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Author(s): Babette E. Babich

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Nietzsche's Chaos sive natura: Evening Gold and the Dancing Star

BABETTE E. BABICH*

ABSTRACT: Nietzsche's creative and fundamental account of chaos in both its cosmic, universal as well as its humane context, recalls the ancient Greek meaning of chaos rather than its modern, disordered, decadent significance. In this generatively primordial sense, chaos corresponds not to the watery nothingness of Semitic myth or modern, scientific entropy but creative, uncountenancedly abundant potency. And in such an archaic sense, Nietzsche's chaos is a word for both nature and art. Nietzsche's creative conception of chaos equates it with the will to power: as the foundational essence of the world "to all eternity." This same correspondence is also the stylistic prerequisite for creating oneself as a work of art.

KEY WORDS: *Amor fati. Art. Becoming. Chaos. Cosmology. Cosmos. Creativity. Culture. Dionysus. Eternity. Greeks. Male-Female. Nature. Nietzsche. Power. Pre-socratics. Science. Spinoza. Time. World. Zarathustra.*

RESUMO: O artigo começa por demonstrar até que ponto a mais fundamental explicação criadora dada por Nietzsche a respeito do caos, em seu contexto tanto cósmico e universal como meramente humano, constitui uma evocação do antigo sentido que lhe foi dado pelos Gregos, mais do que uma adesão à significação moderna do mesmo, desordenada e decadente. Para Nietzsche, com efeito, o caos em seu sentido generativo mais primordial, não corresponde nem à ambiguidade do nada inerente ao mito semítico nem ao sentido moderno, científico, da entropia, mas sim a uma potência criadora assinalada por uma abundância inesgotável. Mostra-se, assim, até que ponto, em conformidade com o sentido arcaico do termo, o caos em Nietzsche constitui um nome que se dá tanto à natureza como à arte. Mais, o presente artigo mostra ainda até que ponto a concepção nietzschiana do caos o transforma em algo equivalente à vontade de poder, ou seja, na essência fundadora do mundo "para toda a eternidade". Desta correspondência, aliás, resulta a condição estilística para que cada um se crie a si mesmo como verdadeira obra de arte.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Amor fati. Arte. Caos. Ciência. Criatividade. Cosmologia. Cosmos. Cultura. Devir. Dionísio. Espinoza. Eternidade. Gregos. Masculino-Feminino. Mundo. Natureza. Nietzsche. Poder. Pré-socráticos. Tempo. Zarathustra.*

* Department of Philosophy, *Fordham University* (New York, NY – USA).

Chaos and the Order of Creativity

Nietzsche regards the world, in its “total character” as chaos “in all eternity” (GS 109), opposed to human categories.¹ Yet, Nietzsche also identifies chaos as the source of creative potential within culture: “I tell you: one must have chaos in one, to give birth to a dancing star” (Z, *Prologue* 5).²

What is Nietzsche’s meaning here? In what sense is “chaos” the “total character” of the world “to all eternity”? Why must one have “chaos in one” for the sake of creativity, what is meant by speaking, in the voice of the character Nietzsche identifies with the sun, the “golden star,”³ of chaos internal to oneself as the precondition for creativity? And, perhaps most perplexing of all, why is such an internal chaos presented as a rarity, endangered? “Alas,” Nietzsche’s Zarathustra quickly adds: “The time is coming when man will give birth to no more stars” (Z, *Prologue* 5).

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft. Nietzsche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, eds., (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980). Volume 3, p. 467. Henceforth cited as GS followed by the section number. Likewise Nietzsche’s *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* is cited as BGE, followed by the section number, and citations from *Also sprach Zarathustra* are cited in the text, followed by Z, section title, and section number, and so on. Citations from Nietzsche’s unpublished works refer to the KSA edition, listing the volume number (roman numeral), followed by the page number.

² It must be emphasized that Nietzsche’s conception of chaos differs from the conception of chaos articulated by authors like Katherine Hayles and other critical and literary reviews of the idea of chaos, as drawn from popular conceptions of chaos theory. Cf. N. Katherine Hayles, *Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). Although Nietzsche recognizes the disorder of chaos, as inherent in the contemporary meaning of chaos, his overarching emphasis from start to finish underlines the fundamental ambiguity of chaos as a primordially abundant (as a prerequisite for creation) rather than a decadent or entropic state. Where Hayles can be reproved – as some might wish to do in the reactionist wake of Sokal’s so-called hoax – for perhaps employing a less than exigent “scientific” notion, Nietzsche cannot be so charged for he takes his conception of chaos, together with its creative potency, from ancient Greek accounts. Naturally enough, even the effort to make the prior distinction is vulnerable to the charge of a failure of hermeneutics as I argue in my review of Sokal’s hoax and the related scientific enthusiasm for denouncing literary and cultural theory. See my essay, “The Hermeneutics of a Hoax: On the Mismatch of Physics and Cultural Criticism.” *Common Knowledge*. 6/2 (September 1997): 23–33.

³ This has been traced to a mistaken etymology on the part of Friedrich Creuzer: there is however no doubt of its profound significance for Nietzsche’s own thinking. See Curt Paul Janz, *Friedrich Nietzsche* (Munich: Hanser, 1978), Volume 2, p. 230. See too David B. Allison’s discussion in *Reading the New Nietzsche: The Birth of Tragedy, The Gay Science, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, On the Genealogy of Morals* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), pp. 130ff. In a letter to Heinrich Köselitz, written 23 April 1883, Nietzsche claims to have “experienced” this etymology for the first time (post Zarathustra I). See commentary ad locum in the *Nietzsche Briefwechsel. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* III-7, forthcoming 2001.

How, in a universe today characterized as beginning from an initial moment of prime, prototypically masculine creative potency – be it the account of Genesis, Plato's *Timaeus*, or the cosmologist's Big Bang –, i.e., a universe in which chaos is a name for increasing inertia, as the lack of order and structure, how is chaos as such to be the precondition for creativity? For even Nietzsche himself stresses the downward tendency (or decadence) of chaos, emphasizing the primacy of order above chaos in his own *Untimely Meditations*.⁴ In what follows I shall trace the origin of Nietzsche's use of chaos as a word for nature in all its conflicted meanings, but especially as primordially archaic and prototypically feminine in aspect.⁵ I shall argue that Nietzsche supposes that we are a radical part of nature, meaning that, as he says provocatively with reference to the possibility of any perspective on nature, or the world, or the will to power, or being and becoming: that there is no outside, no externality. For Nietzsche, the opposition between inside and outside fails⁶ – that is, as Zarathustra declares: "There is no outside!" [*Es giebt kein Aussen!*] (*Z*, III, *The Convalescent* 2).⁷

Greek Chaos vs. The Waters of Genesis and Scientific Entropy

It is worth emphasizing that although Nietzsche's Zarathustra conscientiously invokes the resonant language of the gospels, the notion of chaos as precondition for creative possibility does not correspond to the image of the first waters presented in Genesis – reflecting the inert depths of uncreative receptivity – nor does it correspond to contemporary visions of chaos, whether in casual terms, as disordered confusion or, more formally, as correlated with the scientific notion of entropy. Nietzsche's chaos is fundamentally archaic: prototypically Greek. Hence Nietzsche's conception of creative chaos must be read as *physis* – that which brings forth of and out of itself. And as Nietzsche interposes chaos with (*sive*) nature, the

⁴ In Section 9 of "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," Nietzsche mocks the very notion that chaos is supposed to give birth to its opposite, as greatness is ascribed to the masses: "Da soll die Masse aus sich heraus das Grosse, das Chaos also aus sich heraus die Ordnung gebären." Nietzsche likewise, in the same locus contrasts the scope of ambition with the impotence of human ability: "Freilich kletterst du an den Sonnenstrahlen des Wissens aufwärts zum Himmel, aber auch abwärts zum Chaos" (I, 315) and he will always stress this tension. See, for an insightful discussion, Manfred Riedel, "The Origin of Europe: Nietzsche and the Greeks," *New Nietzsche Studies* 4 1/2 (Summer/Fall 2000): 141-155; originally published as: "Der Anfang Europas. Nietzsche und die Griechen" in *Nietzsche und Kessler* (Ettersburger Hefte 2, Kuratorium Schloß Ettersburg e.V., Weimar, 1994), pp. 13-33.

