹¹ Although the work makes manifest the ontological conditions of its being, the strife between world and earth, it simultaneously disavows any constitutive role that the artist has played in the createdness of the work.²⁹² The createdness is folded into, or withdraws in, the work-being of the work. The truth-disclosing capacity of the work is thus *not* reducible to the subjective intentions of the artist. As Heidegger states, although creation is a bringing-forth, it is, as such, “a receiving and an incorporating of a relation to unconcealedness” (*OWA*, p. 62). It is not the artist who makes the work possible, but rather “the work that makes the creators possible” (*OWA*, p. 71). The work thus takes absolute priority over its creator in Heidegger's post-aesthetic philosophy of art.

Part of Heidegger's attempt to account for the createdness of the work without simultaneously slipping back into a subjectivistic aesthetics of genius is to attribute the very characteristics of genius to the work itself. Although the creator uneasily drops out of Heidegger's discussion, it appears as if the work now must accomplish the creator's task of being an origin, of “originating,” on its own. Yet this again leads to puzzling claims about the temporal and historical constitution of the work. The problem appears to

be one of synchronicity. On the one hand, Heidegger describes what he calls the “self-establishing of truth” (*OWA*, p. 71) in the work. At another point, he even states that truth “*wills* [my italics] to be established in the work” (*OWA*, p. 62), and in an almost Kantian moment, he even writes (of the rift-design) that “this art hidden in nature becomes manifest only through the work, because it lies originally in the work” (*OWA*, p. 70). These qualifications place the entirety of Heidegger’s emphasis on the ontological structure of the work itself; however, the implicitly subjectivistic language that is smuggled into the ontological description perhaps betrays the inherent difficulties of leaving the intentionality of the artist (broadly construed) entirely out of the equation here. Without these qualifications, the intentions of the artist would be foundational, and thus the role of “origin” that art provides would fall back onto the shoulders of the creative artist.

On the other hand now, the bringing-forth of the artwork (which is rather a receiving) presupposes the very Open which it itself first brings forth. In other words, the artwork can only come into being when it is placed in the Open that is only established by the work. The Open, it seems, must already be there if the work is to come into being.

In his veiled account of originality, Heidegger writes:

The establishing of truth in the work is the bringing forth of a being such as never was before and will never come to be again. The bringing forth *places this being in the Open* in such a way that what is to be brought forth *first clears the openness of the Open into which it comes forth*. (*OWA*, p. 62 – my italics)

Without the artist, it seems that Heidegger is left with another version of the temporal paradox that went unresolved in the Rectoral address. This, perhaps, could be construed as the result of Heidegger’s continued attempt to give a philosophical account of

origination, which he now seeks in the disclosive structure of the work of art rather than through political “self-assertion.” As John Sallis has written, however, it is important not to think of this as a movement of truth, which, existing amongst the stars prior to the existence of the work, is then subsequently set up in the work. He correctly notes that truth and its establishment belong together,²⁹³ although it is still not clear in Heidegger’s text exactly how this “riddle” can be explained. For Sallis, there is no temporal paradox, yet it is precisely this reciprocal motion of truth setting itself into a being and a being setting itself into the truth which reinscribes the officially disavowed *mimesis* back into the text. According to Sallis, therefore, art is a “*mimesis* of truth.”²⁹⁴ In this case, the imitation is not of anything that exists prior to, or over and beyond, the work; rather, it is an imitation of the “setting up” of the truth in the work by the work in its very setting up of the truth. As such, despite the synchronicity of this double-movement, what is inscribed here is the trace of that second, “higher” sense of *mimesis*, a *mimesis* of creation, founding, coming-into-being, that we have already encountered in the texts of Heidegger, Nietzsche and Kant. Here, the imitation is more like a reciprocal movement, and as such, there is not even a whiff of any reliance or dependence upon even the antecedent revealing of a previous poetic origination. The covert inscription of *mimesis*, in this case, thus accounts for the radicality of the work’s origin, since what is imitated is no different from, and belongs together with, the work itself.

In what sense, then, is art an “origin?” The work of art is always a projection of the truth of being. It is a way in which truth “happens.” Such a happening, because it opens up a new relationship between man and being, between a people and the striving

opposition of world and earth, is both historical and history-founding. Heidegger concedes that truth can also establish itself in “the act that founds the political state,” or in the “nearness of that which is not simply a being, but the being that is most of all,” or in “the essential sacrifice” (*OWA*, p. 62), yet it is art’s capacity for serving as an origin in our historical existence (like religion and politics, Heidegger implies) that, since Hegel especially, has been in question. In order to give a more concrete account of how art is a founding of truth, and thus an origin of history, Heidegger sketches a “triple sense” in which this founding occurs. Founding can be either a bestowing [*schenken*], a grounding [*gründen*] or a beginning [*anfangen*], but in each of these senses there is also a corresponding “mode of preserving” (*OWA*, p. 75). It is hard to miss the appearance of the hermeneutical circle here, yet it is not clear how the three temporal ecstases can be unproblematically “mapped” onto this threefold division.

First, as a bestowing, founding is also an endowing or overflow, the mark of the transcendence of being. The reason for this is the inability ever to account for the setting-into-work of truth by what has come before. In other words, in order to explain this particular mode of founding, there can be no appeals to history, to tradition, for it is precisely history and tradition, the very grounds of familiarity in the present, that are being “refuted” in founding as bestowing. As Heidegger has already stated, the work is able to “transport us out of the realm of the ordinary,” which means that our “accustomed ties to world and earth” (*OWA*, p. 66) are transformed. Once we stand in the newly bestowed truth of the work of art, once we submit ourselves to the power of this uncanny

address and let the work be a work, then our reliance upon the past and the realm of the everyday accordingly withers away.

Second, as a grounding, art is a “poetic projection of truth” (*OWA*, p. 75). Founding as bestowing means that art can find no adequate measure for itself in the past; founding as grounding means that art itself becomes the measure of beings in the future.²⁹⁵ As such, through grounding, “truth is thrown toward the coming preservers, that is, toward an historical group of men” (*OWA*, p. 75). The truth that is founded in the work is thus yet to come, for the audience to whom it is directed, the preservers, are not of the present.²⁹⁶ The work, in fact, “produces” its own preservers, that is, those who willingly respond to the truth that is disclosed in the work.²⁹⁷ However, what is founded as grounding is not something that is radically new, not an utterly arbitrary possibility, but rather “the withheld vocation of the historical being of man itself” (*OWA*, p. 76). In other words, the poetic projection of founding as grounding draws from the excess of being, like water from a spring, that has yet to be exhausted because it is inexhaustible, and thus human history is opened up anew by the work

Third, as a beginning, art is “a leap...a head start, in which everything to come is already leaped over, even if as something disguised” (*OWA*, p. 76). Art is thus a beginning not because it is futureless, but because it already, from the outset, from its setting up of the truth, contains the future within itself. In this discussion, Heidegger for the first time explicitly connects the founding of art as beginning with his own epochal history of being:

This foundation happened in the West for the first time in Greece. What was in the future to be called being was set into work, setting the standard. The realm of

beings thus opened up was then transformed into a being in the sense of God's creation. This happened in the Middle Ages. This kind of being was again transformed at the beginning and in the course of the modern age. Beings became objects that could be controlled and seen through by calculation. At each time a new and essential world arose. At each time the openness of what is had to be established in beings themselves, by the fixing in place of truth in figure. At each time there happened unconcealedness of what is. Unconcealedness sets itself into work, a setting which is accomplished by art. (*OWA*, p. 76-77)

By ascribing such a power to the Greek beginning which both accounts for, yet is disguised in, what is to come, Heidegger is *not* committed to the conclusion that each of these epochs of Western history were founded by contemporaneous works of art. In the modern epoch, under the sway of aesthetics, art has "lost" its capacity to disclose the absolute in Hegel's sense, and thus there is no connection between, say, the truth that is disclosed in Van Gogh's painting and the subjectivistic metaphysics of our time in which being is understood as "objects that could be controlled and seen through by calculation." This calls into question the "status" of Van Gogh's painting as a "great" work of art, but it saves Heidegger from having to account for the epochs of metaphysics by providing examples of the "founding" works of art. The Greek beginning, of course, was different. Because art attained "its historical nature as [this] foundation" and because this foundation, as a beginning, contained the "end latent in itself" (*OWA*, p. 76), then Heidegger is perfectly justified to claim that (Greek) art founds (or at least, in dialogue with philosophical thinking, "co-founds") the history of being without having to deny Hegel's "death of art" thesis. This way, Heidegger is able to hold open Hegel's claim as a question, while simultaneously uncovering the intimate relationship between art, truth and history in the Western tradition:

Whenever art happens – that is, whenever there is a beginning – a thrust enters history, history either begins or starts over again. History means here not a sequence in time of events of whatever sort, however important. History is the transporting of a people into its appointed task as entrance into that people's endowment.²⁹⁸ (*OWA*, p. 77)

The unconcealing and concealing of truth that happens in the work is here elevated to a principle of historicity. The history that art finds is not “normal” history in the Kuhnian sense, but rather the discontinuous, epochal history within which normal history processually unfolds.

This returns Heidegger to the proximity of Kant.²⁹⁹ Like Kant, Heidegger believes that art does not “progress” by building on the accomplishments of antecedent works. Only science, they both claim, unfolds in this successive, methodical way. Kant, of course, attributes the possibility of “art history” to the artist's imitation of a previous genius' freedom, not the “content” or the “determinate rules” of the work. In this way, a genius-genius relationship is established that does not constrain the successor's freedom by the predecessor's work; in fact, it is precisely this antecedent exemplification of free creation which serves as a “model” for the successor to imitate in this “productive” sense. For Heidegger, this account of artistic production is still too “productionistic,” still too wedded to the subjective features of the artist. What is “imitated,” therefore, is not the freedom of a prior artist, since only “works” are under consideration here. As I have already suggested above, following John Sallis, the *mimesis* operative here is a *mimesis* of truth that has been folded into the very structure of the work. It is neither Platonic reproduction, nor the Kantian imitation of freedom, nor the Nietzschean imitation of self-creation. It is this mimetic structure, however, that accounts for the reciprocal movement

of the truth setting itself into the work and the work setting itself into the truth, which is what occurred at (and *as*) the beginning of Western history, Heidegger claims. The play of *mimesis* thus both opens up history in this originary, foundational sense, and accounts for the self-subsistence, the autonomy, of the work of art.

The question that remains, Heidegger's question to Hegel, is whether great art, as exemplified by the Greeks, understood in this truth-disclosive, history-founding sense, is still possible. In other words, as Heidegger concludes the essay, is our relation to art determined by a merely "cultivated acquaintance with the past," or can we (that is, the German people) resolutely let art once again become "an origin in our historical existence" (*OWA*, p. 78)? For Heidegger, this is an "either-or" choice, but it is one which he suggests has already been "poetically projected" to us in the poetic saying of Hölderlin's verse. It is the (not-yet existing) German people, accordingly, who are the preservers to whom the poet's words are addressed. In the quoted words, "Reluctantly / that which dwells near its origin departs," what is indicated is the need to return to the origin, to retrieve the unthought possibilities of the beginning, in order to transcend the very history which that beginning ordained. This is precisely what both Heidegger and Hölderlin attempt to do, but once again, the specter of the Greek beginning, as the model for a German beginning, both conditions and contests the decisiveness of this break. The paradoxical logic of *mimesis* is thus once again asserted at the very limits of Heidegger's philosophical modernism.

CONCLUSION

In his recent, brief study of modernity, Charles Taylor has argued that there is an analogy, perhaps even a connection, between authenticity, understood as an idea of freedom, and artistic creation. In fact, he argues that self-discovery actually *requires* creation, *poiesis*, since it is this creative process alone through which “I become what I have it in me to be.”³⁰⁰ It is the artist, consequently, who paradigmatically represents the ideal of the self-determining, free, authentic self in modern culture. Part of the problem with this determination of authenticity as (an artistic) self-creation, however, is that the demands of uniqueness, originality, and unconstrained freedom often come into conflict with the demands of morality and social convention. We have seen this opposition appear in various forms throughout the previous chapters. In Kant, it manifested itself in the opposition between genius and taste; in Nietzsche between sovereignty and herd-like conformity; in Heidegger between authenticity and the theyself. Since the radical bracketing or rejection of moral concerns is precisely what authorizes the dangerous “slide to subjectivism”³⁰¹ that Taylor discerns in modernity, he argues that we must distinguish between those more radical Nietzschean and neo-Nietzschean versions of

authenticity which ostensibly blur the differences between genuine self-discovery and invention on the one hand, and those which retain an openness to horizons of significance and an ideal of self-definition through dialogue with the other. What Taylor is attempting to delimit and defend, however, is a philosophical understanding of authenticity that is not reducible to either one of these alternatives, since the exclusion of either alternative is ultimately self-defeating. For example, radical, self-determining freedom in this first sense is unintelligible outside of human communities and the horizon of significance within which alone those private projects find meaning and significance. Paradoxically, then, the more we are called upon to create ourselves at the expense of shared, public meaning, the more meaningless our self-assertions become in a world that has been leveled down and emptied of significance.

So far in this study, I have withheld critical comments about the “costs and benefits” of the versions of aesthetic autonomy that I have been describing, concentrating instead on the enormously complex array of philosophical issues that are at stake in these important texts. In light of Taylor’s distinctions, however, I would like now to venture a few tentative claims of my own that are still, even at this stage, more suggestive than definitive or conclusive.

I should state right away that Taylor is right about the obvious tensions that exist between authenticity and morality. To his credit, however, Taylor has refused the easy “solution” for which both Rorty and Habermas, in their own ways, have opted. Rorty, of course, argues that the vocabulary of authenticity should be strictly private, and rigorously kept apart from that of justice and public policy. A reading of Heidegger’s

Rectoral address might make this position seem appealing, if not utterly necessary, if we are to avoid similar attempts to impose “private” ideals upon a “public” world. Habermas, for his part, believes that the delineation of different spheres of validity accomplished by modernity is similarly required to prevent the over-reaching of aesthetics into the autonomous territories of morality and cognition. Hegel’s “death of art” thesis is to be celebrated, not mourned. Taylor, on the other hand, is still trying to defend a role for art to play that does not consign it to either a private or an aesthetic sphere. By arguing that a strictly private project of self-creation or authenticity is self-defeating and responsible for the disenchantment of modern cultural life, Taylor believes he is justified in trying to articulate a defensible relationship between private, artistic life and the shared meanings of our social world. He is arguing, in effect, contra Rorty and Habermas, that the very existence and vitality of their private or aesthetic spheres depends upon the articulation of those spheres with the larger moral and political dimensions of our life.

It is here that I believe my extended argument can be of service to a project like Taylor’s. I have been arguing that even the extreme, at times radically subjectivistic, versions of aesthetic autonomy, by virtue of their mimetic constitution, are never fully *private*, never utterly self-contained, since they implicitly or explicitly invoke and rely upon the presence of antecedent exemplifications of autonomy in order for the self-legislation in the present to be accomplished. This is true of both individual and cultural or political assertions of autonomy, and thus such a claim, if I am right, has implications for our understanding of modernity. Indeed, what I have suggested is that the definitively

modern impulse to assert itself against the claims of tradition and history is ultimately self-defeating; the modern can only *be* by concealing its reliance on that which it declares to have overcome. For Taylor, part of the problem with extreme assertions of aesthetic autonomy or unconstrained self-creation is the groundless, arbitrary nature of such projects. In these instances, significance is conferred by the mere choice, the mere “newness” of what is brought into being. By showing how a self-assertion in the present is conditioned by a return, of sorts, to the past, however, it is perhaps possible to convince the modern, revolutionary consciousness to pause and reflect upon its own conditions of possibility.

