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Understanding Heidegger’s Metaphysical
Reading of Nietzsche

James Magrini
College of DuPage, magrini@cod.edu

Article

Truth, Art, and the "New Sensuousness": Understanding Heidegger's Metaphysical Reading of Nietzsche

James Magrini

In the first of four lectures on Nietzsche's philosophy, "The Will to Power as Art" (1936-37), Heidegger argues that the unique and important relationship between truth and art, which Nietzsche suggests, must be understood "with a view to the conquest of nihilism,"¹ i.e., within the historical context of a radically novel interpretation of sensuous reality. Beginning with the project of overturning Platonism as the *active* countermovement to nihilism, this essay interprets Heidegger's difficult notion of the discordant relationship between truth (the fixation of semblance) and art (the transfiguration of semblance) in Nietzsche's philosophy, emphasizing the supreme importance of art as life's greatest enhancing force. The analysis is conducted within the context of Nietzsche's metaphysics as presented by Heidegger, who claims that as a metaphysical thinker, Nietzsche could not explain such topics as "truth," "Being," and "Becoming" in terms beyond the conceptualization of Western philosophy. In spite of that, his thought intimates a movement beyond the constraints of the tradition within which he was entrenched. In addition to providing a detailed exegesis of Heidegger's lecture course, the problems associated with Heidegger's metaphysical interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy will be discussed, problems that commentators such as Alan Schrift (*Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*) believe stem from Heidegger's stringent and restrictive methodological choices for approaching the reading of Nietzsche.²

What is Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism? What is the significance of waging an aesthetic war against this negative cultural force? Attending to such questions will clarify Nietzsche's unique conception of art as

¹ Martin Heidegger, "The Will to Power as Art," in *Nietzsche*, trans. by D. F. Krell, [Volumes 1 & 2] (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 161.

² Alan Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 14-20. It must be noted that Schrift's critique, in the tradition of Heidegger's "critical confrontation" with Nietzsche, focuses not only on the problematic aspects of Heidegger's reading, but also elucidates the supreme strength of Heidegger's interpretation. Schrift's brilliant and detailed critique acknowledges the debt to which philosophy owes Heidegger for his monumentally influential interpretation of Nietzsche.

a countermovement to nihilism, which finds its expression in the task of overturning Platonism. Nietzsche's determination to act against Platonism is presented as a "fundamental experience, that is, his growing insight into the basic developments of [his] history."³ Accordingly, Nietzsche's work to overturn Platonism unfolds on historical, rather than theoretical grounds. Nihilism, he recognizes, is the historical development in which the "*highest values devalue themselves*."⁴ The supposed guarantors of "Being" and "truth," i.e., theism (faith), philosophical rationalism (reason), and science/technology (logical empiricism) lose legitimacy and force. They prove inadequate to the task of categorically explaining the vast complexities of existence because they are driven by the following erroneous assumptions: (1) The belief that the universe is explainable in definitive terms, it has "aim" and "purpose," and (2) The belief that a unified system of thought exists that explains the "true" nature of the universe in its totality. All such disciplines, holding complete optimism in the power of truth, must ultimately fall short of their unrealistic goal of attaining complete knowledge of the world, which according to Nietzsche, is in fact beyond definitive explanation. "Theoretical optimism," the belief in the possibility of absolute knowledge, must breakdown when rendered ineffectual through encounters with phenomena that defy its explanations. This process of knowledge becoming ineffectual is what Nietzsche means when referring to the nihilistic devaluation of values, and whether acknowledged or not, it is the decisive moment when "logic twists around itself and finally bites itself in the tail."⁵ As the cataclysmic event of nihilism pervades the entirety of Western history, it precludes authentic ecumenical goals from grounding a culture's formation and forward projection.⁶

Nietzsche traces the growth of nihilism from Plato's philosophy of the *Ideas* (forms) through the dominant interpretation of Plato's corpus, in the form of Platonism, which amounts to a drastic reinterpretation of Plato's original philosophy, wherein Plato's thought becomes, "more refined, more enticing, more incomprehensible," namely Christian.⁷ In the modern age, the metaphysical interpretation of the "true-apparent" distinction is taken to the extreme in the Christian world-view. Unlike Plato's teachings, Christianity

³ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 155-156.

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, trans. by W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1969), Section 2.

⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. by Shaun Whiteside (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 75.

⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Philosopher as Cultural Physician," in *Nietzsche and Truth: Selection from his Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, trans. by Daniel Breazeale (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1979), 75. Nietzsche did not believe that an authentic culture could ever be grounded in the truths of science or religion. He even argues that philosophy is also inadequate to the task of founding a culture: "It is not possible to base a popular culture on philosophy. Thus, in relation to a culture, philosophy can always be of second, but never of primary significance." Instead, he claims that true culture demands for its unifying center an art or an artwork, and thus envisages the artist as the best possible candidate for cultural founder.

⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (Penguin: London, 1991), 50-51.

believes that "true Being" is no longer attainable through corporeal means, e.g., the wisdom and piety of the philosopher, and is instead promised in a glorious after-life, most specifically to "the sinner who repents."⁸ Christianity views earthly habitation as something negative, and worse, sinful, something to be transcended in order to reach a higher state of existence within the incorporeal realm of spirit (super-sensuous). Christianity denigrates the body, relegating the sensuous to a position of lowly rank. The implications that accompany this dualistic metaphysical world view are both epistemological and axiological in scope. According to Nietzsche, with Christianity comes the erroneous and pernicious view that the "true world" (truth) relates to the moral valuation of "good" and the "apparent world" (falsity) relates to the moral valuation of "evil."

At the backdrop of this Platonist-Christian (Platonism) privileging of the super-sensuous world, Nietzsche attempts to return to the realm of the senses which involves an overturning of the Platonic world view. What ensues is a revaluation of the metaphysical standard of truth and an initiation towards a "physiological" aesthetics. At first glance, positivism appears to accomplish such a move as described, for positivism inverts Platonism's value system by removing the super-sensuous from a position of importance, no longer designating it as "true Being." In its place, empirical presentation (*positum*) becomes the *new* "truth" standard of reality. Nevertheless, positivism is not a radical overcoming of Platonism in the Nietzschean sense, for it continues the proliferation of nihilism, and like its counterpart, embraces the unnatural bifurcation of existence, i.e., the comparative ideal of the "true world" against which values are measured and judged. Although positivism casts aside the ideal of the super-sensuous as the "true world," it retains the ideal of the "true world," and along with it the "blueprint of an 'above and below.'"⁹ Positivism continues to operate within Platonism's system of hierarchy. Empirical validation becomes the gold standard establishing the world of "appearances" (in this case, the super-sensuous world), as that which constitutes all things which are not truly in Being. Initially, Nietzsche's undertaking seems to repeat the move of positivism, i.e., establishing the "sensual" as the criterion for determining "True reality." However, Nietzsche does not intend to establish an alternative form of positivism by merely reversing the structure of knowledge. Rather, he seeks to attack the root of nihilism, abolishing the destructive "essence" of Platonism – the distinction between "true and apparent" world.