⁵ "Note that although grammatically neuter, Chaos is treated as female." Commentary by M. L. West to Hesiod, *Theogony* (Clarendon Press; Oxford, 1966), p. 193.

⁶ *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, I, 15.

⁷ See, for an extended reading of "Es giebt kein Aussen!" in Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* in connection with an exoteric/esoteric distinction and as a genuine completion of nihilism, Holger Schmid, *Nietzsches Gedanke der tragischen Erkenntnis* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1984), pp. 78ff.

same chaos can be expressed as specifically generative nature: *natura*, translated as Erwin Chargaff renders it in English: “she who will be born or she who will bear.”⁸

“To give birth,” in the words of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra (whom Nietzsche himself names in metonymic proximity to the whirling stars of the cosmos itself) “to a dancing star,” one needs to have retained within oneself the same chaos that exemplifies the world “to all eternity.” Yet this prototypical chaos recedes – after its first mention in Hesiod (*Theogony* 116), Chaos is only mentioned again in the context of the battle between Zeus and the Titans and in its persistent displacement at the edge of the world, beyond both Olympian gods and Titans (*Th.* 814) – unlike the contemporary physical notion of entropy, chaos does not increase its range. In today’s banal culture of scientific nihilism and leisurely, mediatized decadence, Nietzsche’s archaic conception of a creative chaos is not only increasingly at risk but the “ultimate” men of today can reply to the Zarathustra who tells them “one must have chaos in one to give birth to a dancing star” with blinking incomprehension, asking, “What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?” (*Z, Prologue* 5)

Hesiod’s *Theogony* relates the emergence of *Chaos*⁹ as first in what simply comes to be without antecedent Ἡ τοι μὲν πρώτιστα Χάος γένεταί.¹⁰ After Chaos, arise the unbounded gods of the beginning, divinities of aorgic nature on Hesiod’s account: including *Gaia* or broad-breasted earth, dim *Tartarus*, winged *Eros*. First of the mothers of being, chaos gives birth to the deities of darkness: Erebus and the same Night that, in the Orphic tradition recounting these origins, lays the silver egg in the lap of black darkness, from which is born the god of many names, golden *Eros* or *Phanes*, who brings everything hidden to birth or to light.¹¹ The *Theogony* includes this Orphic resonance: it is Night’s incestuous union with Erebus that annuls the character of their respective obscurity, yielding brightest Aether and the day. Thus, chaos and not the masculine world-ordering process of cosmological genesis, is generatively primordial.¹²

⁸ Erwin Chargaff, *Voices in the Labyrinth: Nature, Man, and Science* [Series: *The Tree of Life*] (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), p. 1.

⁹ Chaos here is uncountenanceable nature and it is significant that chaos retains an association with blackness, a link that also suggests the Orphic accounting of night as primordial being. See note 11 below.

¹⁰ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 116.

¹¹ C. Kerenyi, *The Gods of the Ancient Greeks* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1951), p. 16-17.

¹² This generatively primordial character is unique. Reviewing the notion of “cosmogonic myth,” Walter Burkert distinguishes between *biomorphic* and *technomorphic* models, but both of these are creative models – i.e., requiring either reproductive generation (on the analogy Burkert draws, complete with “couples of different sex, insemination and birth” [pp. 94-95]) or demiurgic/divine creation. To be sure, Burkert does not distinguish the Greek (although largely characterized by the former) and the biblical tradition (although principally characterized by the latter). Yet the emergence of chaos, appearing as it does at a “time which was the ‘first’ of all, the one beginning from which everything else is about to arise,” (p. 91) is beyond such “narrative options” (p. 94). Thus, for Burkert, “Hesiod asks ‘Which of

It has been suggested that the Hesiodic meaning of chaos (as chasm or yawning gap) can perhaps be traced back to an Orphic account which names the chasm (or night).¹³ Yet the names are less important than the consequences. For the pattern of spontaneous (and feminine) creativity is immediately quashed even in such archaic accounts, and from the start. Especially, we could say, for the Greeks: in the story that tells of insurgent male power ordered, or, to be sure, unhinged by desire or eros, the oldest of the gods in this sense (though, as desire, always also the youngest). Thus the creative power of genesis that is originally female becomes or is made male, as Zeus swallows his first wife, Metis, thereby incorporating not only her wisdom – lodged in his belly, her counsel was always his own – but also her feminine nature: thus the Zeus that gives birth to Athena fully armed, sprung from his forehead, is the same Zeus who can rescue the heart of the dismembered Zagreus from the burnt ashes of his Titanic tormenters, blasted by Zeus's thunderbolt, transferred by the mediating influence of wine into the womb of Selene his human lover, there engendering the child Dionysus, only to reduce Selene herself to ashes with the same lightening flash of his godly countenance (so keeping the promise that is the devastation of love between mortal and immortal), to sew the not yet fully-formed child into his own thigh, finally giving birth to Dionysus of the two gateways, twice reborn in the wake of both titanic and mortal ash. Such a Zeus was a god of the prime male principle made a prime principle precisely by means of its violent incorporation of feminine creativity. Now the father gives birth to the son, now the sky gods that are always male, form human beings in their own image.

For Nietzsche, what matters is not to pay homage to the old story of the primordial goddess, or the literal mothers of being, but instead for us to attend to the powers of wild nature in creative self-genesis, in becoming oneself a work of art. To create oneself, giving birth to a dancing star – a wheel rolling out of itself – one needs the “chaos and labyrinth of existence” (GS 322). This imperative holds not because order kills (the letter the spirit) but because the chaos in creative question is primordial nature itself: that which is older than all other deities, that of which the most darkly aorgic deities are born, as divinities capable of bringing their own opposites out of themselves. And we, so Nietzsche's Zarathustra tells us, still dispose over this creative power: “I tell you: you still have chaos in you” (Z, *Prologue* 5). Yet because we are also, in our age, closest to losing this same power of nature, losing the creative force of chaos, through a blindness that is as much a blindness about ourselves as about nature, we need Zarathustra's reminder.

these came into being first?” and then starts: “First of all...” (p. 92). See Burkert, “The Logic of Cosmogony” in Richard Buxton, ed., *From Myth to Reason: Studies in the Development of Greek Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 87-106.

¹³ Evidence for this is given by no one less than Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1071^b 27, who implies that night is an alternative name for chaos. See note above and compare Burkert's discussion on the same for a different (but not opposed) emphasis.

As self-engendering *physis*, chaos thus corresponds to a generative excess or plenum, conceived as the Theogonic *Ur-chaos* or the Anaximandrian *apeiron*.¹⁴ Such a generative, or creative conception of chaos is a feminine aspect of unthinkably consummate, self-sufficient creativity and such a feminine first principle is common to more than one cosmology. Yet the primordial conception of feminine creative potencies (from the notion of chaos to the fantasies of the cultures of the goddess or matriarchy) is eclipsed, as we have seen, from the moment of inception: all accounts of the genesis of the dark children of chaos are quickly elided by the more fertile and various earth who, herself giving birth to her own lover, sets in motion the dominant account of the succession of masculine progenitors. As the story of the birth of the gods, the theogony becomes a story of genesis (and paternity).

Even more, today's chaos is a pell-mell representing the failure of order, an order *reduced* to disorder (reflecting the temporal schematism articulated in both the religious tradition of *Genesis* and the thermodynamic conception of entropy). Derived from an aboriginally masculinist vision, the Judeo-Christian tradition regards the lifeless depths recounted in *Genesis* as the impotent, and featureless waters of an irreal and feminine abyss prior to the first divine moment of the creation of the world. In this convergence of religious and scientific perspectives, chaos is a non-creative, expressly negative concept.

