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NIETZSCHEAN APHORISM AS ART AND ACT

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Nietzsche is commonly said to be an aphoristic writer, perhaps the master of the aphorism. Yet it is not clear what is entailed by this stylistic designation or how far it takes us in understanding Nietzsche's thought and writing. It is a mistake to see Nietzsche's writings as exclusively aphoristic, if this is meant to imply that his writings lack philosophical and literary structure. Certainly sections of those books (conveniently numbered and titled) can be regarded as independent aphorisms (if aphorisms are ever independent, a question which must be assessed). In fact the long third essay of *The Genealogy of Morals* claims to be an interpretation (*Auslegung*) of just one aphoristic sentence from *Zarathustra*. Yet Nietzsche does not say that the interpretation of the aphorism is independent of the rest of his thought and writing; and the form of the interpretative essay need not itself be aphoristic. As Nietzsche was himself aware, the aphoristic form is a dangerous temptation. It invites us to classify what we are reading as belonging to a rather minor literary and philosophical genre. We're tempted to suppose that the aphorism is simply an amusement, a playful recreation, perhaps, from the difficult pursuits of science and philosophy which should be expressed in more continuous and systematic forms. The aphorist, it is supposed, is the jesting or satiric counterpart of the thinker. Even if we are inclined to see some philosophical value in individual aphorisms we may find their collection formless and bewildering. Arthur Danto's comment sums up the responses of many readers:

Taken individually, they are bright and penetrating — “full of thorns and secret spices” — but read in any number, they tend to cloy and repeat one another, with much the same barbs being flung, over and over, at much the same targets . . . One soon be-

comes fatigued with Nietzsche as a writer, as one might with a landscape of diamonds which end by dimming one another's brilliance. With no structure to sustain and direct the reader's mind, the books, once entered, must soon be set down, and one's experience with them is either of isolated illuminations that do not connect with one another or of a blur of light and noise.¹

The exploration of Nietzsche's aphoristic writing as a distinctive mode of philosophical discourse demands an approach at two levels: that of the aphorism as such and that of the collection of aphorisms. Nietzsche himself suggests that there is high seriousness as well as play in his procedure:

The philosophic life misinterpreted — at the moment when one is beginning to take philosophy seriously, the whole world fancies that one is doing the reverse. (MA II, 1, 380)²

The manifest theme of this aphorism is the distinction between playful appearance and serious meaning. We might think of Socratic irony here and of the many failures of Socrates' contemporaries to understand the high seriousness of what is also high comedy. To capture Nietzsche's intention here, however, we must understand that for him the spoken philosophical life of the *polis* has been transformed into the modern career of the philosophical author. So the aphorism does not refer primarily to a philosophical life outside of itself but to its own life, the life of the text. In this life two central motifs, emerging in this brief aphorism, are interpretation and its problems and the moment (*Augenblick*). Interpretation is a notion which is at home in philosophy and this home never seems far from Nietzsche's mind. If there is interpretation, there must be a text, and we tend to suppose that where there is a text there is a proper interpretation of the text. This seems to be implied by Nietzsche's speaking here of the possibility of *mis*-interpretation. Yet Nietzsche is notorious for having said that "there are no facts — only interpretations" and that "everything is an interpretation." It would seem that taking such remarks seriously would preclude the designation of any interpretation as a misinterpretation. Not only does each aphorism offer a somewhat different interpretation but each seems to deliberately leave itself open to a number of interpretations. The serious thinker — one so serious that he has no doubt as to what true seriousness is — is inclined to dismiss such aphoristic writing. When one begins to do philosophy in earnest (*anfangt mit der Philosophie Ernst zu machen*), one looks for certain standards

of precision, clarity, structure and progression. One is inclined to adopt a certain conception of meaning such that those expressions, of whatever scale, that do not satisfy those standards are held to be absolutely or relatively meaningless. So the initial hermeneutical act — the first interpretation — of the serious philosopher (in the conception of seriousness which is being questioned here) has to do with ascertaining how definite the meaning of that expression is. From such a perspective it is easy to dismiss any writing which seems deliberately to play upon ambiguity or multiplicity of meaning; the serious philosopher is above all interested in making his ideas clear and determinate. But perhaps the dichotomy of complete determinacy or complete indeterminacy of meaning is imposed too hastily here. Certainly there are philosophers like Leibniz, Peirce, Hegel and Heidegger who have stressed the ubiquity of signs and interpretation and yet have not been forced to the conclusion that all interpretations are of equal value or validity. The notion of the aphorism is, as we shall see, a conception of something with determinate limits and bounds, even if it is not determinate in every respect whatsoever. To anticipate this discussion just a bit, let me suggest that the Nietzschean aphorism is a form of language which is concerned with the simultaneous limitation and inversion of meaning. The aphorism is not open to indefinitely many meanings, but it does present us with a thought which when pushed to its limit or horizon (the *horismos*) reveals a second thought; it is an overturning or reversal of meaning (an *Umkehrung*), not its dissolution.