This may well be important, but it certainly does not settle the basic opposition between aesthetic autonomy and morality. For instance, it is one thing to reveal the theoretical difficulties attending *ex nihilo* self-creation or the hyper-modernism which believes it can happily dispense with the claims of the past, but the *mimesis* of freedom can also, paradoxically, be pressed into the service of the politics of *mimesis*, that is, the (nostalgic yet revolutionary) political desire to somehow model the present upon the coming-into-being of the past. Again, Heidegger’s “political” texts serve notice that the mere turning to the past does not solve the basic dilemma that Taylor describes. What perhaps is clear, however, is that when authenticity is elevated to a political ideal that is decoupled from morality, then there is no end to the sorts of abuses that can be authorized in its name. The genius-genius relationship is no ground for communal life. This may well have been what Zarathustra was after all along, although he realized long before

Heidegger that the attempt to identify one's own private project with that of a community could not possibly succeed.

Still, it is not clear just how the ideal of authenticity, speaking of individuals, can be reconciled with the demands of morality. In Kant, we see this separation beginning to occur; in Nietzsche its absolute opposition; in Heidegger a potential reconciliation of authenticity with the claims of history, tradition and community (in *Being and Time*), followed by a twisted political application of this doctrine in the Rectoral address. One might well argue that the ideal of authenticity actually needs to posit a world of moral convention against which to assert itself. This may be true. Still, as Taylor indicates, if there is nothing that I *must* respect when I affirm my own authenticity, then there is no limit in principle to what my authenticity might involve. This mode of authenticity will thus always run the risk of doing great moral and political harm, since it lacks, in principle, any intrinsic moral constraints. As Taylor suggests, however, its categorical denial in the name of morality is harmful too, especially if we consider the degree to which our moral imagination has been shaped – historically and philosophically – by the aesthetic projects of individuals whose creative acts often transgressed the moral conventions of communal life.

I am in no position to settle this dispute, and I do not know of anyone who is. I am quite convinced, however, that this opposition, this often tense, ambiguous relation, has been one of the central foci of our philosophical modernity. Once autonomy takes an “aesthetic” turn, it is difficult to re-articulate its claims with the competing demands of morality and politics. For Heidegger, the origin of art remained a “riddle,” yet he was

convinced that art was also the “saving power” in the face of globalized technology and the metaphysics of *Gestell* that is its condition. Art remained an historical origin in his thinking, and, as such, politically potent. Moreover, in his famous interview, almost with resignation, Heidegger notoriously suggests that “only a god can save us.” We might wonder, after all that has been said, if this is not yet another disguised call for the deified artist, the artist-god, to confer meaning to our desolate time. If so, it is the repetition of a claim that has been made many times before, yet we still do not know, we cannot know, if within the saving power there also lies the greatest of dangers.

Endnotes

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p.110 (hereafter cited as *BoT*).

² In *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, Nietzsche writes describes Faust “as a representation of the riddle propounded by modern times of the theoretical man who thirsts for real life.” See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth in Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 249.

³ Just as the death of tragedy at the hands of Socratic dialectic and Euripidean drama was itself an historically necessary movement within Greek culture, so too is the rebirth of tragedy again a possibility as the result of certain necessary historical conditions that have emerged in the modern era. Each cycle of birth and death testifies to the existence of “an eternal conflict between *the theoretic* and *the tragic world view*; and only after the spirit of science has been pursued to its limits, and its claim to universal validity destroyed by the evidence of these limits may we hope for a rebirth of tragedy...” (*BoT*, p.106). For Nietzsche, then, the different epochs of Western history can be understood as the reflections of one or the other of these eternally conflicting world views. Tragic culture is replaced by Alexandrian-Socratic culture, which, now exhausted, is once again giving way to a definitively modern and reflective version of the initial tragic epoch. Wagner is clearly understood as the modern Aeschylus. Nietzsche even goes so far as to claim in *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* that Wagner’s music did not simply appear by chance, but rather, in an age that “*deserved it least but needed it most*,” this personal and artistic “evolution” was governed by “a transfiguring and justifying necessity.” See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, pp. 221 and 222.

⁴ This will become clear in the discussion of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in chapter three.

⁵ Despite Nietzsche’s consistent opposition to Kant’s (Christian, universalizable) ethics, he does claim that Kant’s infamous limitation of knowledge in order to make room for faith was the result of a cultural need. “A cultural need impels Kant; he wishes to *preserve* a domain *from knowledge*: that is where the roots of all that is highest and deepest lie, of art and of ethics - Schopenhauer.” See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Philosopher: Reflections on the Struggle between Art and Knowledge*, in *Philosophy and Truth*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1979), p.11. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, furthermore, Nietzsche argues that sovereignty should not be construed as *moral* sovereignty since “‘autonomous’ and ‘moral’ are mutually exclusive.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals in The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 1968) p. 495.

⁶ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Philosopher: Reflections on the Struggle between Art and Knowledge*, p. 28. Nietzsche's point is that Kant's restriction of knowledge to phenomena means that our deepest desire for truth - correspondence between knowledge and the thing-in-itself - is impossible, and thus knowledge is only relative, at least for finite subjects like us.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid. p.33

⁹ Robert Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfactions of European High Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1991).

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 12. According to Pippin, Kant's critical "solution" to the empiricism/rationalism impasse effectively transforms the terms of modern philosophical debate, yet our own reason cannot be satisfied with the nexus of restraints that it itself introduces.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., chapter 3, and the collected articles in Robert Pippin, *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹³ Interestingly, Pippin has recently completely reversed his views of Nietzsche's understanding of modernity as a distinct epoch within Western culture. In his 1983 article, "Nietzsche and the Idea of Modernism," Pippin argues that "one of the most important of Nietzsche's claims is one almost always inherent in modernist points of view (although often as a silent, decisive presupposition) - that the present age marks an irremediable, complete break with the past, not the next stage in its continuous, essentially inter-connected development." See Robert Pippin, "Nietzsche and the Origin of the Idea of Modernism," *Inquiry*, 26 (1983): p. 152. But in *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, Pippin claims that with respect to the question of "modernity's" relation to a "pre-modern" past, Nietzsche is "a thoroughgoing continuity theorist." See Robert Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 81. Indeed, Pippin is now claiming that Nietzsche denies the existence of any decisive or radical break that could mark the origin of our modern epoch. I think there is more textual evidence to support Pippin's earlier position, which seems to make better overall sense of Nietzsche's epochal understanding of history that I discuss above (in note three).

¹⁴ There is mention of "thematic links" but a denial of direct "historical influence." Pippin does rightly claim that "[i]t was Kant's revolution that created the ever more complex and finally, I think, unmanageable problems of 'self-grounding' or reflexivity we shall see re-appearing in artists and modern novelists, as well as other thinkers

concerned with the foundations of philosophical modernity.” See Robert Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 60.

¹⁵ See J. M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992). Bernstein argues that the third *Critique* both helps inaugurate “aesthetic alienation” – the separation of truth and art, in modernity, at the hands of “truth-only cognition” – and points toward its overcoming. The subsequent chapters on Heidegger, Derrida and Adorno are thus read in terms of one of the key features of Kant’s aesthetics which are put to use to critique the singular authority of philosophical/theoretical truth at the expense of the possible truth of art. Although I am sympathetic to Bernstein’s project, and share to a large extent his understanding of (aesthetic) modernity, I will not be focusing so much on the “autonomy” of aesthetic judgment but rather on the productivity of artistic genius, which, I believe, plays a much more decisive role in post-Kantian aesthetics.

¹⁶ Frederick Beiser summarizes the general intellectual and cultural claims of the *Sturm und Drang* in the following passage. “The metaphysical significance of art, the importance of the artist’s personal vision, the irreducibility of cultural differences, the value of folk poetry, the social and historical dimensions of rationality, and the significance of language for thought – all these themes were prevalent in, or characteristic of, the *Sturm und Drang* and Romanticism.” See Frederick Beiser, *Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 16.

¹⁷ Pippin, in fact, makes no mention of the third *Critique* in *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*.

¹⁸ Aristotle, *Poetics* in *Classical Literary Criticism*, ed. D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom and trans. M. E. Hubbard (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 80 (1459a).

¹⁹ It is important to note, however, that despite the superficial resemblances, this does not by default return Descartes to the sophistical world of Protagoras in which “man is the measure of all beings,” since the pre-Socratic “measure” extends only to a fixed radius of things present and not to beings as they are universally disclosed which modern mathematical science demands. In this sense, then, Plato is much closer to Descartes than Protagoras. For a further discussion of this Descartes/Protagoras relationship, see Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche vol. IV*, ed. David Farrell Krell and trans. Frank A. Capuzzi (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), pp. 91-5 and pp. 119-122 especially (henceforth cited as *NIV*).

²⁰ Much of my reading of Plato's *Republic* has been guided by Heidegger's own reading of the text in Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche vol. I: The Will to Power as Art*, trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), especially pp. 162-187 (henceforth cited as *NI*). I will discuss Heidegger's understanding of ontological difference in the fourth chapter. For now, I should mention that the difference between Being and beings in Plato is still a *metaphysical* determination of this difference, and thus it enacts the originary concealment of ontological difference, which Heidegger's thought continuously attempts to uncover and think anew. Throughout this dissertation, I will use "Being" to refer to the metaphysical difference between Being and beings, and "being" when I am referring to Heidegger's understanding of being as presencing. I am thus following the lead of Hubert Dreyfus and others in this respect. See Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), Preface and chapter 1 especially.

²¹ Plato, *Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 597d-e.

²² *Ibid.* 598b.

²³ *Ibid.* 597e.

²⁴ Again, we can see from this infamous doctrine just how completely antithetical the Platonic position is to the moral and aesthetic concerns of most eighteenth century thinkers. Burke, for example, argues that the poet's slavish devotion to verisimilitude actually impedes the sympathetic identification underlying the very moral responses the poet is ultimately attempting to inculcate in his audience. See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. James T. Boulton (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958) pp.170 and 172.

²⁵ Even in Plato's *Phaedrus* (248d-e), a dialogue that explores, among other topics, the nature of beauty, the poet is now situated in a more minutely differentiated hierarchy between the prophet and the artisan, a level that is six times removed from true being. The elevation of the poet over the artisan is not consistent with what we find in the *Republic*. See Plato, *Phaedrus* in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, trans. R. Hackforth (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

²⁶ Jonathan Lear, "Testing the Limits: the Place of Tragedy in Aristotle's Ethics" in *Aristotle and Moral Realism*, ed. Robert Heinaman (London: UCL Press, 1995), pp. 61-84.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 71.

²⁸ Yet even as Aristotle rehabilitates the moral and epistemic value of poetry, it is philosophy, as poetics, which attempts to determine its nature. Hence, insofar as Aristotle

provides us with a theoretical determination of poetry, then his own discourse similarly reproduces the subordination of art to theory even as it retrieves a theoretical value for poetry.

²⁹ As Walter Kaufmann notes, “The conception of art as mimesis is clearly derived from Plato; but in Aristotle it lacks the Platonic overtones of sham.” See Walter Kaufmann, *Tragedy and Philosophy*, (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1969), p.43.

³⁰ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448b.

³¹ In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer writes: “But we do not understand what recognition is in its profoundest nature if we only regard it as knowing something again that we know already - i.e., what is familiar is recognized again. The joy of recognition is rather the joy of knowing *more* than is already familiar. In recognition what we know emerges, as if illuminated, from all the contingent and variable circumstances that condition it; it is grasped in its essence. It is known as something” See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1975), p. 114.

³² Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451b.

³³ See Jonathan Lear, “Testing the Limits: The Place of Tragedy in Aristotle’s Ethics,” p. 76.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 81.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* in *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1980).

³⁸ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), p.149.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.146. This is Taylor’s Cartesian paraphrase of Weber’s “innerworldly asceticism” used to describe Protestant spirituality.

⁴⁰ In the *Theaetetus* (197c-198), Plato compares the mind to an aviary. Possessing knowledge is thus analogous to the bird keeper who is able to catch any of the birds he has already managed to capture. If we follow this metaphor, what Descartes contributes

to our understanding of knowing and thinking is a set of procedures that can 1) secure the reliable capture of these wild birds, and 2) provide an efficient and orderly way of catching, grouping, and domesticating the birds, such that the unruliness of the aviary is replaced by methodological control, the rational mastery of nature. See Plato, *Theaetetus* in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, 1973.

⁴¹ According to Jacques Taminiaux, not only did Descartes' method and his subjective foundation of knowledge contribute to the rise of the mathematical sciences, but also "aesthetics," as understood in its properly modern sense. Taminiaux argues in a Heideggerian vein that the reference of works of art "to a subject who judges them" marks the inaugural moment of modern aesthetics, and thus by implication "Kantian aesthetics reveals Kant as the heir of a movement of thought intricately connected to the very foundations of the modern era." The difference between modern aesthetics and previous Greek and medieval studies of art and beauty is that these latter mediations were "poietic," meaning that they were reflections on "the rules presiding over the production of the works rather than on their contemplation." See Jacques Taminiaux, *Poetics, Speculation and Judgment: The Shadow of the Work of Art from Kant to Phenomenology*, ed. and trans. Michael Gendre (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), p.56-7.

⁴² Here I am borrowing heavily from M.H. Abrams' elaboration of the "co-ordinates of art criticism" from his extremely helpful text, *The Mirror and the Lamp*. In the following discussion of Plato, Aristotle and eighteenth century "criticism," I have relied on this framework while simultaneously attempting to bring out the deeper metaphysical issues involved in a much more Heideggerian fashion. See M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁴ Earl Wasserman, *The Subtler Language* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), p. 11. I have made use of Wasserman in much the same way that Charles Taylor does.

⁴⁵ There is obviously more to this history than I can possibly examine here. A more comprehensive discussion would have to take into account the theoretical work of the Swiss theorists, Johann Bodmer and Johann Breitingner, who focus on the specifically creative powers of the poet. In addition to Abrams, see also Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz Koelln and James Pettegrove (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951) for a discussion of these two figures, and the developments of modern aesthetics more generally. See also James Engell, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

⁴⁶ See the discussion in Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, pp. 272-85.

⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Physics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon and trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye (New York: Random House, 1941), 193a-b.

⁴⁸ G. W. Leibniz, *Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason* in *Philosophical Essays*, trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1989), p. 211.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.211-12.

⁵⁰ See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 319 for Taylor's brief description of this modern, cultural tension.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁵² For an excellent, comprehensive examination of Rousseau and Nietzsche, see Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche Contra Rousseau: A Study of Nietzsche's Moral and Political Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). See also Bernard Yack, *The Longing for Total Revolution: Philosophical Sources of Social Discontent from Rousseau to Marx and Nietzsche* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

⁵³ See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* in *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (London: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1973).

⁵⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* in *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ This rationalist trajectory inaugurated by Descartes is rendered even more explicit in Spinoza's philosophy of mind according to which reason is the source of our adequate ideas and imagination the source of our inadequate ideas. The dominance of reason is, of course, absolutely essential to Kant's ethics which abandons Spinoza's naturalism in order to fully exploit the separation of practical reason from the mind's lower faculties.

⁵⁶ As the result of the British empiricist tradition, beginning with Locke's identification of a special power to amalgamate simple ideas into complex ones, to Hume's moral psychology and his denial of any radical disconnection between reason and feeling, to Coleridge's discussions of individuation and personal identity, the imagination eclipses reason as the central organizational and intuitive faculty of the human mind.

⁵⁷ See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 374.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Taylor summarizes this emerging romantic, and by extension modernist view of the artist and its legacy in the following way: “Artistic creation becomes the paradigm mode in which people can come to self-definition. The artist becomes in some way the paradigm case of the human being, an agent of original self-definition. Since about 1800, there has been a tendency to heroize the artist, to see in his or her life the essence of the human condition, and to venerate him or her as a seer, the creator of cultural values.” See Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord, ON: Anansi Press, 1991), p. 62.