Denying an archic, originative function to the cosmos as such and so denying both its ruling and its telic or guiding principles, i.e., by understanding reality as a chaos of multiple realities, Nietzsche's insight into the nature of the world as "chaos to all eternity" and his recollection of the creative importance of a chaos within, recalls the principle significance of Greek κόσμος, κοσμέω¹⁵ as a quintessentially aesthetic concept.¹⁶ Given the creative urgency and possibility of chaos in the world as in the human being within the world, the subsequent interpretive order yields first the world of appearances and still, and now, the potential for a re-birth of culture.

¹⁴ One tends to hear in this an associative reference to the combining hollow of Plato's Timaeon *chora* but although the Pythagorean tradition may justify this association, the very conception of a hollow dependent upon the working influence of the demiurge already testifies to a condition that is underway to the latter conception of a disordered in need of order.

¹⁵ Charles Kahn had pointed out that Homer's use of "*kosmos, kosmew...*denote[s] in general any arrangement or disposition of parts which is appropriate, well-disposed, effective." Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*, p. 220.

¹⁶ The transfer from the original significance, Kahn observes, of a 'neat arrangement,' is an easy one to the wider decorative sense of *kosmos* as 'finery, rich adornment'" Kahn, p. 220. The metaphysical cast of this "cosmetic" vision is obvious: "all extant examples of *kosmos* or *diakosmos* in the early philosophical fragments illustrate the idea of an all-embracing "arrangement" or ordering of parts: the natural world is conceived as a structural whole in which every component has its place." p. 229.

In connection with Nietzsche's thought, other philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, have explored the relevance of $\chi\acute{\alpha}\omicron\varsigma$ with reference to Hesiod.¹⁷ But Heidegger himself does not advert to the archaic cosmology of chaos but immediately invokes the contemporary conception of chaos as impotent confusion.¹⁸ Other scholars, like Walter Gebhard, correct Heidegger's etymologies.¹⁹ Thus almost all readers who reflect upon Nietzsche's language of chaos understand this conception in its contemporary, i.e., its incidental rather than prototypically Greek sense. Hence, and apart from my own reading of chaos in connection with science (and Jacques Lacan's Real),²⁰ only Jean Granier reviews the importance of the "tragic knowledge of Nietzsche, the new Empedocles,"²¹ with regard to what I have here begun to argue as the specifically Greek notion of creative chaos.²²

Nature as Chaos, Nature as Art

By regarding nature as chaos, now to be heard not in its contemporary expression but in its original Greek or primordial significance, Nietzsche repudiates the traditional Western opposition between nature and art. As an absolute will to power, without remainder – "*und nichts außerdem*" – the native chaos of the world is a raw, uncountenanceable and untrammelled realm beyond the imposition of order for the same Nietzsche who teaches the rule – and the illusion – of perspective. As it recalls Spinoza's *deus sive natura*, Nietzsche's declaration, "*chaos sive natura*" (IX, 515), de-deifies nature while, at the same time, stripping nature of its ra-

¹⁷ $\chi\acute{\alpha}\omicron\varsigma$ "... anfänglich das Aufgähnende ... weist in die Richtung des unabmeßbaren, stütze- und grundlosen, aufklaffenden Offenen," Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), Bd. 1, S. 562. [Subsequently cited as NI or NII, followed by the page number.]

¹⁸ That is: as "das Wirre in der Verwirrung, das Durcheinander in der Überstürzung." NI, 563.

¹⁹ Walter Gebhard, "Erkennen und Entsetzen. Zur Tradition der Chaos Annahmen im Denken Friedrich Nietzsches," pp. 20ff. in Gebhard, ed., *Friedrich Nietzsche. Strukturen der Negativität* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984), pp. 13–47.

²⁰ I discuss Nietzsche's notion of chaos in my *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Science: Reflecting Science on the Ground of Art and Life* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984) pp. 152–157 and, again, to illuminate the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's elusive conception of the Real: "On the Order of the Real: Nietzsche and Lacan," in David Pettigrew and François Raffoul, eds., *Disseminating Lacan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 48–63.

²¹ Jean Granier invokes the "Sagesse tragique de Nietzsche, le nouvel Empédocle" on p. 130 of his essay "La pensée nietzschéenne du chaos," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 2 (1971): 129–166; p. 130. See too the abridged English translation, "Nietzsche's Conception of Chaos" in David B. Allison, *The New Nietzsche* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985 [1977]), pp. 135–141.

²² With reference to Nietzsche's declaration that the "The world of the Greek gods is a swirling veil, concealing the most frightful things" (VII, 77), Granier appropriates Heidegger's penetrating insight into "becoming, that is, here at the same time the character of being as the world entirety as the chaos of necessity [as] the eternal return of the same." Heidegger, NI, 371. See Granier, "La pensée nietzschéenne du chaos," p. 132.

tional ground or foundation²³ – its ultimate concord and commensurability with human reason. For Nietzsche, the modern confidence in science is as liable to critical demythologization as any other belief. Thus he challenges the technologically calculative, scientific:

faith in a world that is supposed to have its equivalent and its measure in human thought and human valuations – a “world of truth” that can be mastered completely and forever with the aid of our square little reason. What? Do we really want to permit existence to be degraded for us like this – reduced to a mere exercise for a calculator and an indoor diversion for mathematicians? (GS 373)

By outlining the history of the illusory, as the history of the true (the “real” world of Platonic fantasy and Aristotelian productivity), Nietzsche raises the key question regarding the rational underpinnings of the ideal real: as the scientific order perceived in nature as a reflection of the phantasms of human sensibility and human conceptual power.²⁴ There is no *reality* or nature knowable apart from a thoroughly “humanised [*vermenschlichte*] nature.” Thus Nietzsche criticizes the realist conviction (in a passage from *The Gay Science* directed “*To the realists*”) that “the world really is the way it appears” before “sober” realist eyes as inevitably naïve: “As if reality stood unveiled before you only, and you yourselves were perhaps the best part of it” (GS 57). Nietzsche challenges the man of science to describe the world apart from or beyond the limits of human perception and this is also to say, apart from the effects of precisely artistic creativity or invention, which is concealed as an illicit passion or conviction:

Your love of “reality,” for example – oh, that is a primeval “love.” Every feeling and sensation contains a piece of this old love; and some fantasy, some prejudice, some unreason, some ignorance, some fear, and ever so much else has contributed to it and worked on it. That mountain there! That cloud there! What is “real” in that? Subtract the phantasm and every human *contribution* from it, my sober friends! If you can! (*Ibid.*)

²³ Cf. Nietzsche’s reflections in *The Gay Science*. Reason has been deified since Plato. But Nietzsche is so far from the danger of deifying reason (a Thomistic as much as a Platonic-Aristotelian liability) that he always names reason with belittling appellations – such as “unsrer viereckigen kleinen Menschenvernunft” (GS 373) and he liked to use the most unflattering comparisons – gnats and frogs as companion perspectives to human foci, to make the same point. In a move similar to Augustinian piety, Nietzsche declares that desire (the belly) is the body, is the best antidote to our conviction that we are, or might be divine. This same move opposes Augustine because, of course, for Augustine (as for Descartes), *qua* will, it is desire that shows our best resemblance to God.

²⁴ Hence Nietzsche declares that the world’s manifest congruence with perception evidenced by the overwhelming concord between sensations from person to person proves the congruence of the perceptual and conceptual apparatus from one human being to another as a veritable *sensus communis*. Thus Nietzsche invokes “Der ungeheure Consensus der Menschen über die Dinge beweist die volle Gleichartigkeit ihres Perceptionsapparates.” (VII, 468).