In addition to the aforementioned epistemological implications associated with attacking the essence of Platonism, for Nietzsche, there are crucial physiological and psychological issues that emerge from this analytic endeavor, which are directly linked with the concerns of axiology. Nietzsche believes that the overturning of Platonism's world view rescues the sensate realm from its maligned and devalued status, a world linked directly to the

⁸ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

⁹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 207.

corporeal “body,” and elevates it to a place of prominence in a renovated, renewed, and *re-valued* conception of human existence. As opposed to viewing the body as a “phenomenon that accompanies thinking, a phenomenon furthermore, that has a rather inhibited effect on the clarity of thinking,”¹⁰ Nietzsche embraces the body as the medium through which thought transpires, and beyond, as the ground from out of which all of our activities and advanced states of being emerge, from thought and language to the superlative transfiguration of our world through art. Since Nietzsche’s project of re-valuation is genealogically concerned with a return to the origins of our psychological motivations and the values we attach to these psychological states, he is ultimately concerned with whether or not the artist’s psychological motives to create emerge out of life-affirming drives or life-negating drives, out of modes of attunement that are valuable or detrimental to the overall enhancement of life’s power. Clearly, for Nietzsche, Platonism fosters a nihilistic environment wherein the creative psychological drives, those conducive to the most fecund and efficacious discharge of the will-to-power, are subjugated in the service of other-worldly aspirations, and here Nietzsche locates the pernicious drive to deny life, which results in the decline and atrophy of the will-to-power and the human’s creative spirit. Nietzsche envisages the authentic overturning of Platonism as the “zenith” of world history, punctuating the “end of the longest error.”¹¹ How is it possible to consider this historical event as humankind’s greatest hour given the grave implications of the complete overturning of values hitherto? For once the “true world” is abolished, so too is the concept of the “apparent world,” and since these worlds together form what ultimately “stands opposed to pure nothingness,” it follows that nihilism will rise to engulf humanity. Not so, assures Heidegger, for Nietzsche’s philosophy works to overcome nihilism in even its most drastic manifestations. It is during this time that humanity is faced with the choice of either remaining *passive* before nihilism’s oppression (the Last Man) or responding *actively*, in the form of the *Übermensch*, striving to overcome the previous relationship of humanity to its existence. Although often conceived as a super-human entity, the *Übermensch* is certainly not “some miraculous, fabulous being.” Rather, as Heidegger notes, the “overman” is a high-bred of the philosopher and artist who surmounts the condition of “unsubdued nihilism,” transcending the Last Man, whose “Dasein and relation to Being have been determined by Platonism in one of its forms or by a mixture of these.”¹² The *Übermensch* response calls for the establishment of new values and standards of ground. This new value-structure receives its impetus from the drives of the “biological,” or physiological, that which is valued precisely for its benefit to life. “In valuations,” writes Nietzsche, “are expressed *conditions* of preservation and growth.”¹³ Values are ultimately

¹⁰ Daniela Vallega-Neu, *The Bodily Dimension in Thinking* (New York: SUNY, 2005), 21-37.

¹¹ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*, 50-51.

¹² Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 208.

¹³ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Section 507.

decided by life as will to power, a perpetual striving and willing of *conditions* that facilitate the unremitting drive to enhance its power.

According to Heidegger's interpretation, Nietzsche's conception of "reality" reinstates the sensuous as the basic character of existence, labeling it "perspectival-perceptual."¹⁴ Reality consists of a large number of forces (perspectives), joined and linked together, striving in contention, each asserting a unique perspective and assessing other perspectives in terms of the "capacity for life."¹⁵ Each living being has its own configuration of drives, forces, and ways of manifesting its presence, of showing, or "shining." That which shows itself *via* the sensuous is termed "semblance" (*Schein*), and this radiating of a things' perspective is part and parcel of the world of appearances (*die scheinbare Welt*). Bringing the idea of semblance into the essence of reality, Nietzsche attempts to expunge the pejorative connotations that the tradition has attached to the concept of "appearance." It is within this new interpretation of reality, or "sensuousness," that the relation between truth and art takes on significance. Grounded in this singular, multi-perceptual reality, each a mode of perspectival-shining (*Scheinen*), truth is conceived as the fixation of semblance (*Anschein*) and art as the scintillating transfiguration of semblance (*Aufscheinen*).

As Heidegger argues, Nietzsche conceives truth as a "justified and necessary condition of the assertion of life."¹⁶ Truth as fixed semblance gives rise to the concept of the "object," i.e., things with a constant and enduring quality. Truth allows beings to establish themselves amid change as they work to master the environment. Although he conceptualizes truth as *Anschein* (apparition), it is not opposed to reality, and instead refers to that which shows itself as fixed appearance, securing what the will to power has gathered and acquired. Admittedly, Heidegger claims that Nietzsche holds a unique view of truth (e.g., "error," "illusion," "metaphor," "lie") and is skeptical of "theoretical" idealism's claim to possess the absolute certainty of knowledge, i.e., the undying faith in the correspondence model of truth and the ability of propositions to accurately picture reality, demonstrating the "adequate expression of an object within a subject."¹⁷ However, Heidegger's contention that truth for Nietzsche is determined exclusively by knowledge, and further, that Nietzsche's understanding of truth as "fixed semblance" firmly locates him in the company of such philosophers as Plato, Aristotle, and Descartes, who concern themselves with truth as demonstrating a *constancy in presence*, representing that which is known because it satisfies the essence of truth, is not without contention among commentators.

In essence, Heidegger claims that for Nietzsche, "Truth is the truth of knowledge," i.e., the truth of what is truly known "is established as something true in, by, and for knowledge alone." (149). According to Heidegger, as will

¹⁴ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 213.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 212.

¹⁶ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 215.

¹⁷ Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense," *Nietzsche and Truth: Selection from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, 86.

be addressed, Nietzsche overlooks the greater ontological concern of the essence of truth and the truth of essence because he pursues truth strictly in terms of epistemology, and much like traditional philosophy, locates truth in the domain of knowledge. It is necessary to interrogate Heidegger's negligent glossing of Nietzsche's early interpretations of truth (e.g., "Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense"), wherein the discourse on truth is actually grounded in the philological understanding of rhetoric, semiotics, and the notion of metaphor as a supreme form of creative, imaginative linguistic transference. In these early writings Nietzsche espouses a radically skeptical view of the possibility of acquiring "truth" as previously conceived by the metaphysical-epistemological tradition. Arguing against Heidegger, Schrift identifies the following aspects of Nietzsche's radical theory of truth, which Schrift claims locates Nietzsche outside the aforementioned philosophical tradition: (1) Nietzsche's critique of the referential nature of language and his extreme skepticism toward the traditional correspondence model of truth, and (2) Nietzsche's understanding of the aesthetic nature of "truth" as emerging through the creative, imaginative use of language. Importantly, as relating to the purpose of criticizing Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche's understanding of truth, relying as it does on the *Nachlass* and *Will to Power*, Schrift states the following: "Nietzsche's reflections on language function as an essential component of his later thinking."¹⁸

For Nietzsche, language constructs the laws of truth, it allows the "clever beasts" to invent knowing, but the notion of "truth" in this instance, as Nietzsche is careful to point out, is at odds with "truth" as conceived by traditional epistemology, i.e., knowledge established through the correspondence model, which expresses, by way of a proposition, the valid relationship between a subjective "representation" and the objective "state-of-affairs." As Schrift points out, the correspondence model works off the mistaken assumption that language, "stands in some sort of privileged relation (*adequatio*) to an extralinguistic referent or meaning ('reality'), i.e., language, that which conceptually structures the world in the first instance, holds the power to provide us with 'true' information about things that are situated outside of language."¹⁹ Nietzsche argues against any referential accuracy inherent to language, for he believes that an unsurmountable gap exists between words and things. This notion is directly related to Nietzsche's critique of the correspondence model, which operates according to the flawed logic that there is an "objective referent" outside the locution, as if it were possible to speak of an objective referent outside the metaphorical relationship language establishes. As Nietzsche reasons, "We believe that we know something about things themselves when speak of trees, colors, snow, and flowers; and yet we possess nothing but metaphors for things,"²⁰ and these metaphors do not express a relationship of identity between "words" and the original entities. In order for

¹⁸ Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*, 138.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 133.