⁶⁰ Schiller contends that it is the Kantian dichotomy between freedom and nature that remains the crucial impediment to true political freedom. Like, Rousseau, Schiller condemned those institutions which contributed to and consolidated this division, but Schiller is the most forceful exponent or a specifically “aesthetic” solution to the problem of externalizing human freedom in political life. Schiller writes in his second letter: “If man is ever to solve that problem of politics in practice he will have to approach it through the problem of the aesthetic, because it is only through beauty that man makes his way to freedom.” See Friedrich Schiller, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* in *Friedrich Schiller: Essays*, trans. Elizabeth Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby and ed. Daniel Dahlstrom and Walter Hinderer (New York: Continuum, 1993), p. 90.

⁶¹ Pippin summarizes the spontaneity of thinking in the following way: “Thinking may indeed be empty without intuitions, but, Kant appears to be assuming, nothing about my having intuitions, or the characteristics of the intuitions, can be said to provide a matter-of-fact explanation for my taking myself to be experiencing (intuited) objects of this or that kind. That... is something I must *do*.” See Robert Pippin, “Kant on the Spontaneity of Mind” in *Idealism as Modernism*, p. 43.

⁶² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1965), A 369 (henceforth cited as *CPR*).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, B xvii.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, A 158/B 197. Kant’s path-breaking thesis has motivated Heidegger to argue that Kant’s “unthought” project should be regarded as an inquiry into the ontological conditions of the objectivity of objects, which means that Kant, even if unbeknownst to him, is the first thinker to ground the Being of beings in the roots of transcendental subjectivity itself. Although Kant sought the unity of intuition and thinking in the transcendental imagination, he “shrank back” from identifying the transcendental imagination itself with primordial time, and thus remains essentially Cartesian – unable to think the “T” in terms of its temporal transcendence, as Heidegger does, in *Being and Time*. I cannot here fully attend to the merits and limitations of Heidegger’s reading (beyond noting that his claim that Kant’s critical philosophy has nothing to do with epistemology seems to me to be just as dogmatic as all strictly “epistemic” readings of the *Critique of Pure Reason*), but I do believe that his imposed distinction between

ontological and ontic inquiry helps to clarify the relationship between philosophy and the natural sciences, and establish the priority and autonomy of the former discipline. If the prior disclosure of ontological truth (the structure of objectivity as such) determines the very possibility of correspondence on which all ontic knowledge, paradigmatically Newtonian science, is grounded, then the critical tasks of philosophy must be seen as distinct from, and prior to the sciences, since no empirical science, qua science, can account for this originary grounding. This means that the question of epistemology (*pace* Heidegger), of what is in principle knowable, *cannot* be separated from ontological inquiry (*pace* Allison, Strawson et al.), but can only be raised after the task of ontological clarification has first projected and circumscribed a region of objectivity within which alone particular objects can be subsequently experienced. See Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

⁶⁵ Kant's authoritative formulation of the transcendental unity of apperception can be found in the following passage: "It must be possible for the 'I think' to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all, and that is equivalent to saying that the representation would be impossible, or at least would be nothing to me. That representation which can be given prior to all thought is entitled intuition. All the manifold of intuition has, therefore, a necessary relation to the 'I think' in the same subject in which this manifold is found. But this representation is an act of *spontaneity*, that is, it cannot be regarded as belonging to sensibility. See *CPR*, B 131-32.

⁶⁶ Given the heterogeneity of concepts and intuitions, Kant needs to find some "third thing" that is rather homogeneously connected to both the intellect and sensibility, the universal and the particular, and can thus assume this crucial mediating relation. Kant calls this "third thing" the *transcendental schema*, the task of which is the transcendental determination of time such that the appearances contained in the temporal order and the pure concepts which intellectually structure that order can be brought together without incongruity. Just *how* this schematism occurs is, for Kant "an art concealed in the depths of the human soul" (*CPR* B 180/1). Yet it is arguably this process of how the concepts of the understanding hook up with the sensible manifold via the schematism of the imagination which has supplanted the problem of the external world as *the* crucial issue of the first *Critique*. The mind-world difficulty of transcendental realism has given way to the mind-mind problem of Kant's transcendental idealism.

⁶⁷ *CPR*, A 680/B 708.

⁶⁸ Recall that in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant seeks to address the two central criticisms of the first *Critique*, the second of which, as already noted, involves "the paradoxical demand to regard one's self, as subject to freedom, as noumenon, and yet from the point of view of nature to think of one's self as a phenomenon in one's own

empirical consciousness." See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1956), p. 6 (henceforth cited as *CPrR*).

⁶⁹ My own understanding of the second Analogy was been greatly influenced by Henry Allison's authoritative discussion and defense of Kant's position. See Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 216-34.

⁷⁰ *CPR*, A 445/B 473.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, A 448/B 476.

⁷² *CPrR*, p. 136).

⁷³ Kant writes: "This same law, however, is objectively, i.e., in the conception of pure reason, a direct determining ground of the will. Hence this humiliation occurs proportionately to the purity of the law; for that reason the lowering (humiliation) of the pretensions to the moral self-esteem on the sensuous side is an elevation of the moral, i.e., practical, esteem for the law on the intellectual side" (*CPrR*, p. 82).

⁷⁴ See, for example, Hegel's discussion of "Dissemblance or Duplicity" in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In paragraph 622, Hegel writes that "[m]orality is the 'in-itself,' the merely *implicit* element; if it is to be *actual*, the final purpose of the world cannot be fulfilled; rather the moral consciousness must exist on its own account and find itself confronted by a Nature *opposed* to it." See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 377. For a fine account of the paradoxes and displacements that Hegel identifies in the "moral worldview," see Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 202-07 especially.

⁷⁵ Yack summarizes this point nicely, arguing that "if Kant is correct in his characterization of man's humanity, then alienation from the external world follows from becoming reasonable." See Bernard Yack, *The Longing for Total Revolution*, p. 99.

⁷⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1987), henceforth cited as *CJ*.

⁷⁷ See F. X. J. Coleman, *The Harmony of Reason: A Study in Kant's Aesthetics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974), p. 3.

⁷⁸ Rudolph Makreel's recent book has challenged this orthodox reading of the third *Critique*: "Instead of regarding the third *Critique* as an attempt to synthesize the first two *Critiques*, I propose that it can provide an interpretive framework for them. In doing so, I

take seriously Kant's assertion that the *Critique of Judgment* is not intended to make a contribution to doctrinal philosophy. Unlike the first two *Critiques*, which ground the doctrinal metaphysical systems of natural science and morals, the *Critique of Judgment* has no specific metaphysical application." See Rudolph Makreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutic Import of the Critique of Judgment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 3. My own reading of the third *Critique* lies in between these two opposing interpretations. Although I take seriously Makreel's claim that the text offers a framework for understanding the entire critical system, I think he overstates his case when he attributes a merely "orientational role" to Kant's transcendental standpoint (which, I believe, the modality of necessity vitiates), and denies any metaphysical role to the third *Critique*.

⁷⁹ The historical origins of the "diplomacy" thesis can be traced to the reception of the third *Critique* in the subsequent generations of German philosophy - the texts of Schiller, Schelling, Hegel and Heidegger in particular. Speaking to precisely this question, Jacques Taminiaux writes of the third *Critique* that "we can say that its mode of reception is ruled not by any cleavage, but, on the contrary, by the theme of the fundamental belonging of man and world, of spontaneity and receptivity." See Jacques Taminiaux, *Poetics, Speculation, and Judgment: The Shadow of the Work of Art from Kant to Phenomenology*, p. 38.

⁸⁰ As Fred Beiser has noted, it is precisely his distinction between determinant and reflective judgments that is the source of Kant's philosophical quarrel with Herder, who inconsistently attempts to ascribe scientific status to teleological judgments which Herder otherwise rightly claims are merely analogical explanations. See Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 158.

⁸¹ See Kant's discussion in section V, "On Reflective Judgment," of the First Introduction, (*CJ*, p. 402) especially.

⁸² As this long quotation suggests, for Kant there are both lower and higher desires. We can, of course, desire sensuous objects by effectively giving in to our natural inclinations, or we can desire a higher purpose for ourselves based on the requirements of practical reason. Analogously, there are both lower and higher pleasures. Lower pleasure results from what we judge to be merely agreeable, whereas higher pleasure - the pleasure under consideration here - results from the free play of our cognitive faculties as the result of our reflection on the mere form of an object.

⁸³ At this point, it should be mentioned that the means by which this pleasure is realized differs according to the type of aesthetic judgment involved. The two types of aesthetic judgments are registered in the division of the "Critique of Aesthetic Judgment" in an "Analytic of the Beautiful" and an "Analytic of the Sublime." In the opening sections of

the "Analytic of the Sublime," Kant compares the sublime and the beautiful with reference to the analytic principles imported from the first *Critique*. "For, since judgments about the sublime are made by the aesthetic reflective power of judgment, [the analytic] must allow us to present the liking for the sublime, just as that for the beautiful, as follows: in terms of *quantity*, as universally valid; in terms of *quality*, as devoid of interest; in terms of *relation*, [as a] subjective purposiveness; and in terms of *modality*, as a necessary subjective purposiveness" (*CJ* §24, p. 100). Despite the similarity with respect to these four moments, the analytics of beauty and sublimity differ in several important ways. Whereas judgments of beauty require the harmonious "free play" of imagination and understanding, certain forms of experience disclose the limits of our finite cognition, and thus judgments of sublimity must bypass the exclusively epistemological faculty of understanding and instead make recourse to the ideas of reason according to our subjective need to represent a cognitively unrepresentable experience. According to Kant, then, "we regard the beautiful as the exhibition of an indeterminate concept of the understanding, and the sublime as the exhibition of an indeterminate concept of reason" (*CJ* §23, p. 98). The inability of our cognitive powers to furnish a concept adequate to the object of experience renders the feeling of the sublime "contrapurposive for our power of judgment, incommensurable with our power of exhibition, and as it were violent to our imagination, and yet we judge it all the more sublime for that" (*CJ* §23, p. 99). The frustration we experience when our imagination is unable to progress beyond a world of sense, or the fear and powerlessness we experience in the face of nature's might are the moments of displeasure we feel prior to their conversion into a higher pleasure when the power of reason within us is aroused and our proper vocation as supersensible beings is disclosed. Although the sublime, like the beautiful, is an aesthetic category always related (even if only minimally) to phenomenality, its operations (more so than those of the beautiful) always forge a passage "beyond" sensible limits such that a purposive bridging or straddling of domains is achieved. For an important reading of the Kantian sublime, see Paul de Man, "Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant" in *Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects*, eds. G. Shapiro and A. Sica. (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984).

⁸⁴ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 1969), p. 555.

⁸⁵ Kant refers to the attribution of a properly mental characteristic to an object as the "fallacy of subreption" (*CJ* §27, p. 114, n. 22). The implication is that any pre-critical philosophy of art that attempted to attribute aesthetic predicates to the work of art or nature itself is guilty of this "fallacious" mode of reasoning.

⁸⁶ Perhaps the most thorough discussion of the relationship between "aesthetic alienation" on the one hand, and "aesthetic autonomy" on the other, is J. M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno*, 1992. According to

Bernstein, Kant's text can be read either as vouchsafing the autonomy of aesthetic judgment, preserving a separate sphere of aesthetic activity that exists independently of all cognitive and moral practices, *or* as underwriting and thus ultimately undoing these very divisions. I agree with Bernstein when he claims that it is "[t]he *Critique of Judgment*, and not the philosophy of Hegel... where the question of modernity is most perspicuously raised" (Ibid., p. 7). It is Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, after all, in which the categorial separation of art and aesthetics from "the language games of knowing, right action and moral worth" is first achieved, yet simultaneously called into question (Ibid., p. 5). As such, the third *Critique* is perhaps both a symptom and a solution to the deforming influences of rational, enlightened modernity.

⁸⁷ For instance, Habermas writes: "In Kant's concept of a formal and internally differentiated reason there is sketched a theory of modernity. This is characterized, on the one hand, by its renunciation of the substantial rationality of inherited religious and metaphysical worldviews and, on the other hand, by its reliance upon a procedural rationality, from which our justifiable interpretations, be they pertinent to the field of objective knowledge, moral-practical insight, or aesthetic judgment, borrow their claim to validity." See Jürgen Habermas, "Philosophy as stand-in and interpreter," in *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?*, ed. K. Baynes, J. Bohman and T. McCarthy (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), p. 298-99, and also the more far-ranging discussions in *The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol. 1 Reason and Rationalization of Society*, trans. T. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984) and *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. F Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987).

⁸⁸ See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 87.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 85.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 97.

⁹¹ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, p. 510.

⁹² In §49 of the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant claims that spirit is one of the powers of the mind which animates genius. Furthermore, he claims that spirit is none other than the ability to exhibit "aesthetic ideas." An aesthetic idea is "a presentation of the imagination which prompts much thought, but to which no determinate thought whatsoever, i.e., no [determinate] *concept*, can be adequate, so that no language can express it completely and allow us to grasp it" (*CJ*, §49, p. 182). Because the aesthetic ideas are not reducible to determinate conceptions or the mere combination of determinate conceptions brought together by the merely empirical use of the imagination, they alone can be said to "surpass" nature, even though, as the discussion of genius makes clear, it is nature which paradoxically "lends" us this material. Since I will be focusing on the *productivity* of

genius rather than on the *productions* of genius, I will not be taking up Kant's determination of aesthetic ideas in my discussion beyond what I have briefly mentioned here, although I think Taylor ought to make use of this section of the third *Critique* in his attempt to account for the sources of meaning that he locates in modern poetry.

⁹³ See John Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁹⁴ Another recent study of Kant is Susan Shell, *The Embodiment of Reason: Kant on Spirit, Generation and Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Shell draws a similar conclusion regarding the "stature" of genius in the third *Critique*, although the terms of the "devaluation" are not the same as Zammito's. According to Shell, it is within the context of the "aesthetic community," which should be regarded as the "externalization of the egalitarian reciprocity of the kingdom of ends" wherein all rational beings can participate, that "Kant's deliberate devaluation of the stature of 'genius'" (Ibid., p. 207) is to be understood.

⁹⁵ This is not to suggest that Derrida's own reading of Kant, following Heidegger's, concludes that Kant is *not* in the tradition of subjectivistic metaphysics. Quite the contrary. According to Heidegger, Kant's analysis of the subject is implicated in the reduction of the self to a substance - a claim made in spite of the paralogisms of pure reason in which he attempts to demonstrate the impossibility of all ontological knowledge of the ego as demanded by rational psychology. In chapter three of the 1927 lecture course, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger shows how Kant's appropriation of a metaphysically construed notion of time requires him to reformulate an essentially Cartesian egology whereby the self-unifying "I acts" of the ego cannot be known as such insofar as they condition space and time - the sensory forms of intuition which makes experience itself possible. As Heidegger notes, "[T]his does not happen by chance." See Martin Heidegger, *Basic Problems in Phenomenology*, trans. A. Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 147. Since Kant still understands human being in terms of the productionist model of natural beings, the ego as *subject* is still understood as "extantness," as substantiality, and thus Kant's notion of transcendental subjectivity is unable to "critically" overcome modern (Cartesian) metaphysics which construes subjectivity as *res cogitans* - for Heidegger still the present-at-hand. (See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.367). For Derrida, the hegemonic position of the subject stands as the very condition of possibility for Kant's transcendental critique of judgment in a most general sense. Questions of art and non-art, the inside and outside of the aesthetic frame, must be referred to the universally discernible inter-faculty relations (sacrifices, recuperations, plays, expansions, etc.) "within" the judging subject. As Derrida suggests in *The Truth in Painting*, this typically undeclared recourse to the free and rational subject infectiously conditions the most central trajectories of the Kantian text: "The third *Critique* depends in an essential manner...on a pragmatic anthropology and on what would be called, in more than one

sense, a reflexive humanism. This anthropologic recourse, recognized in its juridical and formal agency, weighs massively, by its content, on this supposedly pure deduction of aesthetic judgment.” See Jacques Derrida, *Truth in Painting*, trans. G. Bennington and I. McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 108.