For Nietzsche, the whole of natural science is a continuous and effective, successful and consummate process of what he calls a “humanisation *in summa*.”²⁵ Nature is a human invention and yet, and at the same time, it is nature that works its artistry through us and upon us, so that our inventiveness and our artifices are not non-natural – however much in the case of science we use this inventiveness for the purposes of the mastery and control of nature.²⁶ With the artistic, inventive expression of such scientific “means,” we express our own nature, the same essence reflecting the inherent truth of nature as “will to power” or chaos (to all eternity).

Yet, we apprehend neither nature’s chaos – nor could we ever do so given our perceptual and conceptual apparatus – nor can we recollect any sense of the chaos of impressions within us – this last given the coordinate limitations of our human psycho-physiology. This is a favorite theme for Nietzsche, who declares that nature threw away the key to the welter of physiological activity within our bodies²⁷ and it forms a fundamental component of his pre-Freudian critique of psychological identity or the subject. In the more straightforward instance of a face to face encounter with the natural world, Nietzsche writes:

As I walk about in open country, I am always amazed to think how everything works on us with such a supreme precision: the forest thus and so, and the mountain thus and so and that, referring to the whole of sensation, there reigns within us not the slightest confusion, misapprehension, or stammering. And yet the greatest uncertainty and chaotic aspect must abound ... (IX, 957)

In the same way as we do not (as we *cannot*) attend to our own range of perceptions, neither do we attend to the full complexity of the things themselves as experienceable objects. Using the metaphor of reading a text (where as Nietzsche says, the text does not merely disappear in the reading or beneath the interpretation, but the reader instead “picks about five words at random out of twenty and ‘guesses’ at the meaning that probably belongs to these five words” [BGE 192]), we tend to see not what is actually in front of our eyes, rather we perceive what we already “know” or believe: “rather than registering what is different and new in an impression.” Nietzsche draws a parallel to our perception of a thing as obvious and static as a tree. He argues that even with regard to such a sizeable object of everyday perception, we misapprehend the tree itself, never seeing it “exactly and com-

²⁵ “Genug,” Nietzsche writes, “auch die Wissenschaft thut, was der Mensch immer gethan: etwas von sich, das ihm als verständlich, als *wahr* gilt, zur Erklärung benutzen alles Anderen – *Vermenschlichung in summa*” (XI, 191).

²⁶ “Wissenschaft – Umwandlung der Natur in Begriffe zum Zweck der Beherrschung der Natur – das gehört in die Rubrik ‘Mittel’” (XI, 194).

²⁷ See Nietzsche’s well-known comment in “Über Wahrheit und Lüge”: “Was weiss der Mensch eigentlich von sich selbst! Ja, vermöchte er auch nur sich einmal vollständig, hingelegt wie in einen erleuchteten Glasskasten, zu percipiren? Verschweigt die Natur ihm nicht das Allermeiste, selbst über seinen Körper, um ihn, abseits von den Windungen der Gedärme, dem raschen Fluss der Blutströme, den verwickelten Fasererzitterungen, in ein stolzes gauklerisches Bewusstsein zu bannen und einzuschliessen! Sie warf den Schlüssel weg...” (I, 875; cf. I, 755).

pletely, with reference to leaves, twigs, color, and form; it is so very much easier for us to phantasize some approximation of a tree.” Thus whether confronted by routine impressions or “in the midst of the strangest experiences we still do the same: we make up the major part of the experience...” (BGE 192). We overlook, overleap, and so invent our experience in general (for Nietzsche, we are “*accustomed to lying*”). And this circumstance is not ameliorated by adding reference to the complexity of things that are too minor to attract our notice – the wild variety of insects and spiders and plasmodia streaming on the bark of the same tree or crawling and flying in the jungles at our feet.

As Ryogi Okochi²⁸ has rightly underlined in his comparison of Nietzsche’s conception of nature and Eastern views, nature is *not* a correlative *object* for human comprehension.²⁹ And as Erwin Chargaff reminds us (and although Chargaff’s comments date back to the scientifically antedeluvian age of 1969, this is the patient subtext of Richard Lewontin’s recent criticisms of the new rage for genetic determinism), the more we learn of nature from the most comprehensive scientific perspective – that is, on the order of the biology that reveals a far more complex image of nature than physics *can* suggest – the less we know.³⁰ Hence, regarding the world as will to power to all eternity, i.e., naming nature as chaos, Nietzsche emphasizes both its distance from our capacity to comprehend nature in itself (this is Nietzsche’s routine Kantianism) and its inherent creativity (again, recalling the archaic Greek conception of chaos). As chaos, nature itself is interpretive and on this same level, nature itself is invention, replete with subjectivities, wills (that is to say, as Nietzsche expresses this very radical point in a late note: “every center of force adopts a perspective toward the entire remainder, i.e., its own particular valuation, mode of action, and mode of resistance...” [XIII, 371]³¹ and, in the organic world, more conservatively, Nietzsche had earlier written: “the entirety ... is the interweaving of beings with invented little worlds about them: in that they impose upon outer experience their power, their desire, their habits as their external world” [XI, 590]). Nature as a whole is constant and thoroughgoing interpretation and

²⁸ Ryogi Okochi, “Nietzsches Naturbegriff aus östlicher Sicht,” *Nietzsche-Studien*, 17 (1988): 108-124.

²⁹ There is a superficial concord between this assertion and Parmenidean presumption, but, contra Parmenides, for Nietzsche, it is the unthinkability of nature that calls for the philosopher’s attention. Nature is neither the coordinate nor the correspondent object of human knowing

³⁰ Chargaff writes that even if “there is still plenty of scope for the year 2069 [the essay was written in 1969, so the author adds:] and even 2169. But can we really believe that if we keep on plodding for another 200 years or so, suddenly submicroscopic angels will be seen carrying a sign, ‘Now you know all about nature’? Actually, knowledge of nature is an expanding universe, continually creating ever greater circumferences of ignorance, a concept that can be expressed in the words, ‘the more we know, the less we know.’” Erwin Chargaff, “The Paradox of Biochemistry” Ch. One, *Voices in the Labyrinth*, p. 5.

³¹ Cf. the preceding: “Als ob eine Welt noch übrig bliebe, wenn man das Perspektivische abrechnet! Damit hätte man ja die Relativität abgerechnet, das –” (XIII, 371).

“necessary perspectivism by virtue of which every center of force – and not only man – construes all the rest of the world from its own viewpoint, i.e., measures, feels, forms, according to its own force” (XIII, 373).³² Giving measure and giving form, testing, and reacting: nature is art.

Indeed, from beginning to end, everything turns on the question of art for Nietzsche. The difference between the art of the human and the art of nature is the difference between the *artless* art of nature (which lacks all purposiveness) and the *artful* art of human invention that is both artistically consummate (or artful *art*) or else poorly executed or aesthetically artificial – kitsch, or *far-too-*, *all-too-artful* art. Only cultured, and especially the art of practical, technical, purposiveness or *techne*, is able to name itself art (although it does not always do so). Everything else, be it God³³ or be it nature, lacks artistic awareness, as artless or *natural art*. This same artlessness is ultimately the key to the (active) creative process. Hence Nietzsche agrees with Kant's claim that the highest art is the artlessness that is (or appears to be) an unconscious or *natural art* – hence unaware of what it is or does. This one may name innocence. It is Nietzsche's goal to recover this innocence, this naturalness, for human creativity. The result would be a renaturalized humanity (itself only possible on the basis of a redeemed nature, liberated to its chaos or independence from the human).³⁴

From beginning to end, Nietzsche affirms the origin of knowledge in error and illusion, and hence, or ultimately, in art. Thus in an early reflection on this problem, Nietzsche describes the ideal beauties of perceived “nature,” and he paints natural sublimity in the following words: “It was evening: air streaming with the scent of evergreen, one's gaze opened out upon grey mountain ranges, snow shimmering on high, spanning above, becalmed, blue skies” (VII, 468). And contrary to the straightforward, albeit poetic, descriptiveness of this vista in terms of the senses themselves (i.e., the sense of smell and sight in an encounter with the kind of majestic landscape we romantically enough continue to identify with “nature” – think of the Caspar David Friedrich painting *From the Summit: Traveller Looking Over*

³² “Meine Vorstellung ist, daß jeder spezifische Körper danach strebt, über den ganzen Raum-Herr zu werden und seine Kraft auszudehnen (– sein Wille zur Macht:) und Alles das zurückzustoßen, was seiner Ausdehnung widerstrebt. Aber er stößt fortwährend auf gleiche Bestrebungen anderer Körper und endet, sich mit denen zu arrangiren (‘vereinigen’), welche ihm verwandt genug sind: – so conspiriren sie dann zusammen zur Macht. Und der Prozeß geht weiter...” (XIII, 373-4).