²⁰ Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense," *Philosophy and Truth: Selections From Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, 83.

the correspondence model to have validity, it would need to grant legitimate access to the essence of things, the "thing-in-itself," so that the accuracy with which the locution corresponded to this so-called "essence" could be determined, and, as Nietzsche claims, this is an impossible feat.

In "On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense," Nietzsche presents an analysis of the manner in which human concepts arise as constructs of a linguistic nature, most specifically that of metaphor formation. The process can be understood as tripartite in structure, involving a movement, or transference, from one realm of perception to another, "a triple metaphorical transference from nerve impulse to image to words to concept."²¹ According to Schrift, since each sphere involves a move from one "language" to another, this rules out "a legitimate relation, or literal translation between spheres."²² Thus, for Nietzsche, complete descriptive analysis, wherein it is possible to determine legitimate truth-value, is impossible. The concepts we form and incorporate in our attempts to know the world are always at a remove from the original perceptual experiences that ground the move to abstraction, for even at the level of the initial perception, when "a nerve stimulus is transferred into image,"²³ metaphor formation is at work. As stated, Nietzsche claims that there are no externally valid descriptions of real things, of anything resembling the essence of things, because language does not hold the ability to accurately capture reality. "For between two absolutely different spheres," writes Nietzsche, "as between subject and object, there is no causality, no correctness, there is at most, an *aesthetic* relation."²⁴ Although Heidegger locates Nietzsche in the company of such philosophers as Plato, Aristotle, and Descartes, who all believe that truth is properly determined by knowledge and that the possibility for legitimate knowledge exists, Nietzsche's radical theory of knowledge drastically contradicts the responses the aforementioned philosophers have given to the questions concerning the origin, reliability, and criterion for knowledge, i.e., the concerns of epistemology proper. Nietzsche is not only skeptical of knowledge in the traditional sense, but is outright nihilistic about the possibility of both "gaining knowledge" and the value of the idealized quest to attain it.²⁵

As opposed to the traditional notion of truth that seeks to overcome any and all illusions, which settles for nothing less than categorical certainty in all matters of truth, Nietzsche adopts a "naturalistic" and "instrumental" conception of truth. As described by Daniel Breazeale, this is the understanding that the human requires the aid of "life preserving fictions, which apparently must be believed to be true if they are to serve their intended function."²⁶ However, "believing" these life preserving fictions is not the same

²¹ Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*, 132.

²² *Ibid.*, 126.

²³ Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense," *Philosophy and Truth: Selections From Nietzsche's Notebooks of the 1870's*, 82.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 27, (trans. by/ator Daniel Breazeale's Comments).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

as investing them with objective, categorical truth-value. Nietzsche is clear that we must at all times be aware that their production requires the equating of unequal things, based as they are on the metaphorical transference from one perceptual realm to another. To the point, such truths are nothing but lies and illusions we that we as humans create.²⁷ Viewed in this manner, truths are as illusory and false as lies, however, if we attend to Nietzsche's "naturalist conception" and its utility for human life, we understand that "some products of the intellect are more valuable ("truer") than others."²⁸ Ultimately, as argued by Schrift, Nietzsche concludes that knowledge is "merely a collection of perspectival illusions which, while necessary for the preservation of the human species, stands as a function not of truth [epistemology] but of *power*," or value. Truth, for Nietzsche, much unlike the tradition within which he is located by Heidegger, becomes a concern for *axiology* rather than a function of epistemology.²⁹

Heidegger's metaphysical reading argues that Nietzsche's intimation of the all-important question of Being *qua* Being occurs in the strategic reconciling of art and truth in the realm of "art," wherein truth as "fixed semblance" facilitates the will to power in its quest to overcome and transfigure life (as fixed semblance, or "truth"). However, such an interpretation appears to overlook the crucial issue that art is in fact situated at the root of Nietzsche's theory of truth as metaphor formation, i.e., truth as a byproduct of language is always already art in that it is metaphorical, imaginative, and creative. As Nietzsche writes, "The drive toward the formation of metaphors is the fundamental human drive,"³⁰ and this drive is artistic, plain and simple. According to Nietzsche, the human being is to be admired for its artistic powers, for it is a "genius of construction." Whereas other animals create their habitat with materials they collect, "man builds with the far more delicate conceptual material which he first has to manufacture for himself."³¹ Nietzsche believes that the entire conceptual schemata of the world is born through the artistic process of metaphor construction, which streams from "the primal faculty of human imagination like a fiery liquid."³² However, as Nietzsche astutely observes, many are unable to come to terms with the fact that the human artist creates its world by way of "anthropomorphic" concepts that do not capture anything resembling the "true essence" of things. According to Nietzsche, outside of the human being, no objective truths exist, and tradition philosophy ignores this, forgets this, and must do so in order to preserve its "self-consciousness," in order to retain its sanity and security in the

²⁷ *Ibid*, 33.

²⁸ Nietzsche, *Philosophy and Truth: Selection From Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, 32, (trans. by Iator Daniel Breazeale's Analysis).

²⁹ Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*, 138.

³⁰ Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense," *Philosophy and Truth: Selection From Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, 88.

³¹ *Ibid*, 85.

³² *Ibid*, 86.

false and dangerous belief that the world can be known with utter certainty through knowledge.³³

For Nietzsche, thought is possible only by way of language, "semiotic unities and syntactical categories,"³⁴ which gives order to the world and structures our understanding of it. The artistic process of giving form to our world through language does not end with the formation of concepts. Rather, this moment is in fact the origin of the life-long process of artistic world creation, transformation, and self-overcoming. As Nietzsche points out, if we are able to recognize and accept that our worldly conceptual framework is indeed nothing beyond a creative "illusion," i.e., as long as we are able to momentarily deceive "ourselves without injury" in matters of truth, then we are free for additional creative acts, free to celebrate our "Saturnalia" in artistic world transfiguration. When the will to power is engaged in the highest task of life, as related to the theme of metaphor formation, graduating beyond the *originary* phase of concept formation, we are *as* artists once again playing with metaphor, and we derive pleasure in this play which displaces "the boundary stones of abstraction."³⁵ When remaking the world as an aesthetic phenomenon, Nietzsche claims that we are "guided by intuition rather than concepts,"³⁶ so in essence, we are transforming and overcoming through artistic creation that which we ourselves have originally constructed through language. By dismantling the conceptual framework and reassembling it "in an ironic fashion, pairing the most alien things and separating the closest," we are exercising the artistic drive to refashion the world of our own "aesthetic" making.³⁷ Thus, against Heidegger's interpretation, it seems that prior to the will to power overcoming and transforming through artistic activity that which is gathered as "fixed semblance," there is an artist always already at work in an *originary* sense, creating through metaphor formation the conceptual edifice of the world, making possible to powerful discharge of will to power in higher-level aesthetic activity, making possible anything like the interpretation of truth as "fixed semblance" in the first place.³⁸

³³ Nietzsche, "On the Pathos of Truth," *Philosophy and Truth: Selection From Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, 66. This so-called "drive for knowledge," for Nietzsche, represents the inevitable withering and death of the human's "will to art," the will to overcome existence. For as Nietzsche philosophizes, "whereas knowledge attains as its final goal" in annihilation, i.e., the petrification of existence, "art is always more powerful than knowledge - because it desires life."