The aphorism says that one begins to do philosophy seriously in a certain moment or *Augenblick*. This notion of the *Augenblick* suggests a very definite boundedness. In Zarathustra's visionary confrontation with the spirit of gravity, there is a discussion about the meaning of time before a door inscribed "*Augenblick*." It is the *Augenblick* which is said to eternally recur. Unlike our English "moment" which rather vaguely designates any brief temporal interval, *Augenblick* suggests the lived and limited period of a blinking of the eyes, or perhaps the duration bounded by two such blinks. So we are dealing here with a continuous surge of experienced time rather than the measurable unit of a chronological system; it is a pulse or moment of attention and experience, not a formal container that can be filled with any sort of material. An *Augenblick* is a momentary perspective, a snapshot taken from a particular angle; yet the snapshot analogy breaks down because the *Augenblick* may contain movement and change. Perhaps it is more like the brief take in a film which, together with other such takes, may constitute a montage. Even this analogy is a bit limited, for there is no

reason to think that a given *Augenblick* might not contain elements of contrast and sequence which, in the film, are found only in the montage and not in the individual shots which constitute it.³ Now an aphorism is itself a kind of *Augenblick*. Like the moment of experience its bounds are sharply delineated although it may contain much internal variety and present many possibilities of internal articulation. The aphorism is etymologically connected with the idea of horizon; and in Nietzsche's practice each aphorism is a particular horizon. In Greek an *aphorismos* is a definition, or a short and pithy sentence; the verb *aphorizein* means to define, or mark off. To *aphorizein* is to set the boundary, the *horos*. That which is bounded is the horizon. An aphoristic book may seem to be something of a contradiction, for if we think of a book as having not only a physical integrity but also as being continuous and offering a totality of some kind, a "volume," then a series of aphorisms, to the extent to which they really are distinct horizons, cannot possess such a unity. Consequently Nietzsche's readers have often regarded his aphoristic books as sources of quarries of individual aphorisms, a *Bartlett's Quotations* for the sophisticated, rather than disciplined or methodic enterprises.

What needs to be remembered (whatever we may come to think of the strategy of the aphoristic books) is the distinction between the aphorism and the relatively formless fragment. Heidegger's remark on the aphorism is helpful here: "not every brief notation is automatically an aphorism, that is, an expression or saying which absolutely closes its borders to everything inessential and admits only what is essential."⁴ What Heidegger does not discuss, however, is the aim of Nietzsche's intentional collections of aphorisms which we have been calling his aphoristic books. Instead he is interested in elucidating the philosophical structure of *The Will to Power*, a collection of fragmentary writings which includes some aphorisms but which does not consist of them exclusively. This interest in *The Will to Power* stems from Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche's whole philosophical project, a reading which sees that book (or non-book) as the culmination of a development that does not find explicit expression anywhere else. So Heidegger begins his book on Nietzsche with methodological and hermeneutic considerations which discount the published works. He claims that "[w]hat Nietzsche himself published during his creative life was always foreground" and that "[h]is philosophy proper was left behind as posthumous, unpublished work."⁵ Yet the philosophy that Heidegger actually attributes to Nietzsche is one which might be seen as pointing to just that integral conception of Nietzsche's philosophical writings

that he began by dismissing. In the first part of his Nietzsche study, "The Will to Power as Art" Heidegger attempts to explicate the way in which Nietzsche's philosophy is an inverted Platonism. Such an inverted Platonism attempts to invert (*umkehren*) the traditional philosophical positions of truth and art. Truth as Nietzsche understands it is Platonic truth — the truth of a supersensible world; art is that which glorifies and embodies the apparent and the sensuous. Certainly Heidegger is correct in this interpretation, so far as it goes. In the course of developing it he offers impressive readings of crucial passages about truth, beauty and art in the *Republic* and *Phaedrus* and a powerful explication of Nietzsche's wonderful vignette "How the 'True World' Finally Became a Myth" from the *Twilight of the Idols*.

Now if Nietzsche is both the great antagonist of Plato and the champion of art as the inversion of the value of truth, certain consequences would seem to follow as to how Nietzsche's texts should be read. When Nietzsche praises the "grand style" (*grosse Stil*) Heidegger correctly points out that he has in mind a classical, commanding, style, "a longing for Being that flows from the fullness of gift-giving and yes-saying." Another of Heidegger's formulations points up the analogy of the grand style and eternal recurrence: "The grand style is the active will to Being, which takes up Becoming into itself."⁶ The possibility which Heidegger seems determined to avoid, however is that Nietzsche's comments about the grand style are not only claims about the aims and limits of art in general, but that they are also programmatic statements of his own stylistic aims in his works. As the great antagonist of Plato we would expect Nietzsche not only to prophesy the appearance of an art that could be a worthy antagonist of Platonic truth, but to attempt such art himself. And if the rivalry with Plato is taken in the agonistic spirit of the Greeks (as in Nietzsche's essay "Homer's Contest") we should suppose that Nietzsche is contending with Plato by matching his poetic skills against the artistry of the Platonic dialogue.