⁹⁶ See John Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment*, p. 3.

⁹⁷ Zammito is caught in an interpretive bind here. In order to reconcile his reading of Kantian genius as a polemic directed against Herder and the *Sturm und Drang* while preserving the aspects of Kant's theory which decisively prefigure more Romantic articulations of genius, Zammito is compelled to conclude that Kant offers two distinct theories of genius in the third *Critique*. He calls this second theory the “metaphysical theory of genius” (Ibid., p.283) which he locates exclusively in section 49, “On the Powers of the Mind which Constitute Genius.” The claim that Kant is inconsistent, or that he needs the figure of genius to function in mutually distinct ways is, however, a far too radical conclusion to draw from Kant's admittedly ambiguous and puzzling discussion, as I will subsequently make clear. Zammito is not alone among Kant scholars in suggesting that Kant's theory of genius is not unified. Salim Kemal goes even further and suggests that there are *three* distinct senses of genius operative in the third *Critique*. See Salim Kemal, *Kant and Fine Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). My own reading is more consistent with Mary McCloskey's observation that there are certainly two uses of genius in play here, but this difference is reducible to a wide and a narrow use. Basically, in its wide use genius *contains* taste, whereas in its narrow use, genius and taste are opposed. See Mary McCloskey, *Kant's Aesthetic* (London: Macmillan, 1987), p.133.

⁹⁸ See Gilles Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 57.

⁹⁹ See H. W. Cassirer, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Judgment* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1938), p. 323.

¹⁰⁰ See John Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment*, pp. 32-44, for his important discussion of Kant's initial reflections on genius.

¹⁰¹ I am borrowing this helpful characterization of the opposing developments in the philosophy of language in the eighteenth century from Charles Taylor's work. See especially Charles Taylor, “The Importance of Herder” in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

¹⁰² This is taken from Kant *Reflection* 771 (1774-75), A. A. 15: 337, quoted in John Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment*, p. 38.

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 41-42.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁰⁶ In *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, Kant recapitulates the free/mercenary distinction in his discussion of faith. The logic of subordination is even more pronounced in this later text, and the implications are clearly much more severe: "The faith of a religion of divine worship, in contrast, is a *drudging* and mercenary faith and cannot be regarded as saving because it is not moral. For a moral faith must be free and based upon an ingenuous disposition of the heart." See Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. T. M. Greene and H. H. Hudson (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), p. 106.

¹⁰⁷ See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, Translator's Introduction, l-li.

¹⁰⁸ This passage is from Johann Gottfried Herder, *Samtliche Werke* I, p.155, quoted in Robert Norton, *Herder's Aesthetics and the European Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 102-03. I am using Robert Norton's translation of this passage.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Frederick Beiser suggests, moreover, that the changes from the first version to the second were primarily due to the influence of Kant's *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels* on Herder's still developing "genetic" method. See Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte*, pp. 141-142.

¹¹⁰ Kant suggest here that pleasure was once present at the origin of knowledge, which problematically historicizes the emphatic separation that Kant's present taxonomy requires: "It is true that we no longer feel any noticeable pleasure resulting from our being able to grasp nature and the unity in its division into genera and species that alone makes possible the empirical concepts by means of which we cognize nature in terms of its particular laws. But even the commonest experience would be impossible without it that we have gradually come to mix it in with mere cognition and no longer take any special notice of it (*CJ* VI, p. 27).

¹¹¹ Kant distinguishes our direct interest in natural beauty from our indirect liking for artistic beauty in two respects: first, art can imitate nature in a deceptive way such that we confuse art and nature, thus indirectly producing feelings of pleasure; or, "it is an art in which we can see that it intentionally aimed at our liking; but in that case, though our liking for the product would arise directly through taste, it would arouse only an indirect interest in the underlying cause, namely, an interest in an art that an interest us only by its purpose and never in itself" (*CJ* §42, p. 168).

¹¹² See Timothy Sean Quinn, "Kant's Apotheosis of Genius," *International Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. XXXI, No. 2, (1991): p. 163, where Quinn argues that "[b]ecause an immediate love for natural beauty reveals a moral interest, it must therefore violate the 'purity' of disinterested taste."

¹¹³ See John Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment*, p. 142, for his discussion of the "irony" of Kant's position.

¹¹⁴ It should be pointed out, however, that in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant seems to have partially abandoned his earlier commitment to the exclusion of genius from scientific fields. In this later text, the juxtaposition of "invention" and "discovery" does not simply extend Kant's earlier divisions, since now the works of Newton and Leibniz are included as productions of genius. But despite this modification of Kant's position here, there is also a return to a very much pre-critical type of analysis of the supposedly national characteristics of invention - a shift which defies the spirit, at least, of the transcendental argument found in the third *Critique*. See Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. V. L. Dowdell (London: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), pp. 123-29 especially.

¹¹⁵ Instead of translating *Nachahmung* into English as *imitation*, I will often use instead the Greek *mimesis* in order to retain the resonances between Kant on the one hand, and Plato and Aristotle on the other. Kant, as we shall see, repeats the Platonic devaluation of *mimesis* but reserves the spirit of imitation to the scientist alone, thus placing it under the purview of *logos* as does Aristotle. It is important to keep in mind that Kant's science/genius opposition turns on Kant's reductive understanding of pedagogy as mere rule following and imitation.

¹¹⁶ According to Hamann, for example, one of the purposes of art was to reveal the word of God by retranslating His original language into decipherable human words. Although we are denied access to this original, Adamic language, the poet is able to express His word through his own creative work. The artist is thus invested with a privileged metaphysical significance, and is accordingly granted a privileged pedagogical role as well. Beiser's discussion of Hamann, in particular, highlights the paradoxical nature of his aesthetics and the significance of this formulation for the coming Romantic generation. Hamann's theory, writes Beiser, "gave the artist his cake and allowed him to eat it too" since the "artist could express his personal passion and at the same time have a metaphysical insight into reality in itself." See Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte*, p.37. It is thus via Hamann's *Aesthetica in muce* that a Romantic faith develops whereby the work of art becomes "the new organon and criterion of metaphysical knowledge, avoiding all the pitfalls of pure reason so ruthlessly exposed in the Kantian critique" (Ibid.). (My understanding of Hamann is indebted to Charles Taylor, who lectured on Hamann and other Romantic and proto-Romantic philosophers of language in a seminar on "Romantic Poetics," given at the University of

Toronto, winter 1996.) The larger argument I am developing will show that this last claim is somewhat misleading, since in the third *Critique* Kant not only fails to constrain the privileges of artistic genius and the metaphysical significance of the fine arts, but also contributes to this Romantic trajectory by describing the mechanisms of art's metaphysical redemption. This is not to say that this was Kant's intention. In his polemical essay "On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy," for example, Kant bitterly criticizes the uncritical ascription of metaphysical insight to the poet that his rivals are claiming. "But the one who *philosophizes* beyond a mathematical problem believes that he has hit upon a secret and even believes he sees something extravagantly great where he sees nothing; and he posits true philosophy (*philosophia arcani*) in precisely the fact that he broods over the Idea in himself, which he can *neither make comprehensible nor even communicate to others*, [my italics] and so here poetic talent finds nourishment for itself in the feelings and enjoyment of exalting: which is, to be sure, far more inviting and splendid than the law of reason whereby one must work to acquire a possession. But here also poverty and haughtiness yield the most ridiculous phenomenon: hearing philosophy spoken in a *superior tone*." Immanuel Kant, "On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy" in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida*, ed. P. Fenves (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 56). Interestingly, Kant traces this superior tone of philosophy back to Plato, and juxtaposes it with Aristotle's thought, which is, by contrast "work." Much of the argument in this essay is sublimated in this way to a battle between these two ancient surrogates of contemporary philosophical quarrels, yet Kant clearly feels that philosophy itself is at stake here. He argues that all such movements of feeling beyond the realm of possible experience cannot produce cognition, but merely "supernatural communication (mystical illumination) which is then the death of all philosophy" (*Ibid.*, p. 62).

¹¹⁷ Zammito completely misses this consequence of Kant's position, arguing instead that the imitability assigned exclusively to science should be straightforwardly read as Kant's ironic deflation of the rational powers of genius. See John Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment*, pp. 139-41 especially.

¹¹⁸ A number of commentators, however, have called into question Kant's denial of genius to the scientist, arguing specifically that Newton's ability to explain his discoveries to others does not extend to how these discoveries occurred to Newton in the first place. Donald Crawford, for example, argues that Kant himself confuses "the order of discovery and the order of teaching or systematic exposition of truths already discovered." See Donald Crawford, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), p. 165. Kemal echoes this view in his claim that "Kant wrongly conflates creativity with the production of a particular sort of object." See Salim Kemal, *Kant and Fine Art*, p. 52. For Kemal, the distinction between science and the fine arts does not turn on the creativity of the latter as Kant implies in paragraph 47; rather, their dissimilarity is explicable by making reference to the different relationships which obtain

between the fine arts and science on the one hand, and “the rational and feeling subject” on the other (Ibid.). Accordingly, we need not go beyond Kant in order to account for this distinction, although Kant confuses the issue by illegitimately banishing creativity from science at the stage of discovery. Coleman is therefore right to critique Kant for the way he renders the distinction between the aesthetic and the scientific, but he is wrong to conclude that Kant’s “restriction of ‘genius’ to art and to the indeterminate workings of ‘aesthetic ideas’” is “arbitrary.” See F. X. J. Coleman, *The Harmony of Reason*, pp. 169-70.

¹¹⁹ As Derrida suggests in “On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy,” Kant does not object to “true aristocrats” who have a “natural” claim to their superior status, but only to those usurpers who illegitimately mimic an “overlordly tone” without the real authority of authentic social division. This indicates that Kant’s problem here is not strictly political but is motivated at the deepest level by a fear of *mimesis* contaminating the distinction between reality and imitation and thus upsetting the naturalized social hierarchies that remain unquestioned in Kant’s text. See Jacques Derrida, “On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy” in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida*, pp. 128 and 129. See also my discussion of the relationship between art and politics in Kant and Nietzsche in Jonathan Salem-Wiseman, “Nature, Deception and the Politics of Art: Divisions of Labor in Kant and Nietzsche” forthcoming in *International Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Spring 1998): pp. 107-120.

¹²⁰ Jacques Derrida, “Economimesis,” *Diacritics* 11 (June 1981): pp. 3-25.

¹²¹ See Jacques Derrida, “Economimesis,” p. 9.

¹²² In *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, Schiller claims that when the illusion offered by imitation is complete, the revelation of such deception destroys the feelings of pleasure that would otherwise attend the aesthetic experience. For Schiller, *mimesis* assumes an ethical content which is paradoxically negated when the mimicry of nature is most perfectly exercised. He concedes in a footnote, however, that it was Kant who first raised this as a philosophical problem. See Friedrich Schiller, *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* in *Friedrich Schiller: Essays*, eds. Daniel Dahlstrom and Walter Hinderer and trans. Daniel Dahlstrom (New York: Continuum, 1993), p. 180.

¹²³ Jacques Derrida, “Economimesis,” p. 6.

¹²⁴ Ibid. p. 10.

¹²⁵ For Kant’s grace/nature distinction, see Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, p. 179, in which nature is not simply reduced to physical properties understood in strict opposition to freedom.

¹²⁶ Jacques Derrida, "Economimesis," p. 9.

¹²⁷ Parts of the following discussion can be found in Jonathan Salem-Wiseman, "Modernity and Historicity in Kant's Theory of Fine Art" forthcoming in *Philosophy Today*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Spring 1998): pp. 16-24.

¹²⁸ Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 301.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 298 and 299.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 299.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 301-2.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ In all fairness to Guyer, he is not attempting to work out in any detail what a more consistent Kantian theory of art-historical development would look like; however, he would have better served his case had he at least provided basic arguments to justify his claims.

¹³⁸ See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

¹³⁹ Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture*. Tr. Jon R. Snyder (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), p. 94.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 93 and 94.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁴² See Paul de Man, "Literary History and Literary Modernity" in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

Press, 1983). Although de Man focuses on literary examples in his essay, there is no reason to limit the scope of his argument to field of literature alone. In what follows, accordingly, I will simply presuppose this extension, and let literature be the representative of the other arts.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 145.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 146.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 147.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 148.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 149.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 151. De Man cites, for example, Nietzsche's call to a future self-knowing "youth" to actively break from the paralyzing forces of history and inaugurate a new, unencumbered spirit of modernity. This motif will recur in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 156. De Man is citing Charles Beaudelaire, "Le peintre de la vie moderne" in F. F. Gautier, ed., *l'Art romantique, Oeuvres complètes, IV* (Paris, 1923), p. 208. De Man's italics.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 157.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 161.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), henceforth cited as *HAH*, and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), henceforth cited as *Zarathustra* or *Z*.

¹⁵⁸ My reading of Hegel is deeply influenced by the recent work of Terry Pinkard. See Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*, especially chapter six. See also Frederick Beiser, "Introduction: Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics" and Robert Pippin, "You Can't Get There from Here: Transition problems in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Frederick Beiser (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 1-24 and 52-85 respectively.

¹⁵⁹ There is much that I am skipping over here in this brief sketch. For a dissenting voice to the opposition I am drawing between Hegel and Nietzsche, see William Desmond, *Art and the Absolute: A Study of Hegel's Aesthetics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986), pp. 140 and 157-59 especially, wherein Desmond argues that Nietzsche's inversion of Platonism and his revaluation of sensibility is already underway in Hegel. Since, for Hegel, *Erscheinung* helps *Wesen* to appear, Desmond argues that they should not be seen as opposites - an anti-Platonic claim usually credited to Nietzsche. While I am sympathetic to Desmond's correction of Heidegger on this point, the fact remains that once art is understood as a sensuous presentation of the absolute, it cannot *not* be a thing of the past in a logical sense.

¹⁶⁰ See Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, pp. 262-63 for an excellent description of what Hegel means by absolute knowing, especially in contradistinction to religion.

¹⁶¹ The reversal that Nietzsche attempts to enact in *The Birth of Tragedy* is devoid of the logical force that propels the transitions in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. As Paul de Man rightly observes, the "mere reversal of the regressive movement that destroyed the Hellenic world into a symmetrical movement of regeneration by which the modern, German world is to be reborn" is "valueless" as an argument, since it assumes that the "events of history are founded in formal symmetries easy enough to achieve in pictorial, musical, or poetic fictions." See Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 84.

¹⁶² This leads, of course, to an entirely new, and possibly disastrous problem for Nietzsche. If Nietzsche wants to establish the superiority of Dionysian truth over illusory Socratic knowledge, then how can he even undertake this philosophical argument without presupposing the legitimacy of the (Socratic) position he is allegedly seeking to undermine? One need not be an Hegelian to discern the apparent contradiction of Nietzsche's argumentative strategy here. The fact that Nietzsche resorts to producing a scholarly/theoretical treatise to undermine the desirability of scholarship and theory suggests that Dionysian insight in particular, and aesthetic values more generally, are not self-sufficiently capable of establishing their own authority.

¹⁶³ Julian Young argues that there are two basic theses in *The Birth of Tragedy*. First of all, there is the "birth-of-tragedy" thesis, which asserts that tragedy originated through the union of Apollonian and Dionysian artistic energies, and "died" when its Dionysian

element was removed from Euripidean tragedy under the influence of Socrates. Second, Nietzsche articulates what Young calls the "Hellenism-and-pessimism" thesis, which explains how the Greeks were able to psychologically deal with the "terror and horror of existence" through the salutary effects of the artistic union of Apollo and Dionysus in early tragedy. See Julian Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 30.

¹⁶⁴ One particularly good discussion of the relationship between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer is Jacques Taminiaux, "Art and Truth in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche" in *Poetics, Speculation, and Judgment: The Shadow of the Work of Art from Kant to Phenomenology*, pp. 111-26.