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 30 (trans. by editor Daniel Breazeale's Analysis).

³⁵ Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Context," *Philosophy and Truth: Selection From Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, 90.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 90.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

³⁸ Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense," *Philosophy and Truth: Nietzsche's Early Notebooks From the Early 1870's*, 84. In relation to this discussion on truth and art as metaphor formation, it appears that for Nietzsche, the realm of knowledge is not the domain of truth as conceived by the tradition, but rather, truth seems to reside in a realm of artistic intuition, where truth is defined in terms of rhetorical tropes: "What is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: In short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished."

Returning to Heidegger's analysis and the interrelation he establishes in Nietzsche's philosophy between art and truth, Heidegger suggests the following: Traditional philosophy embraces truth as life's ultimate guiding principle, for as the logic runs, humans require truth in order to have a meaningful life. Is it not right to demand that life, in the first instance, be grounded and guided by truth in all of its aspects? Nietzsche vehemently opposes such logic. Truth, he argues, is but one aspect of existence. It is correct that life necessitates its own preservation, but also, and more importantly, life requires enhancement in order to perpetually grow out beyond itself. Therefore, according to Nietzsche, a life dedicated solely to the pursuit and acquisition of truth leads to the stagnation and decay of life, as historical nihilism testifies. Truth inhibits life's drive to continually increase its power, and so it is art, rather than truth, which opens the possibility of its ultimate enhancement. For this reason Nietzsche proclaims, "We possess *art* lest we *perish from the truth*."³⁹

Art is the most "transparent"⁴⁰ configuration of will to power, as expressed by the artist in the act of creation. In its most organic capacity, art transfigures life, making it stronger, richer, and more perfect,⁴¹ effectively opening up life for the creation of more life. Although the expression of will to power reaches its apex in the artist, Nietzsche does not limit his conception of aesthetics to the production of literature, music, or plastic art. Rather, he protracts the traditional notion of art, defining creative activity as the basic function of all living beings. Art clarifies semblance by locating a "thing in the clarity of Being, and establishing such clarity as the heightening of life itself."⁴² As "will to semblance," art idealizes and embellishes reality, causing it to "shine most profoundly and supremely in scintillating transfiguration."⁴³ *Art is worth more than truth*⁴⁴ because it stands closer in metaphysical proximity to life's innermost nature as will to power, "an expression for the Being of Becoming."⁴⁵ Art is the principal facilitator of this essence, akin to life as a dynamic ever-changing phenomenon, and as such, more valuable and necessary to life than truth as fixed semblance.

Art is the secularized "spiritualization of the senses,"⁴⁶ and as such, a powerful spiritual force once liberated from the tyranny of the religious conscience. When referring to art as "physiological," Nietzsche is not restricting the concept to the expression of base sensuality, that is, symbolic

³⁹ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Section 822.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Section 797. Nietzsche's aphorism runs thus: "The phenomenon of 'artist' is still the most transparent – to see through it to the basic instincts of power, nature, etc.!" This is to say, as articulated within the "grand style," that the highest form of creative activity, the artist is not only expressing most obviously the will to power in action, he/she is also, and more importantly, expressing the will to power in its most powerful and effective configuration.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Section 808.

⁴² Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 216.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁴⁴ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Section 853.

⁴⁵ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 233. (trans. byator David Krell's Analysis).

⁴⁶ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Section 820.

only of the libidinous urges at work in nature, for art is best understood as a physiological-psychical phenomenon, encompassing both sensuous and "non-sensuous" aspects of life, an amalgam of mind, body, and spirit. Inducing semblance to scintillate, art yields a mystical glimpse into an idealized, perfected reality, the world is brought forth to appear in such a way that it is "embellished." The scintillating transfiguration of existence occurs when artist and spectator are attuned within the aesthetic mood (*Stimmung*) of *Rausch*, or, as David Krell translates this term, the "attunement of rapture." This is the intoxicated "feeling of plenitude and enhancement of force,"⁴⁷ which influences and determines one's stance to Being as a whole. *Rausch* awakens the capacity in beings to extend, or project, their Being out beyond itself in transcendence, experiencing a "relation to Being in which beings themselves are experienced as being made more full in Being, richer, more perspicuous, more essential."⁴⁸

Nietzsche identifies the embellishing power of art as "Love." This is a dual reference to the sexual and spiritual elements of the aesthetic attunement of *Rausch*. Love facilitates art's transformation of the world, in all of its terrifying and uncertain aspects, into something to be affirmed. Love represents "the highest state of affirmation of existence," and in this state of existence even the "highest degrees of pain"⁴⁹ are not excluded, and in fact willed. When Nietzsche describes the aesthetic enthusiasm of Love's attunement as a form of "divination," the classic characteristics of the mystic (religious) experience are undeniable. Within Love's intoxication, "the sensations of time and space are altered," "tremendous distances are surveyed"⁵⁰ and effortlessly apprehended, as the power of understanding is immeasurably enhanced. Such an ecstatic experience directs "life out beyond itself," creatively communicating to life a new possibility of its higher law."⁵¹ Whereas religion once served as redemptive justification for human existence, it is for Nietzsche art that reveals life's highest possibilities. As the secular-spiritual liberator of the *sufferer*, the *man of action*, and the man of *knowledge*,⁵² art is the only authentic means of justifying existence.

As articulated, despite the fact that art and truth are both necessary for life, as modes of *perspectival-shining*, it is art, due to its powers of creative transfiguration that is significantly more valuable to life than truth. Nietzsche's talk of the "discordance" (*Zwiespalt*) between art and truth is to be understood within this line of reasoning. Heidegger conceives discordance as the severing in two of forces emerging from a common origin, possible "only where the elements which sever the unity of their belonging-together diverge from one another by virtue of that very unity."⁵³ It is for the sake of life's continued

⁴⁷ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 105.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 100.

⁴⁹ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Section 852.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Section 800.

⁵¹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 126.

⁵² Nietzsche *Will to Power*, Section 853.

⁵³ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 217.

enhancement that these two modes of existence must diverge and run counter to each other. As Heidegger explains, art and truth must split in discordant opposition to ensure the continual growth and ascendancy of life:

In order for the real (the living creature) to *be* real, it must on the one hand ensconce itself within a particular horizon, thus perduring in the illusion of truth. But in order for the real to *remain* real, it must on the other hand simultaneously transfigure itself by going beyond itself, surpassing itself in the scintillation of what is created in art – and that means it has to advance against the truth.⁵⁴

Nietzsche explicitly states that the relationship between art and truth arouses “holy dread.”⁵⁵ Is it possible to find such discordance elsewhere in the annals of philosophy, most specifically within the works of Plato? Heidegger pursues this line of inquiry for the following reason: If Nietzsche’s philosophy is to be considered the authentic “inversion,” or overturning, of Platonism, a similar discordance, “but of a reverse sort,”⁵⁶ must be found in Plato’s thought (recall that the doctrine of the *Ideas* originally spawned Platonism’s nihilistic domination).⁵⁷ Attempting to locate this discordance, Heidegger examines the dialogues of Plato, searching out the center of Plato’s metaphysics and the conception of Being as *eidos*, or the *Ideas*, Heidegger reads the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus* with the intent to first, clarify Plato’s definition art, Being, and truth; and next, to explore the context in which the question of truth and art arises, asking: In what way is art related to the truth of Being within Plato’s philosophy? Is this relationship of a discordant nature?