To understand the artistry of Nietzsche's aphoristic works in this light we must consider them as deliberate acts rather than collections of fragments. Like Plato's dialogues they are to be read in terms of their own specific problems, strategies, styles and settings rather than as fragments of an artless system. In the chapter of "Human All Too Human" called "On the Souls of Artists and Writers" there is a longish aphorism (or short essay) entitled "Revolution in Poetry" (*MA* I, 221). Although it seems, on the surface, to be simply a *feuilleton* or fantasia on some differences between French and German literature, it should

be construed as an analysis of the prospects of modern art *and* of that philosophical art which Nietzsche practices in his aphoristic writings. Nietzsche begins the aphorism by praising the rigorous conventions of French drama, which, like the Gorgianic figures of Greek rhetoric, encourage the artist to work through a system of constraints until he appears to have escaped them altogether; "this *appearance* is the highest achievement of a necessary development in art." The glorification of appearance (*Schein*) as the triumphant expression of power is the core of Nietzsche's conception of the grand style, although that term is not used here. The focus of the little essay is not so much the analysis of such a style itself as the contrast between various attempts at artistic mastery in which the French are clearly the representatives of the classic or grand style. The contrast between French mastery and German confusion appears in the opposition of Voltaire, the last great dramatist, to Lessing, whose appeal to Shakespeare prepared the way for naturalism in the theatre. Naturalism is a loosening of stylistic conventions and constraints. Naturalism is not a strong style (like that of the classical French drama) and therefore it cannot maintain its own hegemony. Instead it opens up the artistic field to an influx of foreign and esoteric styles such that "for a time we are able to enjoy the poetry of all nations, everything that has sprung up in hidden places, original, wild . . ." The historical reference is to the German romantics and their enthusiasm (as with the Schlegels) for the art of the middle ages, India and other (then) exotic cultures, however there is a more general principle being illustrated which has to do with the power necessary for any genuine style. At the same time Nietzsche is concerned with the problematic relationship between art as knowledge and productive art. Both the weakness of naturalism and the influx of "world literature" destroy the possibility of a certain ideal or normal artistic development.

The encroaching flood of poetry of all styles and all nations *must* gradually sweep away that magic garden upon which a quiet and hidden growth would have been possible: all poets must become experimenting imitators, daring copyists (*experimentierende Nachahmer, waghalsige Kopisten*), however great their strength might be at the beginning.

This is a story which has been told in a number of ways by philosophical writers on the arts. Most notably, there is Hegel's description of art in dissolution (*Auflosung*), sometimes mistakenly construed as a doctrine of the end of art. Having exhausted its fundamental possibili-

ties and assimilating itself increasingly to science or having no possibility other than a parodic reworking or destruction of its own earlier forms, modern art is, in Hegel's view, no longer the highest possibility of the spirit.⁷ The notion that the artist is now condemned to be nothing more than an "experimenting imitator" or "daring copyist" has been developed by Harold Bloom who sees the great modern poets as making a succession of attempts to overcome the inevitable influence of their poetic predecessors. This they can do, however, only by making their own poetry a commentary on the history of poetry itself.⁸ Arthur Danto's conception of the art-world in which each successive artistic form or style is a kind of commentary on and inquiry into the history of art is a generalization of these Hegelian insights.⁹ Nietzsche appears to be following this Hegelian schematization consciously, although he does so, ultimately, in order to question both the presumed generality and inevitability of the pattern as well as the status of Goethe's poetry which plays a unique role in Hegel's account. In the following passage Nietzsche touches the elegiac Hegelian note, although he will soon subject that viewpoint to a revaluation as well:

...unconsciously we have grown accustomed to consider all fetters, all restrictions as senseless-and so art moves toward its dissolution (*Auflosung*) but in so doing, it touches — which is certainly highly edifying — upon all the phases of its beginning, its childhood, its incompleteness, its sometime boldness and excesses — in perishing it interprets its origin and growth (*sie interpretiert, im Zugrundegehen, ihre Entstehung, ihr Werden*).

The comment on the edifying aspects of this tendency is surely ironic. It is not simply that modern art happens to edify because of its reflective concern with its own history, but that it is perishing or dissolving through and because of its confusion of itself with a cognitive history of art. From Nietzsche's point of view it is precisely this confusion which leads Hegel to say that "art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past."¹⁰ Hegel believes that art's content is essentially conceptual and that the development of this conceptual side will necessarily lead to a philosophy of art; or as he seems to suggest in his account of the dissolution of modern art, it may lead to an art indistinguishable from a philosophy of art.

For Hegel the development is an inevitable one, although he sees romantic art having an efflorescence in such comprehensive poets as Shakespeare and Goethe. So it is appropriate for Nietzsche to turn at

this point to a revaluation of Goethe. Yet like Hegel, Nietzsche sees Goethe as a reaction, a counterbalance to the aimless explorations, formlessness, and *Witz* of the romantics and the weakness of the art of his time:

he felt the deepest longing to win back the tradition of art, and to restore in imagination (*Phantasie*) the ancient perfection and completeness of the temple's abandoned ruins and colonnades, with the imagination of the eye at least, should the strength of the arm be found too weak to build where such tremendous powers were needed even to destroy.