¹⁶⁵ Nietzsche's argument should not be reductively construed as a claim about a local antagonism between two basic phases in the development of ancient Greek culture. More generally, Nietzsche wants to claim that the highest forms of art (of which Greek tragedy is but an instructive example) have value because they can help human beings affirm life, and thus escape from the pessimism which would otherwise accompany our inescapable experiences of suffering and cruelty. Consequently, since Socratic (that is, modern) culture is opposed to the Dionysian energies constitutive of great, life-affirming artistic expressions, it is unable to help us say "yes" to life. But not only that. Since Socratic culture also seeks to "correct" existence, it is essentially motivated by a reactive negation of life, an inability to affirm existence because it is understood as imperfection, error, and suffering. Nietzsche writes, for example of the "profound *illusion* that first saw the light of the world in the person of Socrates: the unshakable faith that thought, using the thread of causality, can penetrate the deepest abysses of being, and that thought is capable not only of knowing being but even of *correcting* it" (*BoT*, p. 95).

¹⁶⁶ In "History and Mimesis," Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe brilliantly unpacks the relationship between historical culture and the problem of imitation. Although his focus is on the second *Untimely Meditation*, much of what he writes here is directly applicable to Nietzsche's argument in *The Birth of Tragedy*. He writes, for example, that "[h]istorical *mimesis*, such as Nietzsche conceives it, does not consist of repeating the Greeks but of recovering the analogue of that which was their possibility: a disposition, a force, a power - the capability of extricating oneself from the present, of breaking with the past, of living and committing oneself under the constraint of what has not yet happened. This *mimesis* does not admit any constituted model; it constructs its models. It is a creative *mimesis*. It is a "poietic": it is great art itself." This passage thus situates Nietzsche's project explicitly within the horizon of the problematic of imitation and implicitly within the horizon of what I have been calling philosophical modernity. Lacoue-Labarthe also suggests that the task of cultural invention or self-founding - explicitly modernist, not to mention Germanic themes - depends upon either the struggle against, or the conversion of, *mimesis*. What must be transformed if a radical break with the past is to be accomplished is the sort of relationship to history based on a merely

passive imitation of what has been. In the case of *The Birth of Tragedy*, this means that the proper task of German or modern culture is not to re-invent slavishly a modern Greece, but to actively and creatively transform the present by imitating the active and creative transformations of the past - in this case the paradoxically, and paradigmatically ahistorical Greeks. See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "History and Mimesis" trans. Eduardo Cadava in *Looking After Nietzsche*, ed. Laurence Rickels (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), pp. 209-31.

¹⁶⁷ The most thorough, "historically" oriented study of *The Birth of Tragedy* is M. S. Silk and J. P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). It provides a much more detailed account of the historical periodization that I am only glossing over here.

¹⁶⁸ See John Sallis, *Crossings: Nietzsche and the Space of Tragedy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 20 and 21. Sallis goes on to complicate this sense of Dionysian *mimesis*, arguing that it "is not a matter of an individual artist adding art to a natural, proto-artistic Dionysian from which the artist would be distinct; rather, it is from the abysmal Dionysian circuit of transgression, disruption, reinstatement, into which the artist is cast, that the artwork is produced, nature adding art to itself in a kind of mimetic excess" (Ibid., p. 72).

¹⁶⁹ The Kantian echoes of this claim should not be ignored. According to Kant, the productive imagination receives its material from nature, yet because it is free from the law of association, "we can process that material into something quite different, namely, into something that surpasses nature" (CJ §49, p. 182). Compare this with Nietzsche's claim: "art is not merely imitation of the reality of nature but rather a metaphysical supplement of the reality of nature, placed beside it for its overcoming" (BoT, p. 140).

¹⁷⁰ It is ironic, therefore, to read in Nietzsche's subsequent "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" that "nothing could be more opposed to the purely aesthetic interpretation and justification of the world which are taught in this book than the Christian teaching, which is, and wants to be, *only* moral and which relegates art, *every* art, to the realm of *lies*; with its absolute standards, beginning with the truthfulness of God, it negates, judges, and damns art" (BoT, p. 23).

¹⁷¹ As far as I can determine, Nietzsche employs different descriptions of the same metaphysical ground. On some occasions, as I have already indicated, Nietzsche refers to "artistic energies which burst forth from nature;" on others, he refers to the "true author" or the "primordial artist of the world" to describe this ground. In his "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," Nietzsche justifies his argument in the *Birth of Tragedy* by stating that "art and *not* morality, is presented as the truly *metaphysical* activity of man" (BoT, p. 22). Against a Christian interpretation of his recourse to metaphysics, Nietzsche further contends that "the whole book knows only an artistic meaning and crypto-meaning

behind all events - a "god," if you please, but certainly only an entirely reckless and amoral *artist-god* [my italics] who wants to experience, whether he is building or destroying, in the good and in the bad, his own joy and glory - one who, creating worlds, frees himself from the *distress* of fullness and *overfullness* and from the *affliction* of the contradictions compressed into his soul" (*BoT*, p. 22).

¹⁷² For a good account of the relationship between Fichte and Jacobi – one that has helped me appreciate their respective differences from Nietzsche – see Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 28-52 (chapter one) especially.

¹⁷³ Of the more influential studies of Nietzsche that have decisively determined how *Human, All Too Human* (and Nietzsche's other "middle period" books) are to be read, see Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. 1. The Will to Power as Art*, p. 207 wherein the works in question are referred to as "the years of his [Nietzsche's] metamorphosis," and ultimately situated in the fifth and penultimate stage of Nietzsche's "overturning of Platonism" as sketched out in *Twilight of the Idols*. In Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 181-86 especially, *Human, All Too Human* and the other middle period books are characterized by their "lack of any commitment to a central thesis" and seem to be only of interest for their aphoristic style and the degree to which they adumbrate Nietzsche's later doctrine of the will to power. A more recent, yet still highly influential study is Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), which generally passes over all of Nietzsche's texts prior to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. One major book that does focus to some degree on *Human, All Too Human* is Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 95-103 especially. Clark, however, also reproduces the metamorphosis/ transition thesis of Heidegger and Kaufmann by focusing on Nietzsche's retention of the thing-in-itself from his earlier writings, although now it is epistemically inaccessible even to science, and therefore of "little interest" to our human, all too human beliefs and practices.

¹⁷⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 1968), p. 744.

¹⁷⁵ It is perhaps due to the discontinuity between *Human, All Too Human* and Nietzsche's other works that accounts for its lack of critical attention. For example, see Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1990), pp. 234-61, wherein he discusses Nietzsche's "aesthetics" yet fails to even mention the analysis of artists and art in *Human, All Too Human*. Ironically, it is Eagleton who reproduces the very aestheticism with which he charges Nietzsche by treating Nietzsche's philosophy as a unified whole, a seamless totality like a work of art which admits to no

development, change, multiplicity of voice, or internal opposition, thus ignoring the entire force of Nietzsche's argument under consideration here.

¹⁷⁶ See *HAH I*, 9, p. 15: "Even if the existence of such a world were never so well demonstrated, it is certain that knowledge of it would be the most useless of all knowledge: more useless even than knowledge of the chemical composition of water must be to the sailor in danger of shipwreck."

¹⁷⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §§ 43 and 44 especially.

¹⁷⁸ See *HAH I*, 167, p. 89: "If the same motif has not been treated in a hundred different ways by various masters, the public never learns to get beyond interests in the material alone, but once it has come to be familiar with the motif from numerous versions of it, and thus no longer feels the charm of novelty and anticipation, it will then be able to grasp and enjoy the nuances and subtle new inventions in the way it is treated." The often caustic remarks Nietzsche directs at both artists and art in this section of the book should always be read in the context of these more scarce, understated claims for the continuing role of art in the scientific age that Nietzsche celebrates here.

¹⁷⁹ See Julian Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art*, p. 72. Young writes that art "is left without a function" in *Human, All Too Human* - a claim which distinguishes this text from all of Nietzsche's other books, even those of his "positivistic" middle period between 1876 and 1882. Nietzsche does write: "Even if we possessed art - what influence of *any kind* does art exercise among us?" (*HAH I*, 212, p. 98), but that is a claim directed against the modern age only, which Nietzsche explicitly contrasts with the tragic age of the Greeks. As such, Nietzsche's claim should not be interpreted to mean that *all* art has been and will be without a purpose, nor should it be construed as a claim *celebrating* the demise of art in modern culture or for that matter its lack of influence. I have been arguing that only metaphysically pretentious Romantic art warrants that sort of categorical dismissal.

¹⁸⁰ Julian Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art*, p. 79.

¹⁸¹ The endorsements of "rank ordering" can be found in both *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Will to Power* in particular.

¹⁸² By Book V of *The Gay Science*, science is denounced for claiming to be the *one* authoritative interpretation of the world, which makes it a form of dogmatism no different from Christianity: "That the only justifiable interpretation of the world should be one in which *you* are justified because one can continue to work and do research scientifically in *your* sense (you really mean, mechanistically?) - an interpretation that permits counting, calculating, weighing, seeing, and touching, and nothing more - that is a crudity and naiveté, assuming that it is not a mental illness, an idiocy." See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The*

Gay Science, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974). Elsewhere, the scientist is described as “an old maid” and is criticized for lacking “nobility.” See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* in *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, p. 315 (aphorism 206).

¹⁸³ As Kant claimed, and as I discussed in Chapter 2, the possibility of scientific progress is grounded in the teachability of determinate concepts, whereas this process of learning through imitation is unavailable to practitioners of the fine arts. Since progress is thus explicitly ruled out in art-historical traditions, all that remains open to the artistic genius is the possibility, to use Rorty’s terms, of furnishing a new metaphor, a new description that is understood not as a claim to represent reality correctly, but “simply as one more vocabulary, one more human project” among many others. This proliferation of new vocabularies, and a gradual abandonment of the early-modernist attempts to finally “get things right” or construct a “final vocabulary,” marks the victory of poetry, of “self-creation” over philosophy and science in late-modern Europe. See Richard Rorty, “The Contingency of Selfhood,” in *Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 108. In *Zarathustra*, I am arguing here, the doctrine of the *Übermensch* corresponds to this early-modern attempt to get things right, while the later example of Zarathustra’s inherently private attempt self-creation corresponds to the formulation of just one more vocabulary amongst others. My own disagreements with Rorty will be outlined below.

¹⁸⁴ Stanley Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment: Nietzsche’s Zarathustra* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). See also my review in *Canadian Philosophical Reviews*, Vol. XVI, No. 4, (August 1996): pp. 284-86.

¹⁸⁵ Stanley Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment*, p. 56.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. xiv.

¹⁸⁷ See Daniel Conway’s excellent essays, “Solving the Problem of Socrates: Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* as Political Irony” in *Political Theory*, Vol. 16 No. 2, (May 1988): 257-280, and “Nietzsche Contra Nietzsche: The Deconstruction of *Zarathustra*” in *Nietzsche as Postmodernist: Essays Pro and Contra*, ed. Clayton Koelb (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), pp. 91-110. See also his more recent book, *Nietzsche and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

¹⁸⁸ Daniel Conway, “Solving the Problem of Socrates,” p. 266.

¹⁸⁹ Rosen is much more pessimistic about a way around Zarathustra’s pedagogical dilemmas, as the following summary of Zarathustra’s double-bind suggests: “If we become disciples of Zarathustra, then we are not supermen. If we become supermen, then we repudiate Zarathustra or become his enemies.” See Rosen, *The Mask of*

Enlightenment, p. 145. As I have already indicated, my own reading of *Zarathustra* is much closer to Conway's. Conway argues that Zarathustra accommodates "the deconstruction of his own authority" in order to "promote the sufficiency of others without simultaneously exerting on them an unduly formative influence." See Daniel Conway, "Nietzsche Contra Nietzsche," p. 108. I believe that Zarathustra subverts (rather than "deconstructs") his own authority precisely through the linking of his pedagogy to the servile mode of *mimesis* that Plato and Kant have condemned. I have suggested above that the final mimetic relationship between Zarathustra and the higher men is not imitative in this sense at all, but permits only an imitation of Zarathustra's freedom and self-creation. That this turn in Zarathustra's teaching can only be exemplified on the mountain and not in Motley Cow or the Blessed Isles suggests that this "teaching of freedom" through exemplarity (in opposition to Rousseau's "forcing to be free") is neither democratically enjoyed nor a merely utopian ideal, but a possibility for the capable few. In this sense, Kant's doctrine of genius finds a resounding echo in Zarathustra's final pedagogical position.

¹⁹⁰ See Alexander Nehemas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, pp. 170-199 especially.

¹⁹¹ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, pp. 181-82 (section 125).

¹⁹² Conway argues that the "teaching of the *Übermensch* more properly belongs to Zarathustra" - not to Nietzsche. This is because in *Zarathustra* the *Übermensch* is presented as the "transcendence," rather than the "perfection of humanity. See Daniel Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political*, pp. 20 and 21. I agree with Conway that Zarathustra's teaching thus "lapses regularly into idealism," but I think this is why such an ideal is implicitly repudiated in the text (*Ibid.*). In fact, the plot of *Zarathustra* would not make sense if the *Übermensch* was understood (as in *The Anti-Christ*, for example) merely as an exemplar of the "higher man." In general, however, I agree with those commentators like Conway, Lampert and Rosen who argue that the doctrine of the *Übermensch* is merely Zarathustra's "provisional" teaching, which eventually gives way to the "definitive" doctrine of the eternal return. Lampert in particular is extremely persuasive on this point: "It seems to me that one of the greatest single causes of misinterpretation of Nietzsche's teaching is the failure to see that the clearly provisional teaching on the superman is rendered obsolete by the clearly definitive teaching on the eternal return. That there is no call for a superman in the books after *Zarathustra* is no accident, but rather an implicit acknowledgment that the philosopher of the future has already come in the one who teaches that the weight of things resides in things and not in some future to which they may or may not contribute." See Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching* (New Haven: Yale, 1986), p. 258. According to Robert Pippin, Zarathustra ultimately rejects the teaching of the *Übermensch*-ideal because he comes to see his "transformative 'solution'" as merely the ideal of nihilistic, modern Europe. See Robert Pippin, "Irony and Affirmation in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in

Nietzsche's New Seas," ed. M. Gillespie and Tracy Strong (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 56.

¹⁹³ Zarathustra alludes to this scene again in "On the Flies of the Market Place." "Full of solemn jesters is the market place - and the people pride themselves on their great men, their masters of the hour" (Z, p. 164). Moreover, the "devilish" impersonation of Zarathustra is encountered again at the beginning of the second part, motivating his second *Untergang*.

¹⁹⁴ This should be contrasted with Socrates' argument in the *Republic* that the philosopher-king should return to the cave after his lengthy education, thus suggesting that the few have to be lured back to the many.

¹⁹⁵ In "On War and Warriors," Zarathustra refers to his disciples as his "brothers in war" and tells them that "War and courage have accomplished more great things than love of the neighbor" [*Nächstenliebe*] (Z, p. 159). Zarathustra thus sees his companions as timocratic men who must attain their nobility through obedience: "Your very commanding should be an obeying" (Z, p. 160). Further on, it becomes clear that Zarathustra is the philosophical legislator who does the commanding in the service of the "highest hope." "Your highest thought, however," Zarathustra tells his disciples "you should receive as a command from me - and it is: man is something that shall be overcome" (Z, p. 160).

¹⁹⁶ Later on in part three, Zarathustra laments the fact that he "must still be a poet," which indicates that he accepts the failure of his revolutionary transformation of mankind through his teaching of the *Übermensch*. He must continue to speak in parables instead of directly to man, since the people to whom he speaks will never be capable of understanding any teachings conveyed philosophically.

¹⁹⁷ Conway astutely notes that "Zarathustra's 'discovery' of a receptive audience represents a self-deceived retreat from the failures of his pedagogy; the allusion to the 'Isles of the Blest' of Greek mythology further suggests that Zarathustra has engineered an afterworldly redemption of his pedagogical struggles." See Daniel Conway, "Nietzsche Contra Nietzsche," p. 97.