Plato theorizes that the *Ideas* make up the constitutive nature of existence, and such a hypothesis “presupposes the interpretation of truth as *aletheia*,”⁵⁸ i.e., truth as the “unconcealment,” or the revelation, of Being. Within Plato’s thought, truth and Being share an intimate bond. Since Heidegger wants to understand art as it relates to the truth of the Being, he must first work to ascertain the notion of art as defined by Plato. Although the ancient Greeks did not employ a single, all-encompassing term when referring to “art,” they did embrace a comprehensive definition of art’s nature – all art was categorized as *mimesis*, or “imitation,” a form of representation in art. That

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 217

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 142. Highlighting important discordance between art and truth, Heidegger includes a quotation from Nietzsche’s writings of 1888. Reflecting on the 1872 publication of the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche states, “Very early in my life I took the question of the relation of art and truth seriously: And even now I stand in holy dread in the face of this discordance.”

⁵⁶ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 181.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 163. Heidegger’s questioning seeks not only to uncover the conflict between truth (or true Being) and art (or what is portrayed in art) within Plato’s philosophy, but also works to assist in locating Nietzsche within the history of philosophy - For only by searching out this relationship between art and truth in philosophy’s history, will “Nietzsche’s basic metaphysical position in its own light” come to shine.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 182.

which is properly "real" in Plato's philosophy manifests the *Ideas* in varying degrees within outward appearance, and this occurs in either one of three forms of self-showing and ways of being produced. Plato ranks the three modes of production in terms of their effective capacity to facilitate the uncovering of Being. "With regard to ways of production and in light of the pure outward appearance, Being,"⁵⁹ *mimesis* is defined by its metaphysical "distance" from Being.

In order to properly grasp Plato's notion of art, or *techne*, as the Greeks understood the knowledge leading to the creation of artefacts, the notion of the world-creator in relation to the craftsperson must be elucidated. According to Plato's cosmogony it is god (*demiourgos*) who makes the *kosmos* as the ultimate giver of shape to all things. Working with the forms (*eidōs*), Plato's god holds in readiness the emergence of Being's pure outward appearance in order that the human, for example, the craftsperson, who produces things according to the essence of their Being, is able to discern it. The craftsperson is situated on the second tier of Plato's hierarchy of "Being." This because the things that are produced, made for the sake of the people and state (*demos*), with the explicit purpose of everyday use, illuminates the truth of the *Ideas*. The artist, who produces only imitations of things, is thrice removed from god and true Being, as the artist possesses neither god's disposition over pure essence, nor the disposition over and use of what she produces with respect to what it is, in the manner of the craftsperson. Rather than clarifying and making possible the revelation of Being, the artist's creation inhibit *aletheia*. Due to art's medium and its methods of copying, transforming, and inventing, it is "exposed to the danger of continual deception and falsehood."⁶⁰ Art, as *mimesis*, is therefore far removed from the truth of Being, revealing the metaphor of "distance" in Plato's thought. This idea is not readily translatable into a discernable discordance, which requires thinking art on a par with truth, i.e., as beings of equal significance arising from a common origin.⁶¹ However, the conception of art as presented within the *Republic* does not constitute Plato's entire position on art and beauty, and so Heidegger turns his attention to the *Phaedrus*, and it is within this dialogue, amid reflections on beauty, truth, and the soul that he uncovers the subtle discordance between art and truth to which Plato alludes.

According to Plato, human comportment presupposes the latent understanding of Being. Since Being for Plato is a non-sensuous phenomenon, it cannot be apprehended by the senses, and this indicates that the "soul," or *psyche*, the immaterial, immortal faculty by which humankind comprehend the *Ideas*, must have at one time viewed the radiant truth of Being. The soul, however, is estranged from the truth of the *Ideas* as subject to the inevitable cycle of rebirth within the human body. As follows, within its corporeal habitation, the soul's understanding of Being is covered over, concealed beneath the surface of everyday appearances. This for Plato represents the

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁶⁰ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 168.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 189

fundamental source of humanity's problems. Falling prey to appearances (*aistheta*) and the common opinions concerning appearances (*doxa*), humans descend into the oblivion of Being and exist within a state of forgetfulness, completely unaware that such a thing as Being exists. In order to acquire, or more accurately, return to, an explicit understanding of Being, i.e., recognizing that the *Ideas* are the direct cause of sensible appearances, a recollection of Being (*anamnesis*) must occur, and it is beauty that makes such a recovery of Being possible.

Although neither the production of art nor the work itself allows the radiance of Being to shine forth, it is within art's capacity to profoundly affect the observer that Plato locates the means by which to facilitate *aletheia*, or the disclosure of the *Ideas*. Beauty captivates through scintillating, sensuous appearance, liberating to the "view upon Being,"⁶² i.e., granting humans entry into the immediacy of the sensory appearances while simultaneously drawing them beyond the realm of the sensuous to the realm of the super-sensuous. By way of beauty's entrancing power, the fleeting, radiant glimpse of Being is arrested from the outward appearance of things. Beauty and truth belong together, as they are related to Being, both are essential to the revelation of the *Ideas* within Plato's philosophy, "for that which truth essentially brings about, the unveiling of Being, that and nothing else is what beauty brings about."⁶³ Yet this belonging together of beauty and truth is transitory in Plato's thought, for although beauty opens the truth of Being, it is an "aesthetic" phenomenon, arising in the realm of the sensuous, and Being for Plato is always non-sensuous. For this reason, despite beauty's facilitation of *aletheia*, the opening, or "disclosure" of Being occurs, in a strict sense, at the site of what Plato deems the realm of "non-being" (*me on*)—through the medium of sensation, in the realm of the sensuous. It is therefore necessary that beauty and truth diverge from each other.

When we consider very carefully that art, by bringing forth the beautiful, resides in the sensuous, and that it is therefore far removed from truth, it then becomes clear why truth and beauty, their belonging together in one notwithstanding, still must be two, must separate from one another. But the severance, discordance in the broad sense, is not in Plato's view on that arouses dread; it is a felicitous one. The beautiful elevates us beyond the sensuous and bears us back into the true.⁶⁴

Heidegger establishes that Plato, much the same as Nietzsche, thinks art and truth in terms of their relationship to life, or Being, as emerging from out of a common origin. This fact is crucial to Heidegger's exegesis of

⁶² Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 196.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 198.

Nietzsche's philosophy, because discordance, as denoted by Heidegger, is possible only when art and truth are thought in terms of "abscission," i.e., growing from common ground and then branching off, one from the other. In locating the subtle, "felicitous" discordance between art and truth within Plato's philosophy, Heidegger reveals the exact type of discordance required to substantiate his claim that Nietzsche's philosophy is best understood as an inverted, or reversed, form of Platonism.