³³ Where God today is far more absent from today's sensibilities than could have been imagined in Nietzsche's announcement of and for the Death of God in the requiem sung in *The Gay Science* or parodied in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, or mourned in *Beyond Good and Evil* or *The Antichrist*.

³⁴ But, Nietzsche makes this his goal because most perniciously or exactly nihilistically in the human case, another genre of artlessness betrays a singularly bad conscience, a thoughtless *méconnaissance*, lacking all innocence: as the reactive will that seeks to arrogate the right of interpretation for itself alone and to impose that scheme upon all others, by the expedient of calling its interpretation (its ideal, its vision of God) truth.

the Sea of Fog that not only graces the Penguin edition of R. J. Hollingdale's translation of Nietzsche's autobiographical, *Ecce Homo* but which many viewers automatically imagine an actual rendering of Nietzsche himself), Nietzsche challenges the reality of any such pure or direct perception of nature. That refusal of unfiltered or direct sense access to the world around us is the point (Kantian as well as psychological) of his teasing assault upon the sobriety of "realist" perception of the "real" world in *The Gay Science*: "That mountain there! That cloud there! What is 'real' in that?" (GS 57) For Nietzsche, " – A thing of this kind we never see as it is in itself, but always overlay it with a tender spirit-membrane – that is what we see instead. Inherited sensations, our own feelings are roused by such things of nature. We see something of ourselves – to this extent, the very world itself is our representation, Forest, mountains, more than a concept indeed, but our own experience and our own history: a piece of ourselves" (VIII, 468). There is no world apart from what he explicates again and again as the insensible chaos of our sensations and the veritable chaos of nature itself. And chaos must always be ordered. For us, this describes ordinary perception, but for Nietzsche, it is interpretation and it is not true because it cannot touch the chaotic truth of a world apart from our imposed interpretations, a world of abundance or excess. This is what Heidegger captures with a seemingly paradoxical formula, asserting that for Nietzsche, "Truth is the lack of truth" ["Wahrheit ist Verfehlung der Wahrheit."] ³⁵ What Heidegger means to underscore here is the exactly alethic character of Nietzsche's critique of truth and his phenomenological critique of perception and experience. Thus Heidegger is not charging Nietzsche with tacit contradiction – claiming (as true) that there is no truth. Instead the very question concerning the truth of nature requires an inquiry into the conditions of possible perception as prerequisite conditions of the very possibility of knowledge (be it of nature or ourselves).

Unlike the conventions of negative theology, we lack the axiomatic prerogative needed to assert simply that nature be defined as everything we are not (although this is the most common assumption of our present biologicistic humanism, that is: it is the still-standing opposition between nature and culture in the debate concerning the genetic component of human nature). The ideal that remains is the ideal of conscious creation. Nature as art, *qua* artifice, *qua* anthropomorphic projection, is a projection that begins with the savage perception of drives, forces, powers, and forms in nature (mythic fantasy and dreaming invention), which continues with the Christian convention of nature as the trace of God's handiwork as it may be seen in both St. Thomas's fifth theological demonstration and in Galileo's expression, as the book of nature, written in divinely mathematical symbols. As much as a painting,

³⁵ "Die Wahrheit ist Verfehlung der Wahrheit. In der unzweideutigen Wesensbestimmung der Wahrheit als Irrtum wird die Wahrheit notwendig zweimal und jedesmal anders, also zweideutig gemacht: einmal als Festmachung des Beständigen und zum andern als Einstimmigkeit mit dem Wirklichen. Nur unter Zugrundelegung dieses Wesens der Wahrheit als Einstimmigkeit kann die Wahrheit als Beständigkeit ein Irrtum sein ... als Angleichung an das Wirkliche und als Einstimmigkeit mit ihm, als ὁμοίωσις bestimmt..." NI, p. 620-621.

as much as Nietzsche's description of nature in words, as much as mythic or religious expressions, scientific expressions are art.

Nature and Illusion: The Interpretive Dynamic

Nietzsche invokes the simplified world of everyday and theoretically mediated perceptions as a matter of sensible, aesthetic "refinement," even in the case of science. Scientific laws and scientific entities are creatively, aesthetically (inventively) possible upon the basis of flattened differences (Nietzsche's remark: "and the little errors do not enter into account" underlines that "margins of error," "standard deviation," and the theoretical finesse of "curve fitting" are exactly operative techniques useful for excluding or *discounting* these same "little" mistakes), and taking such exclusion precisely (calculably) into account, thus bracketing potential exceptions.³⁶ As science operates upon the levels of both pure theory and empirical measure, the scientist is a theoretical technician or artisan of exactitude.

By these means exactitude is and can be imposed upon an empirically variable world. Science is the technique (art) of uncovering the Platonic ideal of truth in the phenomenal world (both theoretically and experimentally). So far from praising the achievements of science as such *technites*/artisan of chaos/nature, Nietzsche critiques the flatfootedness of the artifice of science – naming science an "error" just as he characterizes it as dedicated to the pursuit of "the principle of 'the smallest possible effort' and the greatest possible stupidity" (BGE 14). Nietzsche takes this claim to its hyperbolic extreme as he does (speaking of science's "*größtmöglichen Dummheit*") just because our era is earmarked by its unquestioning scientific faith, as we recall his critique of the putative opposition between scientific and religious ideals in the closing sections of *On The Genealogy of Morals*,³⁷ where faith in the latest, greatest ascetic ideal of all, i.e., the most efficacious of ascetic ideals, i.e., the veritable faith in science replaces religious faith. For Nietzsche, claims of scientific truth (conventionalizedly objective, natural scientific knowledge claims) are *artlessly* artificial claims asserting an exactly *non-artistic*, non-constructed "truth."

³⁶ And yet science hardly denies what it thus discards thereby, and hence as it were, science has it "both ways": from the perspective of the scientist, both the absolute ideal and the empirical real belong within the purview of science

³⁷ See Paul Valadier's – to date, too little received (by the Nietzsche scholarship that, more than other philosophic expositions of a secondary kind, seems hell-bent on re-inventing the wheel by every means, including that of a blithe disinterest in the work of the authors who share their own research concerns) earlier studies, *Nietzsche: L'athée de rigueur* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1975) and *Nietzsche et la critique du christianisme* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1974). See also his recent essay "Science as New Religion" in B. Babich, ed., in cooperation with R.S. Cohen, *Nietzsche, Epistemology, and Philosophy of Science*, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1999), pp. 241-252. I discuss the specific conjunction between science and religion as instances of the ascetic ideal as Chapter Five, "Nietzsche's Genealogy of Science" in my book, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Science* and in a recent essay, "Nietzsche's Critical Theory of Science as Art." *Divinatio*, 10 Autumn/Winter (1999): 51-76.

Nietzsche's exigence derives from his dedication to the truth not of the ideal world of mathematizable science, but the very real or chaotic world.³⁸ For if we admit the concordance between art and truth, or the identity of art (interpretation) and nature (as itself interpretive or perspectival), it becomes possible to propose still broader vistas for natural science although, to date, only Heidegger has explored such a hermeneutically phenomenological perspective.³⁹ Because such a science would not yield to modern techno-science's predictive and calculative desire for reduction and manipulation, Nietzsche's search for the truth of nature and art leads him to "the problem of the value of truth" (BGE 1).