¹⁹⁸ It is in this sense, then, that I agree with Pippin's claim that the *Übermensch* is merely the contingent ideal of late modernity, which means that its "self-created status" is vitiated by its dependence upon the particular needs of "late bourgeois culture." See Robert Pippin, "Irony and Affirmation in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*," p. 52.

¹⁹⁹ Conway points out the echoes of the myth of Er in Zarathustra's choices in part three wherein he "reproduces his original Socratic errors" of the first two parts of the text

before making the correct, anti-Socratic choices in part four. See Daniel Conway, "Solving the Problem of Socrates," p. 270.

²⁰⁰ See Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, p. 150.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* p. 153.

²⁰² Since other commentators have given detailed accounts of Zarathustra's encounter with the shepherd (who turns out to be Zarathustra, as we learn in "The Convalescent"), I will not reproduce what is already familiar here. It should be noted, however, that even the teaching of the eternal recurrence is reduced to a mere "hurdy-gurdy song" [*Leier-Lied*] by those who, in part three, are closest to Zarathustra: his animals. The episode is comedic precisely because the animals still seem to have no clue about the meaning of Zarathustra's new teaching. They are still under the impression that "getting it right" is a more important question than "who I am," the strictly existential issue which the eternal recurrence forces each of us to confront. Nietzsche is also attempting to convey the idea that the imitation or verbal reproduction of the teaching falls well short of what the teaching intends. It is ridiculous that Zarathustra's animals have attempted to appropriate Zarathustra's doctrine in this way. Moreover, at the end of this chapter the animals articulate a strong cosmological version of the doctrine. That the animals at first do not understand Zarathustra's teaching should be taken as a warning that the subsequently proclaimed cosmological version of the teaching is not to be equated with Zarathustra's.

²⁰³ Gilles Deleuze's highly improbable reading of the eternal recurrence founders on precisely this point. He argues that the "eternal return would become contradictory if it were the return of reactive forces," which entails that only the "becoming-active" can be affirmed in this unconditional way. But given the link between the active and the reactive that Nietzsche continually points out, the selective return that Deleuze discerns is itself contradictory and deeply inconsistent with much textual evidence in "The Convalescent" (wherein Nietzsche acknowledges that the small man recurs - the source of his great nausea) and elsewhere. See Gilles Deleuze "Active and Reactive" in *The New Nietzsche*, ed. David Allison and trans. Richard Cohen (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977), p. 102.

²⁰⁴ More generally, I take seriously Nietzsche's claim in *Ecce Homo* that in *Zarathustra* a "counter-ideal" is proposed in opposition to the ascetic ideal. Given that the ascetic ideal's most basic purpose is to confer meaning and significance exclusively to our self-inflicted modes of suffering and self-denial, it seems highly probable that Nietzsche has the eternal recurrence in mind here as the one doctrine which short-circuits all efforts to affirm life by denying its very conditions. Maudemarie Clark argues convincingly that the *Übermensch* ideal functions within *Zarathustra* much like the moral doctrines of the ascetic priest, and thus cannot be the counter-ideal Nietzsche has in mind in *Ecce Homo*. According to Clark, the teaching of the *Übermensch* implicitly deprives the small man of

his value, since his life is only worth anything in so far as it can be negated by this new, supposedly redemptive ideal. Zarathustra, furthermore, can only affirm his own existence as the teacher of the *Übermensch* by condemning the aspect of existence he most despises - the continued life of the small man. Zarathustra's great nausea results from his realization that if he were to return, he would return to the very historical conditions under which the small man presently flourishes, and thus he must conclude that what he despises most cannot be negated. Because the doctrine of eternal recurrence does not require the ascetic's logic of redemption through revenge (which is precisely the economic arrangement organizing all of Western metaphysics, Nietzsche believes) it should be construed as the only way of affirming life without simultaneously participating in its negation. See Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche On Truth and Philosophy*, pp. 276-77. I find Conway's response to this sort of argument unconvincing. He claims that since such a counter-ideal would "outstrip the diminished faculties of their [Nietzsche's and Zarathustra's] late modern readers," there can be no receptive audience for this teaching, and thus it cannot serve as the sort of counter-ideal that Nietzsche has in mind. See Daniel Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political*, pp. 103-4. It seems to me, however, that appeals to historical circumstances are hardly relevant to a discussion of the appropriateness of an *ideal*. The fact that no one believed the madman's proclamation of God's death does not mean, for example, that Nietzsche's teaching is not also directed at a contemporary audience, even if the small or last man ignores or misunderstands his words.

²⁰⁵ Zarathustra's *Züchter und Zuchtmeister* resonates with the title of part four of *The Will to Power*, "Zucht und Züchtung" [Discipline and Breeding], although the political teaching of the later text - the classical locus of the "bloody Nietzsche" - is precisely what Zarathustra has abandoned in his own pedagogical practices. For an interesting assessment of Nietzsche's return to the beliefs that I am arguing Zarathustra rejects, namely, the determination that only an explicitly *political* transformation of modern European life is possible, see Tracy Strong, "Nietzsche's Political Aesthetics" in *Nietzsche's New Seas: Explorations in Philosophy, Aesthetics and Politics*, pp. 153-174.

²⁰⁶ In "The Drunken Song," Zarathustra asks: "Have you ever said Yes to a single joy?" Answering his own question, Zarathustra emphasizes the existential import of the eternal recurrence doctrine: "O my friends, then you said Yes to *all* woe. All things are entangled, ensnared, enamored..." (*Z*, p. 435).

²⁰⁷ The means, I think, that the aesthetic terminology Nietzsche employs to describe the self is not reducible to metaphors. In both *The Gay Science* and *Zarathustra*, at least, I think Nietzsche's understanding of self-overcoming and becoming what one is is intelligible only as a quite literal act of artistic creation. Although this voluntaristic model of self-creation is prevalent in these two texts, Nietzsche does gradually abandon his aesthetic doctrine of the self in his later texts wherein his concern becomes more explicitly political.

²⁰⁸ See *CJ* §47, p. 177.

²⁰⁹ Heidegger understands three distinct ways in which Dasein can “be” with others, which sheds light on Zarathustra’s transformation here. First, Heidegger describes a negative mode of caring-for characterized by a lack of care between people. Others simply show up for Dasein as not mattering. Second, he juxtaposes two positive modes of caring-for, the first of which is characterized by a “leaping in” which takes over the other’s possibilities. Although Heidegger emphatically does not offer a psychological explication of what motivates this covert appropriation of another life, for Nietzsche it would clearly be the result of perceiving a “lack” in the other and pitying the other in virtue of that lack. Such a relationship is still cultivated in the first half of *Zarathustra*, in which the very rationale of Zarathustra’s descent to man is the perception of a lack of self-sufficiency. What he realizes, finally, is that his descent does not simply respond to, but also engenders, the very dependency it is intended to abolish. Heidegger’s second mode of positive solicitude is thus what I believe characterizes Zarathustra’s relationship with mankind in book four. Instead of leaping in and taking away the other’s possibilities, Zarathustra now “leaps ahead” and *opens up* possibilities for the other, precisely by exemplifying new possibilities in his own mode of existence. I will be taking up this point with respect to Heidegger’s text in Chapter 4. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 158-9 (henceforth cited as *BT*).

²¹⁰ Rorty argues for a distinction between our private, ironist stance and public concerns. It is the mistake of metaphysicians to believe that our private vocabulary can function as a final vocabulary that offers true claims about reality, history, the essence of man, etc. See Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), chapter four especially.

²¹¹ Daniel Conway, “Solving the Problem of Socrates,” p. 274.

²¹² Robert Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 121.

²¹³ *Ibid.* p. 118-19.

²¹⁴ I should state at the outset of this chapter that it is difficult to simply talk about Heidegger’s “relationship” with “modernity,” since much of his philosophical project involved making manifest the hitherto forgotten grounds that made modernity, as an essentially metaphysical category, possible. Modernity, therefore, is never the exclusive focus of Heideggerian inquiry; it is instead a mere symptom of the final “stage” or epoch of the history of being. When Heidegger does speak about the basic features of modern age, his remarks are insightful, if not detailed. For example, in “The Age of the World Picture,” Heidegger outlines five essential phenomena of modernity: 1) the development

of modern science, 2) the growth of machine technology, 3) the consideration of art from the purview of aesthetics, 4) the consummation of human activity in culture, and 5) the Hölderlinian “loss of the gods.” See *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977), p. 116 (henceforth cited as *QCT*).

²¹⁵ The destruction of the history of ontology was understood by Heidegger to be the necessary preparation for any subsequent (post-metaphysical) thinking as early as 1927. In *Being and Time* Heidegger writes: “If the question of Being is to have its own history made transparent, then this hardened tradition must be loosened up, and the concealments which it has brought about must be dissolved. We understand this task as one in which by taking *the question of Being as our clue*, we are to *destroy* the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being - the ways which have guided us ever since.” (*BT*, p. 44)

²¹⁶ Robert Bernasconi, *Heidgger in Question: The Art of Existing* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993), especially chapter six.

²¹⁷ The importance of Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche for his interpretation of the essence of modernity cannot be underestimated. As Randall Havas remarks: “Heidegger’s overall account of life in the present age depends essentially upon his reading of Nietzsche. Approaching Nietzsche in the right way provides insight, Heidegger insists, into what it means to be modern.” See Randal Havas, “Who is Heidegger’s Nietzsche? (On the Very Idea of the Present Age)” in *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, edited by Hubert Dreyfus and Harrison Hall (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 231. For another good discussion of Heidegger and Nietzsche in this respect, see L. P. Thiele, “Twilight of Modernity: Nietzsche, Heidegger and Politics” in *Political Theory*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (August 1994): pp. 468-90.

²¹⁸ John Sallis, *Echoes: After Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), chapter 7 especially.

²¹⁹ I am here alluding to Derrida’s reading of Heidegger’s Nazi affiliations in which he suggests that Heidegger’s spiritualization of National Socialism both confers a false philosophical legitimacy upon Nazism, but simultaneously demarcates Heidegger’s “politics” from the “‘ideological’ camp in which one appeals to obscure forces - forces which would not be spiritual, but natural, biological, racial, according to an anything but spiritual interpretation of ‘earth and blood.’” See Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. by G. Bennington and R. Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 39.

²²⁰ Heidegger's political debacle has motivated his critics to find evidence of Nazism in his philosophical work prior to 1933, which has led to some of the most remarkably naive readings of, especially, *Being and Time*. Tom Rockmore, for instance, so completely misunderstands what Heidegger means by fundamental ontology that he claims to detect the "incipient antirationalist side of his philosophy...in his insistence on the analysis of Dasein as prior to and apart from the various sciences (§ 10)." See Tom Rockmore, *On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), p. 127. This insistence is tantamount to claiming that fundamental ontology is inherently "antirational," which I think is patently absurd. Heidegger's ontology must be fundamental if he is not simply to take over the received conceptions of being from regional ontologies, like psychology or the biological sciences. Fundamental ontology must both exceed, and account for, the determinations of being latent in the regional ontologies of the various scientific disciplines. Heidegger was consistent on this point until the end of his philosophical life. See, for example, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking" in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 377. A more promising approach is suggested, but not developed by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, who indicates that Heidegger's political and philosophical commitments of 1933-34 are not accidental, because they are already prefigured by his analysis of Dasein's historical character in division 2, chapter 5 of *Being and Time*. See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics* trans. Chris Turner (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 18. For a provocative analysis of how Heidegger's political involvements motivated his subsequent engagement with Greek tragedy, see Norman Swazo, "Gnothi Sauton: Heidegger's Problem Ours" in the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 25, No. 3, October 1994, pp. 263-87. Swazo argues that Heidegger's meditations on Sophocles and the paradigmatic fate of Oedipus immediately following his Rectorship suggest that Heidegger understood his political involvement with National Socialism as a form of physical blindness, even if he was able to "see metaphysically."

²²¹ See Richard Wolin's "Introduction" to Richard Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), p. 8. Additionally, see Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *Heidegger and Modernity*, trans. Franklin Philip (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), who argue that recent attempts (Derrida in particular, but also Elisabeth de Fontenay and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe) to explain Heidegger's political involvements in terms of his lingering metaphysical commitments merely reproduce the initial, exculpatory claims of the orthodox, post-War Heideggerians. Like Wolin, the authors wonder if Heidegger's criticisms of modernity are in fact inextricably tied to his support for National Socialism. I quote at length: "Beyond these interpretive stakes, the deepest significance of the debate, for which the Farias book and even the discussion of the Heidegger case are merely the occasion becomes clear: it hinges on - we can see this clearly in Derrida - the criticism of modernity, and what defines it philosophically, culturally, and no doubt also politically, to wit, the outbreak of subjectivity and the values of humanism. The Heidegger

controversy merely stands in the foreground of a controversy that has a quite different impact, involving nothing less than the significance attributed to the logic of modernity: if we argue about it so much today, isn't it because Heidegger's deconstruction of modernity provided a considerable part of the French intelligentsia with the bases and style of its criticism of the modern world? More precisely yet, aren't the reactions all the more spirited because to account for the specific terms and full extent of Heidegger's involvement with the Nazis, we have no choice but to wonder whether this aspect of his critical thinking about modernity wasn't related to the way this thinking attributed to National Socialism 'an inner truth and greatness'?" Ibid., pp. 53-4.

²²² Wolin has Carl Schmitt, Oswald Spengler, and Ernst Jünger in mind when he speaks of those conservative revolutionaries who have continued this "Nietzschean-inspired" tradition into the twentieth century. See Richard Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, p. 273.

²²³ Ibid., p. 7.

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 8. At no point, however, does Wolin attempt to develop in any detail Heidegger's actual comments on the ancient Greek polis. We are merely presented with the suggestion that Heidegger "shares" Nietzsche's evaluation (a claim which is an oversimplification, if not utterly misleading), but Wolin does not even bother to trace the crucial changes that Heidegger's reading of the ancient polis actually undergoes in the period from *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935) to the lecture course on Hölderlin's "Der Ister" (1942). As I have been arguing throughout this dissertation, this sort of "evidence" cannot be read as a simple confirmation of Heidegger's anti-modernist stance, since the dissatisfactions with Enlightenment-style reassurances about the authority of reason and the turn to what I have been calling "aesthetic autonomy" (including, of course, the descriptions of the realization of self-legislation through acts of (self)-creation) certainly precede Heidegger and Nietzsche, and extend to thinkers - from Schelling to Adorno - who Wolin, presumably, would not want to exclude from the modernist camp.

²²⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein."* *Gesamtausgabe* 39 (Frankfurt: Klosterman, 1980) cited in Ibid., p. 9.

²²⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche III, The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, David Farrell Krell, and Frank Capuzzi (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1987), p. 178. Heidegger argues that the essence of modernity should not be determined by our reflection on phenomena in the fields of politics, poetry and the natural sciences, but should rather be construed as the epoch at the beginning of which, firstly, "man installs and secures himself as *subiectum*, as the nodal point for beings as a whole; and secondly, that the beingness of beings as a whole is grasped as the representedness of whatever can be produced and explained." Ibid.

²²⁷ Michel Haar, for one, actually attributes Heidegger's political debacle in terms of a "disastrous impatience" to transform the essence of man. Although Heidegger officially claimed that only poets and thinkers could accomplish this by disclosing a new truth of being for an epoch, Haar suggests that Heidegger was seduced by the illusory temptation of Nazism to produce a new type of human being (although never, for Heidegger, in a racial/biological sense) through total state control and dominance. Haar notes, however, that Heidegger's massive blunder actually betrays the very sorts of subjectivism and voluntarism that his later work attempted to comprehend as the basic metaphysical position of the modern age. See Michel Haar, *Heidegger and the Essence of Man*, trans. William McNeill (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), p. xxxi.