To understand why, in Nietzsche's philosophy, the interaction of art and truth arouses dread, the moment of Platonism's abolition must be analyzed, for at this time in history, along with the eradication of the "true" and "apparent" worlds, the monumental occurrence of God's death hits with full force.⁶⁵ When God, morality, philosophy, and science no longer guarantee a complete understanding of existence in terms that are categorical, humanity is forced to assume responsibility for its own existence. Art receives its vital impetus from these events, and creative activity, as metaphysical activity, comes into its own for the first time. "Existence," states Nietzsche, "can now be endured on within creation,"⁶⁶ for art is "the only superior configuration to all will to the denial of life (nihilism)."⁶⁷ Within a world devoid of transcendent values, the will to power conducts itself in creation, and art, the greatest stimulant to life, the most "transparent" configuration of will to power, emerges as the only legitimate means by which humanity enacts its life. In assuming responsibility for its own Being, at the peak of nihilism, i.e., the moment when God's death hits with full force, humanity is inextricably trapped within the discordant relationship of art and truth. The discordance between art and truth *rages* in so far as it continually induces "dread,"⁶⁸ that is to say, in the desperate times of nihilism, locked within the relentless cycle of art and truth, humanity is repeatedly thrown back upon its own self-reliant means. Nietzsche's rallying cry, "Art and nothing but art,"⁶⁹ serves as a harsh, yet inspirational reminder to humanity that in the midst of Becoming, forever creating and reassessing existence, it must continually rise to the task of living in an authentically creative manner.

If Nietzsche is to succeed in abolishing (overturning) Platonism, the overturning "must become a twisting free of it,"⁷⁰ i.e., his thought must *properly* break free from the conceptual fetters of metaphysics. This, argues Heidegger, is precisely what Nietzsche fails to accomplish, because he remains locked within the conceptual scheme of Western philosophy. Consequently, Nietzsche's ideas on Being, Becoming, and truth develop in the light of metaphysics as the result of asking the same question that has guided philosophy since its beginnings. Avoiding the *ultimate* (grounding) question of philosophy (What is Being?), which is concerned with the essence of Being, he

⁶⁵ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 217.

⁶⁶ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Section 853.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Section 853.

⁶⁸ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 142, (trans. by translator David Krell's Analysis)

⁶⁹ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Section 853.

⁷⁰ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 20.

instead asks only the *penultimate* (guiding) question (What is the being?), inquiring into the truth of beings, or the Being of beings. Pursuing the “non-essential” route, Nietzsche employs the identical system of conceptualization that has for centuries directed philosophical inquiry. Both Being and Becoming are thought to determine the ground of beings as such. On the one hand, Nietzsche conceives “Being” as that which “shows itself” as fixed appearance, or presence (*ousia*), as the ground of that which *is*, and this represents the meaning of truth according to the tradition. On the other hand, he conceives “Becoming” as change (*genesis*), that which is coming into existence and passing away. The fact that he envisages art, as the ultimate expression of Becoming, i.e., the transfiguration of that which shows itself in appearance, will emerge as integral to Heidegger’s claim that Nietzsche is the “last” of the metaphysicians.

Heidegger claims that Nietzsche conceives the fundamental character of beings, i.e., the Being of beings, as will to power. As an unquenchable drive to grow in strength, will to power is both “willing” and “Becoming.”⁷¹ It is not enough to simply conceive will to power as Becoming, for according to Heidegger’s analysis, Nietzsche philosophizes the notion that Becoming only *is* Becoming in an authentic sense, if it is grounded in Being, therefore he seeks to attach a sense of permanence to Becoming in order to legitimize it. Nietzsche moves to “impose upon Becoming the character of Being,” which is the ultimate will to power, and that “everything recurs is the closest approximation to a world of Becoming to a world of Being.”⁷² Such reasoning conveys the interconnectedness of will to power and the “eternal recurrence of the same,” as expressed in the metaphysical terms of the “what” and “how” of existence, i.e., the *essentia*, or “what” of beings, as will to power, and the *existentia*, or “how” of beings as eternal recurrence of the same. Will to power is the Being of beings, a Becoming that wills its return (Being) as Becoming in the form of the eternal recurrence. “Being as permanence,” writes Heidegger, “is to let Becoming be a Becoming.”⁷³ Being, as the constancy of form, endures throughout the change and flux of Becoming, and such a conception of fixed and “enduring” presence (*ousia*) is to be found within his idea of truth. According to Heidegger, although Nietzsche boldly attempts to creatively rethink the original unity of Being and Becoming, he nonetheless retains the oppositional nature of their “original” relationship as established by metaphysics.

When asking the *penultimate* (guiding) question, Nietzsche is simultaneously asking, “What is true?” Not *formally* concerned with the essence of truth, he is inquiring into the grounds of beings along the traditional path of path of epistemology.⁷⁴ Unconcerned with the all-important primordial

⁷¹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 19.

⁷² Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Section 617.

⁷³ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 218.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 234, (trans. bylator David Krell’s Analysis)

phenomenon of truth as "uncovering,"⁷⁵ the tradition leaps over the primordial conditions necessary for a thing to reveal itself in the first instance. Heidegger traces this mistake to the failure to articulate the question of Being *qua* Being. However, in Heidegger's view, Nietzsche is not merely another astute metaphysical thinker, but is instead the last, and perhaps, greatest of the metaphysicians, who gathers and completes the tradition.⁷⁶ How is it that Nietzsche's philosophy brings to a close the thought of Plato, Aristotle, and more, the entire Western metaphysical tradition? Heidegger argues that Nietzsche distinguishes himself "within" the tradition by intimating and projecting philosophical concerns, which are beyond the frontiers of metaphysics. To address this concern, Heidegger attends to the "unthought," that which remains "unsaid" in Nietzsche's philosophy.⁷⁷ The *unthought* is not something that Nietzsche forgets, or neglects to think. Rather, it is the source from which the entirety of his thought emerges and develops. This for Nietzsche is the concern with the ground of beings, the Being of beings as a whole. Heidegger reveals Nietzsche's unique status within metaphysics by carefully reading in correlation (1) the two questions that drive philosophical thought and (2) the discordant relationship of art and truth as argued by Nietzsche.

Both the *penultimate* question of philosophy (What is the being?) and the *ultimate* question (What is Being?) ask, in an elemental way, "What is...?" Heidegger argues that the verb "is" breaks open the scope of the inquiry to include beings as a whole and Being itself, not even the concept of "Nothingness" remains outside the inquiry. This despite the specific focus of each respective question. As a result, writes Heidegger, "Beings are brought into the open region itself, and Being is conducted into the region of its essence,"⁷⁸ i.e., into the openness of *aletheia*. When asking the grounding and guiding questions of Being and beings, "we are also asking simultaneously and inherently about essence of truth." Thus, both questions ask what beings and Being in "truth" are, entailing the concern with the "essence" of truth, and the truth of "essence." Beings in their truth are determined by will to power, and this names the Being of beings in truth, therefore the "question concerning

⁷⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. trans. by, J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962), 220/263.

⁷⁶ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 4.

⁷⁷ Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*, 15. With respect to Nietzsche's "unthought," Schrift relates it directly to remains "unsaid" in Nietzsche's thought, and explains it in the following manner: "The 'unsaid' attends to what, as a simple matter of fact, did not come to be expressed by Nietzsche in the works which he saw published." This also refers to what can't be "said" from inside the conceptual and linguistic schema of metaphysical philosophy. When Heidegger refers to the "unthought" in Nietzsche, he is specifically referring to "what remains unthought in the thinking of Western history as the history of metaphysics: Truth of Being." Heidegger believes that Nietzsche's authentic thought is to be found in the *Nachlass*, and so he attends to this thought, but even then Heidegger focuses mainly on "what Nietzsche thought only in the form of what is unthought." Schrift reduces both notions, the "unsaid" and the "unthought" to the methodological choices structuring Heidegger's interpretation.