Nietzsche's contrast between the eye and the arm is what distinguishes his analysis from Hegel's. While Hegel sees Goethe as a strong and creative poet, Nietzsche views him as having that same elegiac and nostalgic attitude toward the past which Hegel expresses by saying that the owl of Minerva takes flight only when the shades of night are falling.¹¹ So Nietzsche describes Goethe by saying that "he lived in art as in the remembrance of the true art . . ." Goethe is distinguished from other moderns not so much by his achievement as by his acute recognition of the gap between the naive and the modern. His art becomes an encyclopedia of the art of the past, as Hegel's thought becomes a closed and finished cycle, summing up the history of philosophy. Despite his efforts he is still only an inspired copyist. Perhaps Nietzsche is thinking of the second part of *Faust* here; it is a constant butt of his parodies. There Goethe does quite literally summon up the beauty of antiquity in the figure of Helen and quickly recapitulates some major developments in western culture.

The dispute between Hegel and Nietzsche has to do with whether Goethe's is an art which is perishing or one which has managed to exert a renewed force — is it an art of the eye or of the arm? The conclusion of the aphorism discusses Goethe's concern with the great conventions which were introduced at first: the ideal rather than the individual, allegorical generality rather than the details of reality, and so on. "That is art, as Goethe *understood* it later, as the Greeks and even the French *practiced* it." The contrast between German theory and French practice is one of Hegel's own, which Nietzsche has turned to his own ironic purposes. Hegel saw German philosophy, in its concern with human freedom, as being the necessary spiritual completion of the French revolution: it raises that practical struggle for freedom to a higher, spiritual, more conscious level. The consistent application of such a principle leads to the valuation of art as knowledge rather than as

praxis and to the Hegelian picture of the end of history in the completion of philosophy. Hegel alludes to Goethe in suggesting that "when philosophy paints its gray in gray, then has a shape of life grown old"; but for Nietzsche the artistic source of the allusion (*Faust*) is *also* a gray in gray painting.

This aphorism is not only a sample of historical philosophizing about art but also an instance of Nietzsche's art of aphoristic writing. As such we must ask how it would be described in terms of its own categories or to what extent it eludes such description. Is it a detached observation, a rarified and witty cognition, or an example of a renewed artistic *praxis*? Let me begin with a maxim that can be unfolded: while Hegel epistemologizes art by conceiving it from the standpoint of philosophy, Nietzsche aims at a philosophical *praxis* by construing philosophy on the model of art. That art is *praxis* rather than contemplative knowledge corresponds with the distinction between Nietzsche's free spirit (*der freie Geist*) and Hegel's absolute spirit or absolute knowledge (*absolute Geist, das absolute Wissen*). As Nietzsche's notes for *Human, All Too Human* indicate, the book is meant to be a text in the art of living well; this is its connection with the moralistic and aphoristic traditions to which it so frequently alludes. The aim of its artistic *praxis* is the *praxis* of the free spirit; or, more immediately, its aim is to summon free spirits into being. Hegel, as understood by Nietzsche (and by Marx), construes the achieved theoretical knowledge of absolute spirit as the genuine end of the action and passion of history, elevated above it into a heavenly kingdom free of stress. Or, less metaphorically, this Hegel believes, like Aristotle, that in our most rational and spiritual moments we are engaged in a reflective and self-referential knowledge (*nous nousing nous*) which takes account of the world of action only through sublimating it into the knowledge of history. Nietzsche, rejecting this encyclopedic conception of philosophy with its sense of being finished once and for all, appeals to the ability of a strong art to forge meaningful myths, symbols and forms.

We should be able to see this form-giving characteristic of art in Nietzsche's own writings and we should be able to articulate the way in which such writing is a *praxis*. In the case of the aphoristic works this seems to be an impossible task, for the aphorism might be thought to be a deliberate approach to the fragment. The scrutiny of the aphoristic works ought to proceed by distinguishing several levels of thought and style. It seems that the most elementary unit is the individual aphorism which stands out on the page as a numbered section.

We may still be puzzled as to how Nietzsche's seemingly fragmentary

aphoristic books exemplify this form-giving artistic *praxis*. Certainly the books lack conventional order or shape (although I think that it could be shown that *Human, All Too Human* has a more significant structure than appears at first glance). Yet Nietzsche's praise of French classicism reminds us of his interests in the French moralists (Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld, Pascal) as well as the dramatists. The aphoristic form itself presents the writer with a relatively fixed set of constraints within which he can develop a "grand style." Each aphorism must be bounded, must have a horizon (*horismos*); it is these bounds which in the fashion of such other vigorous genres as the sonnet or the haiku make the aphorism a candidate for another of Heidegger's formulations: "the grand style prevails whenever abundance restrains itself in simplicity."