²²⁸ For Heidegger, the "epoch" of metaphysics does not simply denote the historical period between Plato and Nietzsche during which Western philosophy flourished, but also the "withdrawal" or "withholding" of being that is constitutive of metaphysical thought itself.

²²⁹ In section one of that text, Heidegger reviews three of the usual presuppositions or prejudices we have that obscure not only the possibility of an answer, but even the possibility of formulating the question of the meaning of being in an adequate way. (See *BT*, pp. 22-3)

²³⁰ See *BT*, p. 257 as well as Heidegger's extended discussion of truth in section 44 and in the 1930 essay, Martin Heidegger, "The Essence of Truth," in *Basic Writings*, pp. 117-41.

²³¹ In his later essay, "My Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics," Heidegger writes: "To metaphysics the nature of truth always appears only in the derivative form of the truth of knowledge and the truth of propositions which formulate our knowledge. Unconcealedness, however, might be prior to all truth in the sense of *veritas*. *Aletheia* might be the word that offers a hitherto unnoticed hint concerning the nature of *esse* which has not yet been recalled. If this should be so, then the representational thinking of metaphysics could certainly never reach this nature of truth, however zealously it might devote itself to historical studies of pre-Socratic philosophy; for what is at stake here is not some renaissance of pre-Socratic thinking: any such attempt would be vain and absurd." See Martin Heidegger, "My Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics," trans. Walter Kaufmann in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, ed. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Meridian Books, 1975), p. 268.

²³² In one of his most succinct statements on this topic, Heidegger writes: Of course, metaphysics acknowledges that beings are not without Being. But scarcely has it said so when it again transforms Being into a being, whether it be the supreme being in the sense of the first cause, whether it be the distinctive being in the sense of the subject of subjectivity, as the condition of the possibility of all objectivity, or whether, as a

consequence of the coherence of both these fundamental conditions of Being in beings, it be the determination of the supreme being as the Absolute in the sense of unconditioned subjectivity.” See Martin Heidegger, “Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being” in *NIV*, p. 208.

²³³ Heidegger provides one of his many lists of words for being in a section of *Identity and Difference* entitled “The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics”: “There is Being only in this or that particular historic character: *Physis, Logos, Hen, Idea, Energeia, Substantiality, Objectivity, the Will, the Will to Power, the Will to Will.*” See Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 66.

²³⁴ In a late text Heidegger writes: “To hold back is, in Greek, *epoche*. Hence we speak of the epochs of the destiny of Being. Epoch does not mean here a span of time in occurrence, but rather the fundamental characteristic of sending, the actual holding-back of itself in favor of the discernibility of the gift, that is, of Being with regard to the grounding of beings.” See Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being* trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), p. 9.

²³⁵ See *BT*, p. 44, and the rest of §6, “The Task of Destroying the History of Ontology” for a clear statement of Heidegger’s account of this “destruction of ontology.”

²³⁶ In “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking,” Heidegger writes: For since the beginning of philosophy and with that beginning, the Being of beings has showed itself as the ground (*arche, aiton*, principle). The ground is that from which beings as such are what they are in their becoming, perishing, and persisting as something that can be known, handled, and worked upon.” See Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p. 374.

²³⁷ As Heidegger writes: “Not only do we lack any criterion which would permit us to evaluate the perfection of an epoch of metaphysics as compared with any other epoch, the right to this kind of evaluation does not exist. Plato’s thinking is no more perfect than Parmenides’. Hegel’s philosophy is no more perfect than Kant’s. Each epoch of philosophy has its own necessity. We simply have to acknowledge the fact that a philosophy is the way it is. It is not for us to prefer one to the other, as can be the case with regard to various *Weltanschauungen*.” *Ibid.*, p. 375.

²³⁸ This is precisely what Nietzsche attempts with his own *Überwindung* of metaphysics, but since he ultimately provides a metaphysical explanation of metaphysics - a metaphysics of metaphysics, in Heidegger’s words - he is unable to either determine the essence of metaphysics or successfully move beyond it. Heidegger writes: “For it is precisely in the positing of new values from the will to power, by which and through which Nietzsche believes he will overcome nihilism, that nihilism proper first proclaims that there is nothing to Being itself, which has now become a value... Value thinking is

now elevated into a principle. Being itself, as a matter of principle, is not admitted as Being. According to its own principle, in this metaphysics there is *nothing* to Being. How can what is worthy of thought be given here with Being itself, namely, Being as - Being? How could an overcoming of nihilism occur here, or even make itself felt?" See *NIV*, p. 203.

²³⁹ According to Heidegger, "the name *metaphysics* means nothing other than knowledge of the being of beings, which is distinguished by apriority and which is conceived by Plato as *idea*. Therefore, *meta-physics* begins with Plato's interpretation of being as *idea*. For all subsequent times, it shapes the essence of Western philosophy, *whose history, from Plato to Nietzsche, is the history of metaphysics.*" See *NIV*, p. 164).

²⁴⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 13.

²⁴¹ Nietzsche writes, for example: "The question of values is more *fundamental* than the question of certainty: the latter becomes serious only by presupposing that the value question has already been answered" (Ibid., section 588). The priority of the question of value thus enables Nietzsche to read the history of metaphysics as a series of value-projections through which particular values (truth, beauty, goodness, or certainty in the case of Descartes) are ascribed with a foundational, transcendent(al) stature.

²⁴² For Heidegger's articulation of this logic, see his essay "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead'" in *QCT*, p. 78: "For the essence of power lies in being master over the level of power attained at any time. Power is power only when and only so long as it remains power-enhancement, even a mere remaining at a standstill at a level of power, is already the beginning of the decline of power. To the essence of power belongs the overpowering of itself." As Reiner Schürmann notes, since the only goal of the will to power is power, then "every *telos* of the will to power turns into its obstacle." See Reiner Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy*, trans. Christine-Marie Gros (Bloomington: Indianapolis University Press, 1987), p. 189. This is important to understand, since so much Nietzsche scholarship has attempted to specify the *particular* values to which the will to power is committed. Much of the strength of Heidegger's "metaphysical" reading of the will to power lies in its refusal to reductively construe the will to power as a biological, psychological or political category.

²⁴³ Nietzsche's determination as the uppermost values as "categories" serves as evidence for Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche as a transcendental philosopher. It should be noted, of course, that much of the evidence Heidegger marshals in his interpretation of Nietzsche comes from one or two notes of the *Nachlass* material. See *NIV*, p. 36-42.

²⁴⁴ Heidegger writes, somewhat programmatically, that "*We must grasp Nietzsche's philosophy as the metaphysics of subjectivity*" (*NIV*, p. 147). Heidegger's claim

notoriously fails to consider fully the anti-subjectivistic impulses in Nietzsche's thought, such as his denial of a self-present subject, a "doer" behind each deed, and his remarkable anticipations of Freud in his claim that the body "is a great reason, a plurality with one sense, a war and a peace, a herd and a shepherd." See *Z*, p. 146. In a more contemporary theoretical vocabulary, we might say that Nietzsche denies the possibility of free and autonomous subjectivity existing prior to, and independently of, any network of power-relations, which, in fact, are actually constitutive of subjectivity itself. This is the appropriate conclusion to draw from Nietzsche's ground-breaking analyses of our psychological, moral, and juridical categories in the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

²⁴⁵ See *NIV*, p. 169 especially.

²⁴⁶ See "The Age of the World Picture" in *QCT*, p. 128.

²⁴⁷ For Heidegger's discussion of machination, see *NIII*, pp. 174-83.

²⁴⁸ In a particularly striking passage, Heidegger reveals his "opposition" to the technological age, despite his subsequent and official claims that technology, as a mode of revealing, as an ontologically neutral phenomenon: "In the planetary imperialism of technologically organized man, the subjectivism of man attains its acme, from which point it will descend to the level of organized uniformity and there firmly establish itself. This uniformity becomes the surest instrument of total, i.e., technological, rule over the earth. The modern freedom of subjectivity vanishes totally in the objectivity commensurate with it." See *QCT*, p. 152.

²⁴⁹ By "Wesen" Heidegger does not simply mean essence, as if he wanted to understand what was common to all technological forms, but also "presencing." In other words, Heidegger is attempting to show how beings are disclosed, or "come to presence" in the age of technology.

²⁵⁰ See *QCT*, p. 4.

²⁵¹ In contrast to Nietzsche's will to power, the will to will is already in possession of what it wills: the will itself. In "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead,'" Heidegger writes: "What the will wills it does not merely strive after as something it does not yet have. What the will wills it has already. For the will wills its will. Its will is what it has willed. The will wills itself." See *QCT*, p. 77.

²⁵² *Ibid.* p. 28.

²⁵³ Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John Anderson and ed. Hans Freund (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), p. 54.

²⁵⁴ See Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 199.

²⁵⁵ Very generally, I think this captures the inherent problem with Heidegger's understanding of the political that persisted, in different ways, throughout his philosophical life. In his later thought, Heidegger believed that because politics is always but a mere reflection or symptom of a deeper metaphysical essence, then all politics, in essence, will be metaphysically "the same." By ruling out the possibility of an "authentic" politics, the later Heidegger is at least immune from repeating his disastrous political engagement of the 1930s, but it also means that he is increasingly unable to make political distinctions and judgments about politics and political regimes. His attempt to think the essence of politics thus massively constrains what he is able to say philosophically about his own political involvements. I believe that Heidegger's post-war "silence" about Nazism is largely the result of his inability to address political and ethical questions in a specific way. He simply lacked the philosophical vocabulary for comprehending the meaning of fascism, or his own commitments to the National Socialist movement.

²⁵⁶ It is worth mentioning that Heidegger's first lectures on Hölderlin in which the "dialogue" between thinking and poetry is inaugurated came immediately after his political failure as *Rektor*. According to Miguel de Beistegui, this concern with Hölderlin's national hymns marks the beginning of Heidegger's attempt to think the essence of the national, of the German nation in particular, prior to any specific political determinations and the more familiar manifestations of nationalism. It is clear that from this time on, it is *Hölderlin* rather than Hitler who is able to disclose the historical situation of the German people and thus offer Germany the possibility of a new beginning unfettered by the metaphysics of the will. In de Beistegui's words, "starting in 1934-5, the true *Führung* is to be found in poetry understood as *Dichtung*." See Miguel de Beistegui, *Heidegger and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 88. For a fine treatment of Heidegger's relationship to poetry, see Veronique Foti, *Heidegger and the Poets: Poiesis, Sophia, Technè* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1992). For a response to some of the debates about Heidegger's politics, and a discussion of his politics in relation to the university, see David Krell, *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), part two especially. For a sympathetic discussion of Heidegger's "political philosophy," one which refuses to reduce his political thinking to his "official" political texts, see Fred Dallmayr, *The Other Heidegger* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), chapters one and two especially.

²⁵⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. David Krell and Frank Capuzzi (San Francisco: Harper and Row: 1975), p. 58.

²⁵⁸ I owe this gloss to J. M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno*, pp. 112-13.

²⁵⁹ See Robert Bernasconi, *Heidegger in Question*, chapter 6 (especially pp. 112-16), for an excellent discussion of these themes in Heidegger's work. Bernasconi notes that in "The Origin of the Work of Art," the generality of the Greek *technè* made it difficult for Heidegger to make his own distinction between self-subsistent art and the being of equipment, whereas in his later essay, "The Question Concerning Technology," it is precisely this proximity between art and technology which grants Heidegger the perspective to suggest that our consideration of art might enable us to reflect more deeply upon a possibility of revealing that escapes and resists the "challenging forth" of *das Gestell*. See also the account of *technè* in Edith Wyschogrod, *Spirit in Ashes: Hegel, Heidegger, and Man-Made Mass Death* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 177-193 especially. See also Michael Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, Art* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990).

²⁶⁰ The lines "But where danger is, grows / The saving power also" is invoked by Heidegger in the midst of his discussion of Enframing in *QCT*, p. 28.

²⁶¹ This articulation of being in terms of time is the subject matter of the projected, but never officially written third division of *Being and Time*. As such, *Dasein and Temporality* would be a more appropriate title for the completed portion of the text.

²⁶² See John Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 86. My understanding of the temporal structure of Dasein owes much to Caputo's discussion here.

²⁶³ Obviously, the characterization of the moral law as a "public conscience" is a somewhat reductive reading of Kant. For a more sustained reading of Kant's moral philosophy, see *The Basic Problems in Phenomenology*, pp. 131-47 especially.

²⁶⁴ I have chosen to translate "*Fürsorge*" as "caring-for" instead of as Macquarrie and Robinson's "solicitude," which fails to retain any resonance with "*Sorge*" (care).

²⁶⁵ See *BT*, pp. 158-59. In opposition to leaping in and dominating, Heidegger also describes a second extreme mode of caring-for characterized by a leaping forth and liberating. This authentic binding together of Dasein with the Other "frees the Other in his freedom for himself," which means, essentially, that the Other's self has become transparent [*durchsichtig*], and an authentic self-understanding has been made possible.

²⁶⁶ A discussion of whence *in particular* Dasein draws its possibilities would, of course, compromise the ontological nature of Heidegger's analysis.

²⁶⁷ I agree with Lacoue-Labarthe that Heidegger's political commitments in 1933 are no accident, and that what Heidegger did and said at that time is generally consistent with the contents of the chapter on historicity under consideration here. See Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art, and Politics*, p. 18 specifically, and chapter 3 in general. More recently, Miguel de Beistegui has argued that Heidegger moves too quickly in these crucial paragraphs on the relationship between fate and destiny, and suggests that Heidegger's analysis is "ontically overdetermined" such that it is "politically oriented" from the start. De Beistegui is likewise too quick, however, when he suggests that there is an inherent problem in Heidegger's characterization of Dasein's "co-historicizing" with others. He argues that since the being-with-one-another of communal life is a *fallen* mode of Dasein's being from which authentic Dasein extricates itself in the movement of anticipatory resoluteness, it is thus wrong for Heidegger to indicate that an authentically destinal history as described is even possible. This charge, however, that Heidegger cannot legitimately move from Dasein's fate to the community's destiny, is undercut by Heidegger's previous claims, as I mention above, that *Mitsein* is not inherently authentic, even if that is usually the case. It is certainly true that Heidegger does not give a phenomenologically adequate characterization of Dasein's co-historicizing, but this does not necessarily point to an inherent problem with Heidegger's all-too-general remarks. De Beistegui, however, is absolutely right to ask exactly what anticipatory resoluteness would mean for the "we" of a community. See de Beistegui, *Heidegger and the Political*, pp. 17-20.

²⁶⁸ Lacoue-Labarthe has likewise commented on Heidegger's silence on this issue: "Of course, Heidegger does not breathe a word about the problem of imitation. Though some paragraphs before, the relation to the past is defined according to the possibility, for *Dasein*, of "choosing its heroes" (§74) – and what is a hero, if not a model or an example?" Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "History and Mimesis," trans. Eduardo Cadava in *Looking After Nietzsche*, ed. Laurence Rickels (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), p. 230.

²⁶⁹ Although I hesitate, like Heidegger, to give examples, I think the *mimetic* relationship that is operative here recalls Harold Bloom's description of the relationship between strong poets and their predecessors. What Bloom's strong poet resists and most fears is precisely the absolute dominance of the past over the present, the inability to offer a "reciprocal rejoinder" to their poetic inheritance, so to speak. The strong poet's "horror of finding oneself to be only a copy or replica" thus initiates the poet's *agon* with his or her predecessors, in which the later poet rebels against death by attempting to impose his or her own poetic voice upon the present, thus repeating the very creative act of previous strong poets. See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 80. In order to understand a poem, consequently, Bloom argues that we should learn to read it as a "deliberate misinterpretation... of a parent poem" (*Ibid.*, p. 94). Obviously, this relationship between strong poets is more explicit and self-conscious than Heidegger requires; one need not,

after all, “*explicitly* know the origin of the possibilities upon which that resoluteness projects itself” (*BT*, p., 437).