Nietzsche challenges the tententious grammatical distinction between subject and object, active and passive,⁴⁰ organic and inorganic, and even life and death.⁴¹ Thus when he asks, "if the perspectival is an essential property" he can answer, "this would be possible if all being were essentially a perceiving something..." (XII, 188). In this light, we can read a subsequent reflection: "Assuming, however, that we assign certain values to things, after we have forgotten that we were the givers, these same values in turn work backwards upon us" (XII, 192). Because

³⁸ Nietzsche's attention to the duplicity of science addresses the limits of reflective knowledge. We are not as successful as Lewis Carroll's heroine, for we are unable to pass "through the looking glass" into our very selves, as the reflective ground of what we know: "Versuchen wir den Spiegel an sich zu betrachten, so entdecken wir endlich Nichts als die Dinge auf ihm. Wollen wir die Dinge fassen, so kommen wir zuletzt wieder auf Nichts, als auf den Spiegel. Dies ist die allgemeinste Geschichte der Erkenntniss" (M 243; 3, 202_3). In a preface to the same text written half a decade later, Nietzsche would speculate on what it could mean for Kant to reflect critically on reflection: "War es nicht etwas sonderbar zu verlangen, dass ein Werkzeug seine eigene Trefflichkeit und Tauglichkeit kritisieren solle? dass der Intellekt selbst seinen Werthe, seine Kraft, seine Grenzen 'erkennen' solle? war es nicht sogar ein wenig widersinnig?" (M:iii; 3, 13) In his *Nachlaß* notes, he concludes, "Der Intellekt kann sich nicht selbst kritisieren, ... um den Intellekt zu kritisieren, wir ein höheres Wesen mit 'absoluter Erkenntniß' sein müßten" (XII, 188).

³⁹ Heideggerian questioning yields perhaps the only possible aletheiological or "true" science – a possibility Heidegger himself suggests in this same context. "Wer einmal vor Zeiten sich einfallen ließ zu sagen, die Wissenschaft könne ihr Wesen nur behaupten, indem sie es zurückgewinne aus einem ursprünglichen Fragen, der muß in einer solcher Lage sich ausnehmen wie ein Narr und Zerstörer »der« Wissenschaft; denn die Fragen nach den Gründen bringt doch [just as Nietzsche says, wer immer nach den Gründen fragt, der geht zu Grunde] innere Zermürbung, für welches Vorhaben der wirksame Name »Nihilismus« zu Gebote steht" (NI, 362). Heidegger's ironic suggestion has more than a bit in common with Nietzsche's provocative challenge to the convictions of scientific philosophy regarding the essence and progress of the sciences.

⁴⁰ "Die Menschheit hat zu allen Zeiten das Activum und Passivum verwechselt, es ist ihr ewiger grammatikalischer Schnitzer." M 121.

⁴¹ "Das Lebende ist nur eine Art des Todten..." (GS 109). Cf. Nietzsche's chemically inspired observation in "Der Übergang aus der Welt des Anorganischen in die des Organischen ist der aus festen Wahrnehmungen der Kraftwerthe und Machtverhältnisse in die der unsicheren, unbestimmten – weil eine Vielheit von miteinander kämpfenden Wesen (=Protoplasma) sich der Aussenwelt gegenüber fühlt." (XI, 537).

“every center of force adopts a perspective toward the entire remainder ...” (XIII, 371),⁴² there is always a reciprocity between interpretations and perspectives.

On the basis of the relational interaction of the world conceived both in its subjective and objective dimensions as Will to Power, and its ultimate interactive involvement with itself (“the world viewed from the inside ... it would be ‘will to power’ and nothing else. –” [BGE 36]), Nietzsche can write:

A quantum of power is designated by the effect it produces and that which it resists. The adiabatic state is missing, though it is thinkable. It is essentially a will to violate and to defend oneself against violation. Not self-preservation: every atom affects the whole of being – it is thought away if one thinks away this radiation of power will. (XIII, 258)

To conceive the world – “from the inside” as Nietzsche says – not from the assumption of our own interest but rather as the world might be seen according to its collective and varied interests, would, in effect, be to construct the object subjectively. This is Nietzsche’s perspectivism.⁴³

Today’s vision of demythologized, insensitive object-nature is a systematic expression of the cultural illusion of science in the West and the enlightenment’s reverse mythological vision of a mechanical nature revealed through the sobriety of scientific sophistication.⁴⁴ Here we note that the privilege of the subject and its ideal of objectivity are errors (delusions): “Once you know that there are no purposes, you also know that there is no accident...” (GS 109).⁴⁵ In Nietzsche’s vision of the world, necessity and purpose are dissociated. But in the ideal order of nature’s conformity to law, what opposes purpose is accident. Without this ideal, without purpose, there is no accident and only chance (with its archaic necessity) remains.

Chaos sive natura

In the context of a sketch for *Also sprach Zarathustra* – “Towards the projection of a new art of life” – Nietzsche’s first invocation of *Chaos sive natura* – he

⁴² The transformation of a “chaos” of sensations into a cosmos suitable for human understanding may be an arbitrary phantasy but it is nonetheless an effective symbolic construction of the world: “die ‘Welt’ ist nur ein Wort für das Gesamtspiel dieser Aktionen” (XIII, 371).

⁴³ “Die Mechanik als eine Lehre der Bewegung ist bereits eine Übersetzung in die Sprechsprache des Menschen” (XIII, 258). The perspectivist position adopts an interpretive perspective beyond the subjective and extending beyond the objective as well: “jedes Atom wirkt in das ganze Sein hinaus” (*ibid.*). To say that everything is interpretation also entails that our view of the world effects our own interpretive transformation of the world.

⁴⁴ Ergo, a deliberate self-diminution may well advance the (seemingly contrary) aims of exaggerated egoism. The range of this egoism is expressed by what Nietzsche names “Zuschauer-Göttlichkeit” – taken, to be sure in a more Sartrean or modernistically banal sense than Nietzsche’s original emphasis.

⁴⁵ “Als ich den Zweck dachte, dachte ich auch den Zufall. Es muß möglich sein die Welt nach Zwecken und die Welt durch Zufall zu erklären: ebenso als Denken, ebenso als Wollen, ebenso als Bewegung, ebenso als Ruhe: ebenso als Gott und ebenso als Teufel. Denn das Alles ist das Ich” (X, 162).

has only two – occurs in a passage from 1881, parsed with musical allusion to Beethoven: “First book in the style of the first movement of the Ninth Symphony.” Thus the conceptual summary: “*Chaos sive natura*: ‘re-garding the dehumanisation of nature’” (IX, 519), offers an expression of the first movement of this projected new way of life. Nietzsche’s perspective here is not to be confused with the enlightenment vision of *de-anthropomorphisation* proposing to undo or else to deny the efficacy of the “humanisation of nature” (i.e., “– interpretation [of nature] according to us” [XII, 19]).

The enlightenment ideal of a liberation from tutelage (self- or otherwise imposed), extracting the human contribution from the world of both psychological (psycho-social) projection and putatively objective perception, simply cannot be achieved, as Nietzsche sees it. Unlike Protagoras, who highlighted the inseparable contribution of the human to all epistemic endeavors, Nietzsche neither celebrates nor, like Xenophanes, does he mockingly emphasize (or even seek to subvert as postmodernist *avant la lettre*) the inevitable human contribution that is a part of any and all natural knowing because his own ambition is more complicated. Nietzsche’s goal is nothing less than the goal of stylized, conscious, art: “we want to take what we need from [nature], in order to dream above and beyond the human. Something more grandiose than the storm, and the mountain range, and the sea should arise—and yet born from humanity!” (X, 415).