⁷⁸ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 68.

truth, i.e., the question of the essence of truth, must always be inserted into the interpretation of beings as will to power.⁷⁹ Since Being and truth are not simply peripherally related, Heidegger must think Being and truth together, thus he moves to identify the realm, or “domain,” in which they converge, or presence in relation. It is within the analysis of the raging discordance between art and truth that Heidegger locates the “domain” in which will to power (Being) and truth meet within Nietzsche’s philosophy, and as against the tradition, they come together in the realm of art, not in the realm of knowledge (epistemology).

According to David Krell, Heidegger’s implication is that, “although Nietzsche does not formalize the question of essence of truth, he removes ‘the true’ from the realm of knowledge to the domain of art,”⁸⁰ and then goes further, in a radical move that decisively establishes him as the last, great “metaphysician.” When proclaiming that art is worth more to life than truth, Nietzsche, for the first time within philosophy’s long metaphysical history, intimates the awareness of the concern for what Being of truth, or the essence of Being, *is*. When Being and truth converge in the realm of art, it is truth that must ultimately be subordinated to the concerns of Being. Truth, as conceived by the tradition, can never have the final word in the matter, for when conceiving life as a growing, ascending phenomenon, and art as the highest expression of the Being of beings as will to power, the truth of knowledge must always remain secondary to the more primeval, profound, and essential truth of Being. Reviewing Nietzsche’s thoughts on art, truth, and life, within the new “sensuousness,” along with attending to the “unthought” source of his philosophy, Heidegger determines the “oversights” present to Nietzsche’s philosophy to be unlike any of his predecessors. Nietzsche gathers and completes metaphysical inquiry because his thought indicates a concern for philosophy’s need to redirect its inquiry and return to what has been forgotten within traditional metaphysics, i.e., the focus on the most primordial aspect of existence (Being *qua* Being), that which cannot be derived from anything else, and that which is prior to all else. Nietzsche is something of a herald, giving a sign or implication of what is to come, hinting at the essential move toward the formalization of the concern with Being, truth, and essence – namely toward what Heidegger refers to in *Being and Time* as “fundamental ontology,”⁸¹ and herein lies the most important aspect of Nietzsche’s philosophy as presented by Heidegger. For Heidegger seems to suggest that Nietzsche recognizes, albeit implicitly, as expressed through Nietzsche’s “unthought,” the primordial connection between truth and Being.

Heidegger’s interpretation explicitly locates Nietzsche within the tradition of the metaphysical thinkers who: (1) understand truth as belonging

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 68.

⁸⁰ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 236 (trans. by David Krell’s Analysis)

⁸¹ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, 256/213. In Heidegger’s terms (*Being and Time*) even such an implied awareness of this connection, which grounds Nietzsche’s thought in its totality, is the understanding that “the phenomenon of truth comes within the range of the problematic of fundamental ontology.”

to the realm of epistemology, and (2) limit their philosophical inquiry into the Being of beings. There are several problems with this interpretation, which result from Heidegger's systematic and inauthentic "metaphysicalization" of Nietzsche.⁸² This occurs, as argued by Schrift, because Heidegger adopts stringent and highly restrictive methodological choices for approaching Nietzsche. Heidegger's hermeneutic interpretation is limited from the outset, and in essence, amounts to a reading of Nietzsche's text in which Heidegger reads "his own view of the history of philosophy in order to tell us what Nietzsche *really* meant and what he *really* thought."⁸³ The three methodological choices that structure and guide Heidegger's reading are outlined by Schrift as follows: (1) Heidegger focuses only on Nietzsche's unpublished *Nachlass* and the sections appearing under the heading, *Will to Power* and "the conception of the 'unsaid' as it unfolds in his reading of Nietzsche"⁸⁴; (2) Heidegger holds the belief that Nietzsche, like all metaphysical thinkers, thinks one and only one thought, and his thought is about "beings as a whole." Since Heidegger seeks to systematize the self-proclaimed "unsystematic" thinker, "Nietzsche thinks his one and only thought, Heidegger tells us, as the thought of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same,"⁸⁵ the supposed center of Nietzsche's metaphysics; and (3) Heidegger holds the view that all serious philosophical thinking is metaphysical thinking, and, as a serious thinker, Nietzsche is thus attempting to answer the traditional metaphysical question of what beings are.

Because these methodological choices structure and severely limit Heidegger's reading, severe consequences follow, and Schrift argues that Heidegger's "dogmatic" interpretation fails in many ways to do justice to the richness, diversity and even the contradictory nature of Nietzsche's vast corpus of both published and unfinished manuscripts, for all of "Nietzsche's psychological, anthropological, and axiological (aesthetics, ethical) insights are subsumed under the rubric of metaphysics."⁸⁶ It is correct to question the validity and accuracy of Heidegger's reading the will to power in terms of a metaphysical phenomenon that determines the ground of beings as a whole. For example, as Schrift correctly points out, Heidegger classifies post-Cartesian metaphysics as "voluntaristic," wherein the concept of "will" determines the being of beings, and Heidegger locates Nietzsche in this metaphysical tradition which "stretches from Schopenhauer through Hegel, Schelling, and Kant to its inception in Leibniz."⁸⁷ Such an interpretation seems inaccurate, for it is questionable whether Nietzsche's understanding of the "will" is identical with the concept of "will" found in Schopenhauer. For Nietzsche states explicitly that the will is an erroneous and false notion that arises as a fiction of grammar when we take up a "popular prejudice" and exaggerate it by unifying a multiplicity of drives, emotions, and affects into a single immutable source, or

⁸² Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*, 19.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 58.

substance. As the following passage from *Beyond Good and Evil* illustrates, Nietzsche clearly espouses a view of the will that is unlike that of Schopenhauer: “Willing seems to me to be above all something *complicated*, something that is a unity only as a word.”⁸⁸

It is the case that Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil* was one of the many published works that Heidegger fails to subject to his critical analysis, but as Schrift astutely demonstrates, there are numerous passages in *Will to Power* wherein Nietzsche is explicitly arguing against the existence of the will conceived in metaphysical terms. It is not that Heidegger ignores or glosses over these passages in *Will to Power*, rather, it is Heidegger’s close-reading, guided as it is by the aforementioned methodological presuppositions, that literally “produces” a metaphysical interpretation of the will in Nietzsche’s thought. For example, in *Will to Power*, Nietzsche interrogates the general make-up of will to power, questioning outright whether or not it is a metaphysical phenomenon or something else: “Is ‘will to power’ a *kind* of ‘will’ or identical with the concept ‘will’? Is it the same thing as desiring? Or *commanding*? Is it that ‘will’ of which Schopenhauer said it was the ‘in-itself of things’?” Nietzsche responds to these queries in the following manner, which contains a definitive anti-metaphysical tone: “My proposition is: that the will of psychology [also the will of metaphysics] hitherto is an unjustified generalization, that this will does not exist at all,” and, as Nietzsche continues, what Schopenhauer calls “will” is a “mere empty word.”⁸⁹ Schrift concludes that in this instance Heidegger reads Nietzsche’s rejection of the “will to psychology” as representing “*ipso facto* a rejection of all psychological inquiries into the will.” Such a reading, “opens the way for [Heidegger’s] reduction of Nietzsche’s psychology to metaphysics and his consideration of will to power exclusively as a metaphysical concept.”⁹⁰