²⁷⁰ Echoes of this claim recur in Heidegger’s later thought. For example, in his first lecture course on Nietzsche, Heidegger argues that any philosophy which attempts to simply dispense with its history will inevitably mistake its original and new interpretations for traditional ones that have long since been known. The opposition, therefore, between a revolutionary future and what-has-been cannot be upheld: “The greater a revolution is to be, the more profoundly must it plunge into its history” (*NI*, p. 203).

²⁷¹ I disagree, consequently, with Lacoue-Labarthe, who suggests somewhat hastily that Dasein’s authentic historicizing, its “repetition” of hitherto concealed possibilities, simply “is, strictly speaking, the Nietzschean scheme of historicity.” See Lacoue-Labarthe, “History and Mimesis,” in *Looking After Nietzsche*, p. 230. As I have tried to show, although Nietzsche and Heidegger are addressing the same problematic of history, their “solutions” to how our future existence can be negotiated are quite different.

²⁷² This is just to invoke, once more, the title of Bernard Yack’s study of philosophical modernism.

²⁷³ Martin Heidegger, “The Self-Assertion of the German University” trans. William Lewis in Richard Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, pp. 29-39 (henceforth cited as *SA*).

²⁷⁴ Heidegger makes this claim even though the youth in his audience could not possibly have shared his understanding of the essence of the German university. If the self-assertion of the teachers and students is contingent upon the self-assertion of the university, and if *this* self-assertion is contingent upon the prior disclosure of the German university’s essence, then it seems difficult to understand how the self-assertion could already have been decided by the youth.

²⁷⁵ For the Greeks, this relationship between man and the truth of beings was understood as *technè*. Residing in this claim, then, is the nascent opposition between *technè* and technology that will become so crucial to Heidegger’s later thinking. The list of “world-shaping forces” certainly does not privilege technology, but it does show that *technè* is excessive, that it precedes and exceeds the epochal configuration of modern technology, and thus contains within itself the possibility of re-inventing our relationship to *das Gestell*. This suggestion, of course, is still only latent in the address itself. What is perhaps ironic, and what I believe constitutes the fundamental weakness of the address from a *Heideggerian perspective*, is the way in which the questioning of the essence of science, of *technè*, is couched in the very rhetoric of the subjectivistic, metaphysics of the will. Heidegger is thus approaching the archaic determination of *technè* from the willful

stance of modern technology, whereas the proper mode of questioning, as Heidegger himself later realizes and develops, is to approach the essence of modern technology from the perspective of the originary sending of *technè*.

²⁷⁶ See Graeme Nicholson, "The Politics of Heidegger's Rectoral Address," *Man and World* 20, 1987: p. 185.

²⁷⁷ At one (low) point Heidegger writes: "To give law to oneself is the highest freedom. The much praised 'academic freedom' is being banished from the German university; for this freedom was false, because it was only negating. It meant predominantly lack of concern, arbitrariness in one's intentions and inclinations, lack of restraint in everything one does." See *SA*, p. 43.

²⁷⁸ See Miguel de Beistegui, *Heidegger and the Political*, p. 45.

²⁷⁹ My reading thus intersects with Christopher Fynsk's philosophical concerns surrounding his political involvements of 1933. Fynsk attempts "to account philosophically for the necessary insertion of philosophical discourse within a play of interests that inevitably exceeds its power to make those interests *its own*, but also to describe why philosophy cannot be wholly of its time, even as it assumes the responsibility of its history." See Christopher Fynsk, *Heidegger: Thought and Historicity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 112, but also 104-30 wherein the *Rektoratsrede* is discussed particularly with respect to how *Selbstbehauptung* is developed within an essentially tragic schema.

²⁸⁰ Heidegger defines *technè* as *Wissen*, knowledge, which is very different from its typical translation as "art" or "handicraft." In his 1936 Nietzsche lecture, Heidegger makes the following claim: "If man tries to win a foothold and establish himself among the beings (*physis*) to which he is exposed, if he proceeds to master beings in this or that way, then his advance against beings is borne and guided by a knowledge of them. Such *knowledge* is called *technè*. From the very outset the word is not, and never is, the designation of a "making" and a producing; rather, it designates that knowledge which supports and conducts every human irruption into the midst of beings." See *NI*, p. 82. For another clear account of the shift in the philosophical sense of *technè*, see Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art" (henceforth cited as *OWA*) in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 58-9 especially.

²⁸¹ See Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, p. 58.

²⁸² See Graeme Nicholson, "The Two Faces of Heidegger" in *Dialectic and Narrative*, eds. Thomas Flynn and Dalia Judovitz (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), pp. 47-55. My argument is similar to Nicholson's, but not identical. He argues that the problem of

temporality in *SA* is due to Heidegger's illegitimate projection of Dasein's temporality onto the community itself: "The central issue here is the structure of time. So convinced is Heidegger here of the supremacy of the futural mode of human temporality that he is prepared to speak of a people (*Volk*) as finding its being only in the future that awaits it, just as *Being and Time* argues this for the individual. *It is this that cannot work!* While there is some possibility of construing the temporality of each individual as being shaped by the future more than by the past or by the present, this cannot work once we have turned our attention to the community. The futural mode of politics is a utopia without content and, hence, without the slightest chance of succeeding" (Ibid., p. 54). My claim, of course, is that Heidegger's "futurism" is not just illegitimately transferred from Dasein to community, but that now the priority of the future is so extreme, so radical, that the past and the present are massively subordinated to that which is yet to come, out of which alone our possibilities (as Dasein and Volk) are to be determined.

²⁸³ Derrida has argued on several occasions that this revolutionary appeal to the future is typically justified in a future anterior tense, that is, an appeal to what will have been. In this case, the existence of the *Volk* predates the act which is supposed to bring it into being – a paradox which is at the heart of social contract theory. See Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" trans. Mary Quaintance in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, eds. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfel and David Carlson (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 3-67.

²⁸⁴ For an excellent treatment of the Hegelian background to Heidegger's essay, see Jacques Taminiaux, "The Hegelian Legacy in Heidegger's Overcoming of Aesthetics," in *Poetics, Speculation, and Judgment: The Work of Art from Kant to Phenomenology*, pp. 127-52.

²⁸⁵ For a more detailed description of this history, see Robert Bernasconi, *Heidegger in Question*, pp. 103-05.

²⁸⁶ Heidegger's attempt to enter into the hermeneutic circle here is not without its difficulties. By appealing to our familiarity with particular works without already knowing in advance the nature of art itself, Heidegger's entire investigation is perhaps guided in advance by a familiarity that has been determined by aesthetics – precisely what is under question in this essay. If the very concept of art is inextricably bound up with the categories of aesthetics, Bernasconi asks, then Heidegger's overcoming of aesthetics is confronted with a, perhaps, insurmountable difficulty. For a more detailed account of this problem, see Robert Bernasconi, *Heidegger in Question*, pp. 99-116.

²⁸⁷ For a thoughtful account of how Heidegger puts to use these two examples of artworks, the Van Gogh painting and the Greek temple, see Ibid., p. 107-08.

²⁸⁸ See *NI*, p. 80.

²⁸⁹ Heidegger goes so far as to claim that because unconcealedness is “dominated throughout by a denial,” that is, by a double concealment, it follows that truth “in its nature, is un-truth” (*OWA*, p. 54). This is not to say, of course, that truth is actually error, but rather that the primordial occurrence of truth – for the ancient Greeks, the Romans, or modern Europeans – always inescapable covers over or conceals other ways in which truth could be, or has been, revealed. Later in the essay, Heidegger will claim that all art is essentially poetry, because “language alone brings what is, as something that is, into the Open for the first time” (*OWA*, p. 73). The “saying” of language, furthermore, announces “what it is that beings come into the Open *as*” (*OWA*, p. 73). When beings are unconcealed *as* something, this always implies that they are not unconcealed as something else. Hence, concealment belongs to unconcealment. The truth that Heidegger identifies with un-truth, that contains un-truth, is not correctness, and thus any charge of a Heideggerian “irrationalism” here would be off the mark. When Heidegger notoriously claims that science does not think, he is not thereby dismissing all scientific inquiry; rather, he is simply differentiating the historical movement of the unconcealing and concealing of being that is prior to the ontic investigations of the scientific disciplines.

²⁹⁰ I should at least mention that Heidegger describes the striving opposition and belonging-together of world and earth as a rift [*Riss*]. The rift is not “a mere cleft,” but rather the bringing of “the opposition of measure and boundary into their common outline” (*OWA*, p. 63). The rift is that which gathers this indeterminate opposition together in their essential striving, and thus makes manifest the very conditions of the work-being of the work.

²⁹¹ Bernstein argues that Heidegger’s account of the artist as a “passageway” is different from Kant’s because Heidegger decouples his demand for art to be exemplary with the freedom of the artist. Bernstein concludes from this, somewhat hastily, I think, that Heidegger thus “turns history into fate and presages a distinctly anti-modern transformation of culture.” See J. M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art*, p. 108.

²⁹² This is not to say that Heidegger disavows the createdness of the work, so much as the standard vocabulary of aesthetics employed to describe and account for this creation. For example, he writes: “The event of its being created does not simply reverberate through the work; rather, the work cases before itself the eventful fact that the work is as this work, and it has constantly this fact about itself. The more essentially the work opens itself, the more luminous becomes the uniqueness of the fact that it is rather than is not. The more essentially this thrust comes into the Open, the stranger and more solitary the work becomes” (*OWA*, 65-66). See Christopher Fynsk, *Heidegger: Thought and Historicity*, pp. 134-39 especially, for an excellent discussion of this and other related passages. Fynsk also concedes that there is little in Heidegger’s essay that would help us to understand how a particular work might bear a relationship to the artist’s signature or title. The “that it is” feature of all works is shared with equipment, yet the createdness of an item of equipment is utterly submerged in its usefulness. Heidegger’s official

complaint with modern subjectivism is that it “misinterprets creation, taking it as the self-sovereign subject’s performance of genius” (*OWA*, p. 76).

²⁹³ See John Sallis, *Echoes: After Heidegger*, p. 180.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

²⁹⁵ I owe this rough formulation to J. M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art*, p. 107.

²⁹⁶ This opens up, once again, the problem of temporality in Heidegger’s discussion. As Robert Bernasconi notes: “Poetry institutes, founds, and would bring us to the site of the historical existence of a people, a site on which, Heidegger observed, we are not yet standing, although it awaits ‘us,’ would ‘we’ but attend to what it says.” See Robert Bernasconi, *Heidegger in Question*, p. 141. The work of art is thus an address to a people that *are* not, and paradoxically cannot *be* until they have stood in the truth that has been opened by the work. This is the relation in which Hölderlin stands to the German people (who are not yet a people).

²⁹⁷ The preservers are “willing” in the sense that they resolutely stand in the openness of the truth that is disclosed in the work. Heidegger is not speaking of subjective acts of will, here, but of the resoluteness that is always already an openness to being, as described in *Being and Time*.

²⁹⁸ It is not difficult to see the parallels here between Heidegger’s founding as beginning and Hölderlin’s understanding of the caesura. As Lacoue-Labarthe notes, commenting on Hölderlin: “A caesura would be that which, within history, interrupts history and opens up another possibility of history, or else closes off all possibility of history.” See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, p. 45.

²⁹⁹ Bernstein makes a similar point in his study. See J. M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art*, p. 106-07.

³⁰⁰ See Charles Taylor, *Malaise of Modernity*, p. 62.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, chapter VI.

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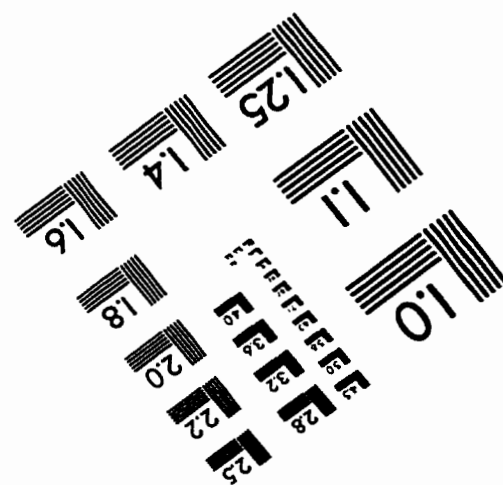
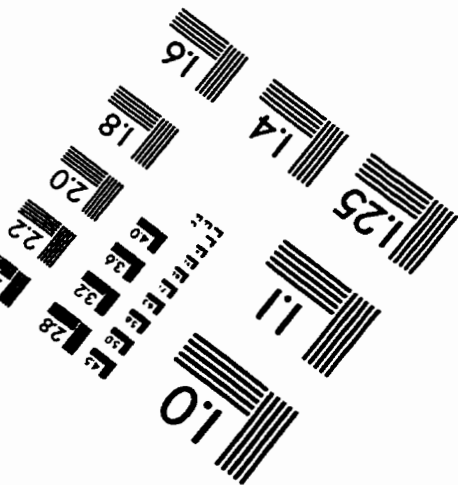
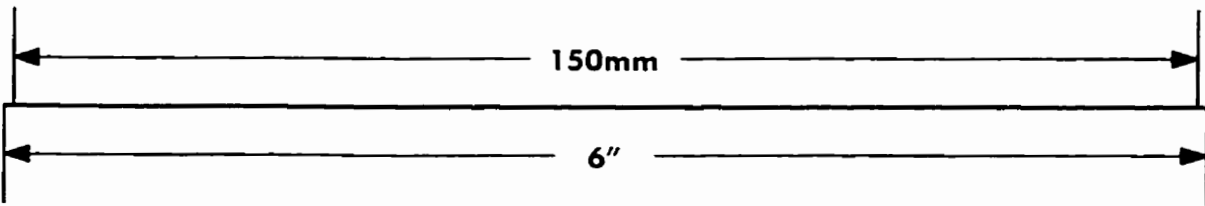
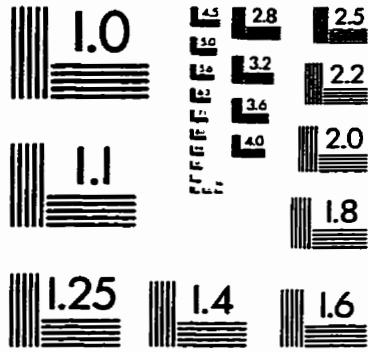
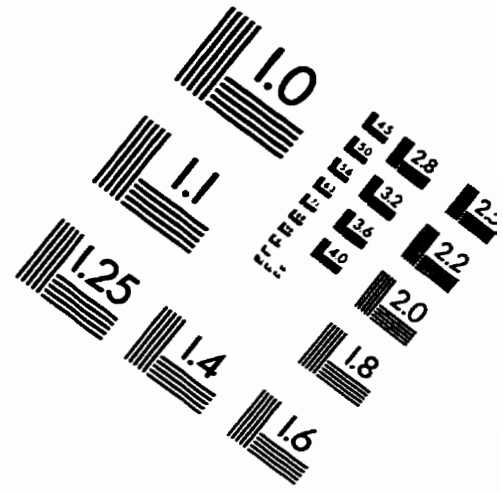
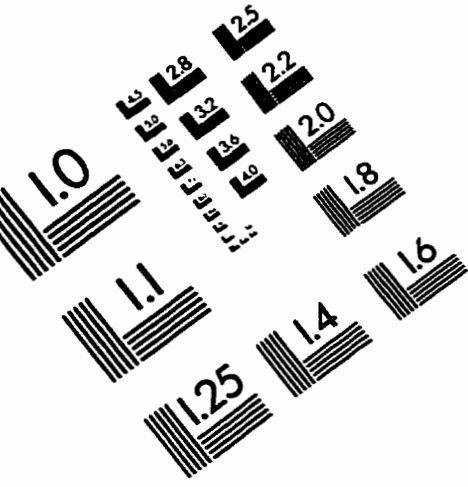
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