Nietzsche’s artistic vision sees a transformed humanity in the light of art presupposing both the unknowability of nature and its abundant excess: *chaos sive natura*. If the form of this last expression is a parody of Spinoza’s *deus sive natura* (Nietzsche criticizes Spinoza’s formula as a confession of sensibility – accusing Spinoza and other metaphysicians of a literally higher “feeling” [GS 372] on the formula of a mystic return to nature and the background of “*Christliche Vertrauensseligkeit*” [XII, 129]), itself derived in turn from Descartes’ equation of God and the things of the world (*Meditation VI*), the core of Nietzsche’s *chaos sive natura* is Kantian, echoing Nietzsche’s rebuke to the Stoic ideal⁴⁶ – yoking Rousseau with Spinoza,⁴⁷ Comte with Christianity – in the context of the mechanistic music box that is the eternal repetition of a world where as he claims, more than concealing a hidden or obscure, god, “even the capacity for eternal novelty... is missing” (XI, 556).

Nietzsche’s *chaos sive natura* (or *natura sive chaos*) substitutes what Heidegger deconstructs as a “truer” (in an alethic sense)⁴⁸ account of nature for the con-

⁴⁶ Nietzsche writes, “Mit welcher Wucht der Ueberzeugung glaubte dagegen der antike Stoiker an das All und an die Vernünftigkeit des Alls!” (I, 208).

⁴⁷ “Rückkehr zur Natur” 1. seine Stationen: Hintergrund christliche Vertrauensseligkeit (ungefähr schon Spinoza “deus sive natura!”) (XII, 129).

⁴⁸ Heidegger, “Die Wahrheit und der Unterschied von “wahrer und scheinbarer Welt” (NS1, 616ff). This is the kind of critique that only a thinker with a sideline in logic could profer. For as Heidegger reads Nietzsche’s account of truth he traces it back to an inherent and essential ambivalence: “Die Wahrheit ist Verfehlung der Wahrheit. In der unzweideu-

ventional religio-scientific falsification of nature.⁴⁹ Nature exceeds human comprehension⁵⁰ yet, for Nietzsche, simultaneously, such chaos is intrinsic to the human,⁵¹ who himself “has something in common with everything that is: indeed, he is himself a piece of reality, truth, nature” (XIII, 193).

One's own chaos, and the power of art as the power of illusion or lying, is to be opposed to what we perceive as the cosmos itself. For nature/chaos is excess, contradiction, cruelty and all the seductions of appearance or falsity. To live in such a chaos without seeing it, to endure such a world of conflict and illusion:

man must be a liar by nature, he must above all be an artist... And he is one to be sure: metaphysics, religion, morality, science – all of them only products of his will to art, to lie, to flight from “truth,” to *negation* of “truth.” This ability itself, thanks to which he violates reality by means of lies, this artistic ability of man *par excellence* – he has in common with everything that is. He himself is after all a piece of reality, truth, nature: how should he not also be a piece of *genius in lying*? (XIII, 193)

Beginning with the task of creating a stylized, artistic vision of humanity – reworking the human as a work of art, i.e., the achievement of which Nietzsche expresses as the exigent ability “– To ‘give style’ to one's character – a great and rare art” (GS 290), Nietzsche's demand presupposes the prerequisite project of giving style to our perception of nature (de-deified, re-naturalized), now reconceived as the *art of science*, as the project of knowing the world. Because science is art (and not the artistic antipode according to the usual schematism of conceptual opposites),⁵² the task of acknowledging the contributions of invention or art to nature, the task of re-aestheticizing science, works backward upon the presuppositions of the first primary task, namely the challenge of creating oneself as a work of art.

tigen Wesensbestimmung der Wahrheit als Irrtum wird die Wahrheit notwendig zweimal und jedesmal anders, also zweideutig gedacht”. See especially Heidegger's discussion of truth as ὁμοίωσις in Nietzsche's thought: Nur unter Zugrundelegung dieses Wesens der Wahrheit als Einstimmigkeit kann die Wahrheit als Beständigkeit ein Irrtum sein. Dieses im Irrtumsbegriff zugrundegelegte Wesen der Wahrheit ist jenes, das von altersher im metaphysischen Denken als Angleichung an das Wirkliche und als Einstimmigkeit mit ihm, als ὁμοίωσις bestimmt wird” (NI, 620-619).

⁴⁹ This falsification, which Nietzsche attributes both to the Stoics and to the romantic vision of nature, as a “mythologization” of nature. Cf. VIII, 405. *Qua* chaos, nature is an impossible abundance, an excess, in accord with which the Stoic could not live (as Nietzsche challenges) because no one could: “verschwenderisch ohne Maass, gleichgültig ohne Maass, ohne Absichten und Rücksichten, ohne Erbarmen und Gerechtigkeit, fruchtbar und öde und ungewiss zugleich, denkt euch die Indifferenz selbst als Macht...” (BGE, 9).

⁵⁰ “Wer kennt die Ziele der Natur und wer überhaupt vermöchte das Unnatürliche?” (VII, 199) and “unerbittlichen Logik langte man bei der absoluten Forderung der Verneinung der Natur an.” (XII, 541).

⁵¹ “ist denn der Stoiker nicht ein *Stück* Natur?” (V, 21).

⁵² “– Diese von uns erfundene Dichtung wird fortwährend von den sogenannten praktischen Menschen (unsern Schauspielern wie gesagt) eingelernt, eingeübt, in Fleisch und Wirklichkeit, ja Alltäglichkeit übersetzt.” (GS, 301)

Nature as Art

We have seen that the image of the nature Nietzsche calls chaos emphasizes less its lack of order than its excess: nature, beyond the sublime, the Lacanian Real: uncountenanceable.⁵³ The alternative to this vision of nature (as chaos to all eternity) turns out to be not the enlightenment vision of science *qua* the objectifying “de-anthropomorphisation of nature” but rather and exactly the naturalization of the artist.⁵⁴ Nietzsche’s question in *The Gay Science*, “When will we complete our de-deification of nature?” inaugurates the project of the *joyful wisdom* that *renaturalizes* humanity in and on the terms of “a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature” (GS 109).⁵⁵

The chaos or nature here described is the wild, untamed, and uncontrollable force (Hölderlin’s divine, or aorgic, *apeiron* nature) opposed to the milder fantasy Nietzsche ascribes to the Stoics or as may be gleaned from garden variety readings of Rousseau, or today’s ecological pharasaicism. Appealing to the surface of this excess in nature, Nietzsche’s works themselves deploy the same extraordinary metaphors. This is the resplendence of autumn perfection epitomized in the epigraph with which Nietzsche begins his *Ecce Homo*, a day of pure clarity and benediction, an abundantly perfect day “when: everything has become ripe,” when the accident (grace) of a pellucid atmosphere allows him to see his whole life lit up by a transfiguring brilliance – the backwards and forwards illumination of gratitude and blessing. And Nietzsche seems even to remember the exact day of such brilliant clarity: the morning after the third of September 1888, in his 44th year of life,⁵⁶ on the occasion of finishing the work on *Twilight of the Idols*, “when in the morning after this writing I stepped outside I found awaiting me the loveliest day the Ober-Engadin had ever shown me – transparent, glowing in its colours, containing in itself every antithesis, every mediant of ice and south.” “I have,” he concluded, “never experienced such an autumn, nor have thought anything of the sort possible on earth – a Claude Lorrain thought on to infinity, every day of the same excessive perfection. –” (EH, *Twilight*).

The metaphors for transfigured, resplendent gold, metaphors of autumn glory and abundance, are metaphors of excess, for the wild, heedless, unimaginable profligacy of nature, like the riches of the sun at evening, the joyful vision of shining gold

⁵³ For discussion of Lacan’s uncanny register of the Real and Nietzsche’s conception of nature, see the author’s “On the Order of the Real: Nietzsche and Lacan.” Cited above.