In Heidegger’s reading of will to power as the Being of beings there remains in Nietzsche’s philosophy a bifurcation of existence, Being is juxtaposed with the notion of becoming, and this latter notion, importantly, is ever-pervasive in Nietzsche’s thought. Just as in the foregoing analysis of the “will” in Nietzsche, with respect to the concept of “Being” in Nietzsche’s philosophy, we encounter a problem created by the prejudiced reading of Heidegger. Much like the notion of will, with respect to Being, “Nietzsche makes no such assertion of the enduring presence of will to power,” as “Being,” as *ousia*,⁹¹ nor does Nietzsche endorse a dualistic view of existence as found in traditional metaphysics. For in describing the so-called “zenith of mankind,” Nietzsche ponders the state of the “apparent world” once the “real world” has been done away with, “What world is left? The apparent world perhaps? . . . But no! With the real world we have also abolished the apparent

⁸⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1990), 47-48.

⁸⁹ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Section 369.

⁹⁰ Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*, 59.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

world."⁹² And again, in *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche outlines and criticizes the "corrupt" motives underlying the quests of both Christianity and Western metaphysics to seek a world, a second world, that lies beyond what presents itself as "reality," a world beyond as will, "as if outside the actual world, that of becoming, there was another world of being."⁹³ By subscribing to the false notion of "Being," humans betray their lack of historical sense, and, motivated by instincts of fear rather than a "pessimism of strength," they cast Being as eternal presence, "a concept whose origins resides in the human being's inability to feel secure in the ever-changing play of the world."⁹⁴ According to Nietzsche, philosophers search for this elusive, nonexistent realm of Being, postulating a true world behind the world of appearance, which for Nietzsche is the only legitimate reality, because they tremble before the Heraclitean notion of endless becoming, change, and flux. As argued by Schrift, if we attend to what Nietzsche actually "said," "thought," and published, we encounter a philosopher reminiscent of Heraclitus, who denied absolute Being, permanence and unity, absolute substance, the very notion of Being that permeates the history of metaphysical philosophy.

In subsuming Nietzsche's psychology to the realm of metaphysics, Heidegger's interpretation covers over the importance of Nietzsche's "genealogical" method, which is described by Nehamas in the following manner, "Genealogy reveals both [the] origins and the mechanisms by which the views in question try to conceal themselves."⁹⁵ Thus, Heidegger misinterprets that Nietzsche, as opposed to pursuing the analysis of the will to power as the Being of beings, is actually pursuing the will to power along the lines of a "new psychology," and this demonstrates for Schrift that "Nietzsche is fundamentally engaged in a project quite different from that of metaphysics."⁹⁶ As previously stated, Nietzsche's genealogy is quite specifically concerned with origins and the motivations behind the manifestation of various phenomena, concepts, and ways of being, for example, asking, out of what sort of impulses does the will to power arise "and toward what ends are these impulses directed?"⁹⁷ Does the will to power result from life-affirming or life negating drives? Against the pursuit of metaphysics, Nietzsche is concerned ultimately with the *transvaluation of values*, which is the creation and determination of values anew. Schrift correctly describes Nietzsche's "psycho-genealogy" as a method that functions simultaneously on a psychological and, perhaps more importantly, an axiological level, for Nietzsche's thinking is never at a remove from the crucial assessment of values in the human life. According to Schrift, in Nietzsche's thinking, "it is the question of the *value* of will to power and not the *Being* of will to power that is of primary

⁹² Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 51.

⁹³ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Section 51.

⁹⁴ Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*, 62.

⁹⁵ Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), 32-33.

⁹⁶ Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*, 60.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

importance.”⁹⁸ In Heidegger’s exegesis, “the primacy of value inquiry is lost within [his] overdetermined metaphysical reading.”⁹⁹

Heidegger’s analysis emerges from a confrontation (*Aus-einander-setzung*) with Nietzsche, resulting in what Heidegger believes is a “genuine critique” of Nietzsche’s thought. As opposed to critique as censure, Heidegger’s confrontational critique traces Nietzsche’s thought in its “effective force, not its weakness.”¹⁰⁰ Such a method is the supreme way in which to bring a philosopher and philosophy to shine most profoundly. Approaching Nietzsche as a thinker of great importance, Heidegger rescues him from the erroneous and damning classifications (e.g., “literary-philosopher,” “philosopher of life”) that impugn his viable *philosophical* contributions. Heidegger accomplishes what no other commentator has yet approached, namely reading Nietzsche as the proponent of a coherent, unified philosophy, organized around three interrelated tenets (i.e., “The Will to Power,” “Eternal Recurrence of the Same,” and “trans. by-valuation of Values”). Heidegger’s “systematic” interpretation appears to avoid the disastrous consequences befalling others attempting to understand Nietzsche. For example, Jaspers, in a state of bitter frustration, after the completion of his voluminous study, writes disparagingly of Nietzsche’s “endless reflection and questioning,” which Jaspers feels establishes “no foundations,” and brings forth only a series of disturbing “new paradoxes.”¹⁰¹

As I have attempted to demonstrate, as much as Heidegger’s interpretation accomplishes it is not without problems, and, as some commentators have stated, when these problems are properly addressed, they expose the flaws in Heidegger’s reading, which amount in the extreme to a dogmatic misreading of Nietzsche. With that being stated, Heidegger’s interpretation, whether severely flawed or not, still succeeds in elucidating the fact that Nietzsche is a legitimate philosophical force who must be considered, confronted, and perhaps, overcome. For Nietzsche expresses the ultimate concern with “life,” and it seems that the awareness of creative life and the “return” of life is most vital to his unique and influential ideas about humanity, which reveal the foundations of a “new” life and existence, an existence that fruitfully springs from the renewal of the forgotten sensual and spiritual ties to earth, nature, and the body, a life in which humanity’s greatest possibilities are reflected within its creative artistic activity. For Nehamas, one of the most important innovations that Heidegger introduced to the “reading” of Nietzsche is “the notion of the fragment” and the close-reading thereof,¹⁰² but as

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁰⁰ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 5.

¹⁰¹ Jaspers, Karl, *Way to Wisdom*, trans. by., Ralph Manheim (New haven: Yale University, 1951), 188. Jasper’s Nietzsche study is titled: *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of his Philosophical Activity*

¹⁰² Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, 16. Heidegger’s interpretation, according to Nehamas, introduces the notion of the “fragment” into the study of Nietzsche. “For Heidegger,” writes Nehamas, “the task in reading Nietzsche is to reconstruct his real thought, in

demonstrated, this "innovation," while holding the potential to radically change the way philosophical analysis is done, is also a source for concern. In closing, perhaps the comments of Schrift are most relevant to the understanding of how to approach Heidegger's metaphysical reading of Nietzsche: It is necessary to perform a careful reading of both philosophers, and further, agree to "read Nietzsche *with* Heidegger to appreciate the strength of the Heideggerian interpretation."¹⁰³

Department of Philosophy, College of Dupage, United States

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which Western philosophy culminates and through which it ends, from these surviving fragments."

¹⁰³ Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*, 52.