Consider the following aphorism, which is concerned with just the network of connections linking thought, style, and practice:

Improving our thoughts (Gedanken). — Improving our style means improving our thoughts, and nothing else. He who does not concede this immediately can never be convinced of the point. (MA II 2, 131)

The sympathetic reader — or perhaps the idling reader whom Zarathustra subjects to such magisterial scorn — may be inclined to agree immediately and so count himself among the happy few. Such temptation must constantly be resisted in reading the aphorisms. For the reader each aphorism ought to be an exercise in self-overcoming by making him aware of just this tendency to easy agreement. The crux of this aphorism lies not in the mere separation of the sheep from the goats but in understanding *why* one who does not concede the point immediately will never be convinced of it. Here there is a complex play upon the possible interrelationships of immediate and mediate judgment. The reader who immediately concedes the point of the first sentence may suppose that he also has an immediate understanding of the whole aphorism, especially if he has assumed that his immediate concession of the point places him among the specially gifted. However there is no reason to suppose that immediate agreement with the first sentence of the aphorism ought to be followed (or could easily be followed) by immediate agreement with the second sentence. Nietzsche's claim that an aphorism is always a single link in a chain of thoughts (*ein Glied in eine Gedankenkette*) suggests that an aphorism is not the kind of thought which can be present to us all at once and immediately

understood. The style of this aphorism reflects this suggestion in its division between the first and second sentences. While the aphorism apparently has to do with the connections between thought and style in our productive linguistic activities (writing and speaking), the same kinds of questions which it raises about those activities are also appropriate to the more receptive activity of reading. In fact, when those questions are thought through with reference to the aphorism itself they suggest not only that reading is a production and an action but that the very thinking of the questions necessarily causes *this* bit of reading to be active and productive. Although the aphorism adumbrates a certain coordination between style and thought, it does not imply that they are strictly identical. The steps of thought can be analyzed severally and their relationships probed. This is the case even when we seem to have made an immediate inference from one thought to another. As Leibniz recognized, all thought forms a continuum such that any thought can be traced back to another thought which gave rise to it. (There is a striking similarity between this Leibnizian thought and Nietzsche's later view that "there are no facts, only interpretations," with later interpretations taking earlier ones as their material).

To apply this to the case in hand: Why should it be impossible to convince the one who does not immediately concede the point? Or should we, with the aphorism, suppose that such a reversal of conviction is impossible? Answering these questions requires the reader to reason inferentially *about* an immediate judgment. One who resists the first sentence of the aphorism is predisposed to insist on the distinction between thought and style, that is between thought as mediate and style as immediate. This distinction, however, is softened in the practice of working on and improving one's style. In such work one discovers that the apparent immediacy of style is the product of a process which occurs in such a way that it can be analyzed and articulated; moreover one acquires through the process a sense of how the product can itself be analyzed. Yet this process leads to a fuller understanding of the feel or style of thoughts themselves. Are there then only two sorts of people, those who will immediately grasp the connection between improvement in thought and style because of their own engagement in a certain kind of *praxis*, and those who will reject the connection because of their lack of familiarity with such *praxis*? Such a distinction would be the translation into terms of thought and writing of the distinction between the active master and the reactive slave which Nietzsche develops in *The Genealogy of Morals*. There would then be two kinds of attitudes toward texts and writing: one which is actively engaged in a con-

struction which is beautiful and good just because it is the expression of abundance and power and one which reacts to the writings of others. The reactive thinker or reader will want to believe in a distinction between the *real* thought and its many possible *expressions* just as the lamb, in Nietzsche's analogy, proposes to make a distinction between its allegedly free will and its acts (*GM* I 13). As we should expect, Nietzsche's critique of Platonism includes all versions of a dichotomy between a level of thought-like realities and one of body-like appearances. To insist on this distinction at the level of thought and style is to have a need for the security of a thought which is not tied to any of its concrete expressions. This is especially comforting if one is not engaged in the *praxis* of thinking but nevertheless wishes to imagine oneself capable of intuiting fine thoughts.

Perhaps we are now in a position to discuss the art of the aphoristic book as Nietzsche conceives and practices it. It may seem a contradiction in terms to speak of the aphoristic book as having a unity or integrity of any sort. In fact, of the books usually called aphoristic — both parts of *Human, All Too Human*, *Daybreak*, and *The Gay Science* — it is only *Daybreak* which approximates to the model of an unstructured collection of aphorisms. *Human, All Too Human* is composed in chapters which revolve around a conception of "the free spirit" in which the notion is both developed from elementary principles and then shown in its social and political manifestation. *The Gay Science* is a rather elaborate alternation of prose and verse, and again there are large sections with titles which indicate a structure if not a linear progression of thought. So *Daybreak*, without such headings and (in its first edition) lacking any prefatory material to explain its point or purpose looks like an ideal place to uncover the *praxis* underlying Nietzsche's aphoristic writing.