⁵⁴ “mit Menschlichem wollen wir die Natur durchdringen und sie von göttlicher Mummerei erlösen.” (X, 415).

⁵⁵ The transformation of a “chaos” of sensations into a cosmos suitable for human understanding may be an arbitrary phantasy but it is nonetheless an effective symbolic construction of the world: “die ‘Welt’ ist nur ein Wort für das Gesamtspiel dieser Aktionen” (XIII, 371).

⁵⁶ We must imagine that, in 1888, Nietzsche, born in 1844, had to think of the significance of such redoubled numbers, although he himself would not “turn” or finish his forty-fourth year until the 15th of October, 1888.

Nietzsche invokes in that beautifully provocative challenge to the future of human culture in *The Gay Science*, where he asks not what blessing could be like (we know that) but it would really take to be *able* to bless in the face of evil or disappointment or certain suffering, to live one's ideal in an age dominated by one's own dying dream, to lose a love and still to love, to fight on in the wake of unspeakable loss, in a battle with no prospect for more success than that same loss. Thus speaking in the most extreme fashion of the diamond hardness that would be requisite for such a futural "humaneness" (GS 337), Nietzsche describes the core of his lifelong project and ideal of giving style to human nature itself. Here, rather than blood and violence, he names resplendence or shining or gold as the multifarious and manifold harvest *colors* of the possibility for a new feeling for life, eternity, art. The feeling is godlike happiness: "the happiness of a god full of power and love, full of tears and laughter," that is the happiness of benediction, the same benediction that he gives to his own life in the epigraph affixed to *Ecce homo*: this is a happiness poured out in abundance, "like the sun in the evening, continually bestows its inexhaustible riches, pouring them into the sea, feeling richest, as the sun does, only when even the poorest fisherman is still rowing with golden oars!" (GS 337).

To suggest this creative vision, if now we turn from a metaphorical discussion of nature as art, to the example of the pictorial and plastic arts (and we recall that Nietzsche himself always includes the art of music and therewith theatre and dance), we may be able to explore this last ideal of abundant happiness and Nietzsche's project of giving style to the human character – thus re-creating the human in the light of art or nature.

The image that Nietzsche gives for this vision at the conclusion of his *Birth of Tragedy* is a thoroughly bodily, experiential one of space and atmosphere: it is the working of sculpture and architecture on one's being, the musical reflection of life in the Greece Nietzsche now "invents" for us:

Walking under lofty Ionic colonnades, looking up toward a horizon that was cut off by pure and noble lines, finding reflections of his transfigured shape in the shining marble at his side, and all around him solemnly striding or delicately moving human beings, speaking with harmonious voices and in a rhythmic language of gestures – (BT 25)

Although I cannot say more on this schematic constellation here – on the dimensionality that is the political aesthetics of the polis in antiquity – it may be enough to recall that one may not simply gaze upon, contemplate, or merely see a plastic work of art. Instead, seeing oneself in seeing (being seen by as much as seeing), the statue's plasticity claims the space around it, thus installing the visitor as a guest on its own terms, in response to it, within its own space and hence caught into, captured by its own orbit. This is the reason the Laokoon, seen in person, face on – as it was first seen in the Renaissance: indeed and out of doors – could exercise such a galvanic effect.⁵⁷ It exerted a literally dimensional claim on those who en-

⁵⁷ Though, and to be sure, Pliny's description was itself so very influential that it could be claimed that it stood behind the institution of what has been named classicism, see for a

countered it, or described it for others in these ecstatic terms. This is the reason Hölderlin could have reacted (as apocrypha suggests he did) to a primal encounter with the sight of classical (however derivative, decadent, we would say: inauthentic) statues passing through the gardens of a private villa in France. The statue, especially under heaven, like the broken and demanding archaic torso immortalised in Rilke's poem, utters an irresistible imperative, urging the change that an entire society could not then and still cannot master. One is as much seen by as one sees. One is claimed, transported by the statue itself, into the dimensional round of the sculpture's tension. Thus the contemporary viewer can also be poised, if only, for our technologized sensibilities, in a dim recollection of the way in which the Helene would have had no choice but to be set against, arched in opposition to the measure of the statue.⁵⁸ Thus Nietzsche's early remarks refer not only to the "statue as the enchantment of a soul in stone,"⁵⁹ but to "concealment of tragedy (like the world of the statue)."⁶⁰ And Gadamer's best discussion of art is a reflection on the Rilkean imperative that is art's command: "You must change your life." To follow this imperative is the legacy and the promise of a phenomenological hermeneutics of art such as may be seen, beyond Nietzsche, in Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty.

The Naturalization of Humanity as Art

Nietzsche, for his part, proposes nothing as theoretically modest as a phenomenological hermeneutics or philosophy of art. Instead Nietzsche's problem is the problem of the creation of the work of art, and thus his many interpreters remind us that his is an artist's aesthetics. Beyond the traditional opposition between nature and culture, as the traditional question of *Bildung*, which traditionally represents the human as other than nature (and, above all as "something higher,") Nietzsche proposes to reconcile nature and culture, and that is, to make of humanity a deliberate work of art and this, of course, is what Nietzsche names the grand style. This project at once affirms our place in nature *and* our disposition as artists of conception, and, sensation/perception.

Nietzsche proposes art as a means to the redemption of both nature and the part of nature that is the human being: "My task: the de-anthropomorphisation of nature and then the renaturalization of humanity, after he has won the pure concept of 'nature'" (IX, 525). This is more than a matter of describing a parallel between the human (as *homo natura*) and nature (as a dynamic creative chaos of abundance and chance) but rather of undoing the obstacles to recognizing ourselves as what we are (as who we are), these are the very obstacles to achieving a newly naturalized hu-

description of this encounter in its historical context: Simon Richter's *Laocoon's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain: Winkelmann, Lessing, Herder, Moritz, Goethe*. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992).

⁵⁸ Cf. (I, 581) and KSA 11, sigl. 25 [101].

⁵⁹ KSA 8, sigl. 22 [36].

⁶⁰ KSA 7, sigl. 7 [15]; cf. KSA 9, sigl. 7 [101].

manity on the basis of a renaturalized nature, beyond the projections of humanizing myth, including the myths of reason: "The human being is the witness to what gigantic powers can be set in motion through a small being of manifold content ... *Beings that play with stars*" (XII, 40). Thus Nietzsche writes in the culminating sections of *Beyond Good and Evil*:

In man *creature* and *creator* are united: in man there is material, fragment, excess, clay, dirt, nonsense, chaos; but in man there is also creator, form-giver, hammer, hardness, spectator divinity, and seventh day. (BGE 225)

The meaning of chaos is an originally *creative* conception, the order imposed on chaos by sensation and reflection is the working of human invention and art, including the calculative, predictive art of science. Thus the project of renaturalizing humanity presupposes, Nietzsche says, the redeemed conception of nature that restores its creative abundance as chaos. This restoration of unfathomable excess or chaos also restores the innocence of becoming. Thus *amor fati*, or what Heidegger calls *Gelassenheit* in another context, is the point of Nietzsche's deanthropomorphisation of nature" as the naturalization of the human being here reworked as, recreated as, or become a work of art. But to give oneself style, to become a work of art, one must yet dispose over the raw power of chaos: "I tell you: one must have chaos in one, to give birth to a dancing star. I tell you: you still have chaos in you." This creative chaos is the power increasingly sacrificed in the decadent culture of nihilism: it is the reason Nietzsche writes that one must be recalled to one's ownmost, intrinsic possibilities, as the possibility not of mere being but becoming, creation, growth, and sacrifice. What must be learnt for this is love and hence what is needed for art and for giving style to one's character – to one's life and to the culture of the human. Thus Nietzsche subtitles his own reflections on his life as an author: *How One Becomes What One Is*. For if one can be thus recalled to oneself, the result is a dancing star – the sun at evening – and in this divine happiness, we human beings might begin to know ourselves.