In Nietzsche's notebooks of 1877, the year in which he was completing *Human, All Too Human*, there appears a draft of a preface which Nietzsche never published. As we shall see, it could serve very well as a preface to *Daybreak*, where similar pointers to the reader are given in a much more compressed form and tucked away at random within the text itself (*M* 454). Here Nietzsche develops the idea of a philosophical travel book, a *vade mecum* for the enlightenment of the sophisticated tourist. Entitled "Travel Book: On the Way Toward Reading" it could have served as a preface to the second part of *Human, All Too Human* as well as to *Daybreak*. Yet Nietzsche may have had good reasons for

withholding an introduction from a book which employs a certain strategy of indirection; in any case it offers an overview of the stylistic practice of Nietzsche's most completely aphoristic writing:

Men who work very much within a definite profession maintain their general views about the things of the world almost without any change: these become ever harder and more tyrannical in their heads. Therefore, those times in which such a man is forced to leave his work are so important, because only then do new concepts and sensations press themselves forward, and his power need not be used for the daily claims of duty and habit. We modern men must all travel for the sake of our spiritual health: and one will travel all the more the more one has worked. Those who work at the transformation of common perspectives (*an der Veränderung der allgemeinen Absichten*), must therefore direct themselves to the traveller.

From this particular reflection there arises a particular form of communication: for those systems of thought have been extensively spun out contrary to the rushed and unquiet nature of travelling; for they become accessible only to the most patient attention and require long weeks of quiet and solitude. There must be books which one does not read through but opens frequently: one stays with any sentence today, with another tomorrow and reflects on it again in the depths of the heart: for and against, into it and out of it, as the spirit moves one, so that one's head is always cheery and well. Gradually there arises out of the reflection which has been provoked in this way — because it is not compelled — a certain general ambience of views (*Umstimmung der Ansichten*): and with it, that general feeling of spiritual elevation, as if the bow has been stretched again with a new longing and is more strongly drawn than before. One has travelled to advantage. If after these prefatory remarks there still remains an essential question in respect to this book, I am not the one to answer it. The prologue (*Vorrede*) is the right of the author, but the reader's, however, is — the epilogue (*Nachrede*).¹²

The last sentence, in which final judgment is reserved for the reader, could be something of a commonplace. Yet here it expresses an analysis of the philosophical writer's relation to his readers at a particular historical moment. All of Nietzsche's writings are highly rhetorical, not in the sense of being florid, bombastic, or sophistical but in their concern with the politics of reading. The writings before *Zarathustra*, however, are distinguished from the later works because they are very much directed to a contemporary audience (or a variety of audiences) and presuppose an analysis of that audience. The audience which Nietzsche

now has in mind must be distinguished from that for which he had hoped only a few years previously. *The Birth of Tragedy* and the *Untimely Meditations* aim at contributing to a critique and rejuvenation of German culture in which Wagner's opera serves as a model of the sense of tragedy and the feeling of totality – in opposition to bourgeois rationalism. In this respect Nietzsche's earlier writing is continuous with the romantic movement in both art and philosophy. In his later reflections on Wagner, Nietzsche frequently links him with Hegel, because both aim at a kind of universal community of understanding or feeling. That such efforts at community may have some success is fairly obvious. For Nietzsche in his Wagnerian period the question is whether it will be the Hegelian version of this culture (represented by D.F. Strauss and others) or the Wagnerian one which shows genuine promise. With the rejection of Wagner there is a rejection of the entire universalistic and romantic ideal. This is no doubt to be explained, in part, by Nietzsche's observation of the actual fragmentation of the many attempts in this direction. Hans-Georg Gadamer has suggested that it is the tragedy of the modern artist (and the same could be said of the Hegelian philosopher) to be burdened with the quasi-religious imperative of establishing a universal community only to find himself caught in various forms of particularity. As he says,

The experimental search for new symbols or a new myth which will unite everyone may certainly create a public and create a community, but since every artist finds his own community, the particularity of this community-creating merely testifies to the disintegration that is taking place.¹³

Yet despite the failure of the universalistic program, it has had an enormous effect upon modern conceptions of art and interpretation; these have all too frequently led to an aestheticism or organicism in which the context and occasion of the artistic utterance are systematically neglected. In philosophy the model lives on, paradoxically, in the dichotomy between a technical literature addressed to a small group, yet adhering to the norm of potentially universal intelligibility and a more occasional or popular form of writing which acknowledges its indebtedness to the idiosyncracies of the times and the aesthetic requirements of specific audiences. Like Kierkegaard and Marx, Nietzsche rejects the alternatives of technical and popular writing which the collapse of that basis produces in philosophy. Although Nietzsche sometimes toys with the strategy (developed by Kierkegaard) of ad-

dressing himself to "that individual" who escapes all conceptual categories, his strategy in the aphoristic works, perhaps most clearly in *Daybreak*, is more like Marx's attempt to find an actual, material subject of philosophy (the proletariat and its allies). Of course the social group to whom Nietzsche addresses these writings is a different one. It is the modern man whose life and thought is determined, in large part, by his "working within a determinate profession" ("*innerhalb eines bestimmten Arbeiten*"). We could focus either on the implicit choice of an upper class audience here or on the skillful attempt to locate *any* audience which will be receptive to Nietzsche's thought.¹⁴ Travel is the conventional antidote to the pressures of the profession, yet it may be nothing more than conventional rest and recreation designed to return the traveller to an energetic participation in his normal pursuits and the affirmation of his normal beliefs and opinions. Nietzsche's "historical philosophizing,"¹⁵ concerned as it is with the conditions of philosophical communication, directs itself to the possibilities and needs of those readers who are temporarily detached from the usual routines of bourgeois life, either by actual travel or in some metaphorical way of not being at home.

In writing for such readers the aim is not to produce one more version of that fantastic identity at which Hegel labored and which Strauss vulgarized but to provide the reader with a handbook for his own quite personal use. None of the aphoristic books was originally published with a preface, perhaps because Nietzsche recognized that such a device (unless it is thoroughly ironic in the Kierkegaardian mode) must help to create just that illusion of identity between author and reader which the text is designed to overcome. So in the first published version of *Daybreak*, the text's commentary upon itself is brief and rather randomly buried about three quarters of the way past the "beginning" of the book.

Digression. — A book such as this is not for reading straight through or reading aloud but for dipping into, especially when out walking or on a journey; you must be able to stick your head into it and out of it again and again and discover nothing familiar around you. (*M* 454)

Nietzsche's violation of the conventions of the philosophical book then is deliberate or, as some would say, willful. The strategy of the traveller's book goes beyond the idea of adjustment to the specific circumstances of the reader to suggest a set of views that could be construed as the ontological generalization of that rapid change of perspective and

suspension of one's habitual identity which are the guiding spirit of a certain kind of travel. In *Daybreak* in particular (and to some extent in the other aphoristic books) it is the very fact of interrupted reading in novel circumstances, the reading done by the typical modern, which is the entering wedge of a philosophy granting a special status to discontinuity.

In this century phenomenological literary theory has attempted to explicate the many intentional structures by which sedentary readers construe their texts as unities, preferably "organic unities." Such unity is a feature of certain intentional objects which we call books or texts, as in the sense that New Critics employ when they speak of "the text itself" and which we usually designate by titles like *Don Quixote*, *Lear* or *The Ambassadors*. One of the discoveries of literary modernism and of avant garde literary criticism is that books or texts so construed are not the only, and perhaps not even the essential form of significant writing. The differences may be accounted for by arguing that texts really are, in themselves, continuous and unified or, on the contrary, that they are themselves fragmentary and chaotic but that we are disposed for various reasons to imagine them as unified. Yet perhaps we need not choose either alternative. Perhaps, as the phenomenologists maintain, the unified structure of a text is the product of certain intentional operations on our part which must necessarily produce intentional objects of a certain sort; but the classical phenomenologists may be wrong in supposing that all construing of texts must proceed in this way. We may also read, on occasion, in order to see the multiplicity of a text, to disperse or fragment it rather than to unify it. We may accept either a constructive or a deconstructive set of guidelines in reading and so emerge with a unified whole or a series of relatively discontinuous parts. In his aphoristic books Nietzsche clearly invites the second kind of reading.¹⁶

Nietzsche's invitation of such a reading should be seen as a challenge not only to literary modes of reading but to the metaphilosophical assumptions employed in explaining and justifying the tradition of philosophical reading and writing. The implicit assumption behind most philosophical books is continuity of thought and attention. Even if our reading of Descartes's *Meditations* or Spinoza's *Ethics* is interrupted by exhaustion, boredom or bothersome appointments, we ought to return to our reading (refreshed, if possible) in order to have a *virtual* or *imaginary* experience of continuity which will match the continuity of the philosophical thought which the book contains. Indeed it is a feature of classical rationalism in particular (my examples are not acci-

dental) to suggest that the merely human lapses and interruptions of our reading are only appearances, and that behind the contingencies of reading in this or that language, or with intermittent attention there lies a single clear structure of thought. For the rationalists sense-perception is simply confused thought, so that any language, spoken or written, which depends upon the senses, would be a confused screen to be pierced by the rational mind in order to perceive, clearly and distinctly, the thought behind it. Part of Nietzsche's criticism of traditional morality, to which his aphoristic books are largely devoted, is just its need to rely on a distinction between mind and body, or the intelligible and sensible.

In calling attention to its physical presence as a book, a linguistic artifact, a world like *Daybreak* suggests a critique of that idealism which Nietzsche found so pervasive in the philosophical tradition. By breaking down our expectations of a continuous reading he would have us ask ourselves just what kind of activity philosophical communication really is. In this respect Nietzsche is quite different from professed materialists or empiricists like Hobbes or Hume who seem to have written books on the same principles as their rationalist opponents. Nietzsche frequently points out that speaking and writing are bodily activities. As classical rhetoric knew, and as Nietzsche reminds us, the largest unit of bodily expression in language is the *period*, marking the limits of linguistic expression which could be compassed by the orator before taking a breath (see *BGE* 247, *GS* 376). This concern with the material limits of language does not exclude the possibility of Nietzsche writing a coherent and unified book, but it does suggest that when he does, he will employ strategies analogous to those in the aphoristic works that will frustrate the idealistic and rationalistic attitudes typically evoked by the philosophical book.

There is a long tradition in philosophy according to which the written word is at best a pale shadow of that living speech or thought in which the philosophers lives and moves and has his being. The classical formulation of this position by Socrates in the *Phaedrus* is not without its ironies, for Plato must be presumed to make a case for the value of some writing — namely his own.¹⁷ But philosophers have tended to ignore this irony and to praise the actuality of thought and talk in some moods while devoting the major share of their time to writing, reading, teaching and commenting on the written artifacts which they denounce in their more inspired moments. Rather than supposing that their infidelities to living speech and thought are to be excused as a kind of normal human inability to live up to the ideal,

however, we might be puzzled by this apparent contradiction between an apparent value and the means of its day to day pursuit. Like Marx, Nietzsche would suggest that talk about the spirit is often disguised talk about the body; here, that talk about the ideal of free flowing speech and thought is a mystified account of the actual production, exchange, and use of written texts.

It is perhaps in this spirit that Nietzsche counsels us not to read *Daybreak* aloud; for that might enhance the very impression of continuity and presence by which the tradition exercises its mystification. What Nietzsche seems particularly interested in in these instructions, however, is that *Daybreak* be capable of giving us a number of dawn-like experiences. One of the frequently repeated themes of the book is the strictly routine and habitual nature of morality and its connection with custom. Unlike Kant and Hegel, Nietzsche does not distinguish *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*, or rational and customary morality, but challenges any such distinction. His claim is that moral philosophy does not transcend the customary level but merely gives it a rationalistic cloak in order to make it more acceptable to the cultured. A task of *Daybreak* will be to awaken its readers from the dogmatic slumber of customary morality. If they are already in somewhat unusual surroundings, they will be more susceptible to such awakening in so far as they are temporarily free of the powerful influences of their usual occupations and society. A few randomly chosen aphorisms should crystallize this incipient detachment from the customary; when they look up from the book they will see nothing around them to which they are morally or perceptually accustomed (*"nichts Gewohntes um sich finden"*).

In his *Discourse on Method* Descartes had outlined a provisional morality to be adopted during the period in which first philosophical principles were being established. In *Daybreak* the aphorism immediately preceding the one entitled "Digression" is called "Moral Interregnum." It suggests some of the general characteristics of the provisional morality or amorality appropriate to Nietzsche's concern with first principles. Like Descartes (although not in this passage) Nietzsche recommends a life of independence which allows freedom for reflection and meditation. In almost all other respects, Nietzsche's provisional morality is quite distinct from the Cartesian. Where Descartes had recommended adherence to the religion and customs of the community in which we live in order to provide the ease necessary for philosophical thought, it is just this customary life which Nietzsche sees as the threat to a serious inquiry into first principles. Perhaps the difference could be traced to the philosophers' varying conceptions of the mind and the

body. Descartes is interested in freeing the mind for philosophy; this is best done if the customary arrangements of our country are followed in regard to all those matters of nutrition, sexual morality, dress, courtesy and so on which pertain to our bodily nature. The body ought to be a distraction to the work of the mind. Given Nietzsche's critique of dualism, in which we can speak of the body as itself being the soul or as "the great reason," the patterns of daily life acquire a much greater significance. Since thought will be the thought *of* the body it will be impossible to evaluate morality in a thorough-going way while living a customary life which is the bodily side or aspect of philosophical morality. To establish a new set of "laws for life and action" (Nietzsche does not speak of a new morality) would require more advanced sciences of physiology and medicine than we now have. Lacking these and lacking a new set of ideals to guide these disciplines

according to our taste and talent, we live on existence which is either a *prelude* or a *postlude*, and the best we can do in this *interregnum* is to be as far as possible our own *reges* and found little *experimental states*. We are experiments: let us also want to be them! (*M* 453)

This provisional way of life (it is not really appropriate to call it a morality) which consists in the establishment of "little experimental conditions" (*Versuchstaaten*) is opposed to the continuity of life, thought, and custom characteristic of conventional life. *Daybreak*, read as its author recommends, is a device for maintaining its readers in a condition of experimentation and re-evaluation. It demands to be read discontinuously because it is to be applied as a kind of medicine or therapy designed to counter our tendency to fall into the inertia of customary morality.

Yet *Daybreak* is not as exclusively transitional a book as Nietzsche's talk of moral interregnum implies. While experimentation is usually conceived as a means to the establishment of truth, it is not clear that the approach followed here could produce anything even structurally similar to the universal customs of conventional morality or to the laws of rational morality. This is clear in the "Moral Interregnum" aphorism itself which speaks of each of us having a preliminary or belated existence according to our tastes and gifts; each of us is to be his or her own ruler during this period. Now a more settled condition could be reached in these cases by each of us discovering the demands of his or own body, temperament and so on. In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche gives an account of himself which speaks triumphantly of his own achieve-

ments in becoming who he is, and he speaks there of his coming to terms with health, illness, nutrition, climate and the rest of the daily regime. However, we will not find stability in ourselves any more than we will in an old or a new moral code. For it is the ephemeral character of the ego and our sloppy causal thinking which tends to picture it as a unique cause or effect, that are the prime targets in *Daybreak*. Similarly Nietzsche's own most serious thought, the eternal return, is one which will not strengthen the ego but dissolve it in the ring of becoming.

The notion that Nietzsche is not an exponent of egoism but one of the sharpest critics of a philosophy and psychology of the ego may appear somewhat surprising. It may seem even more surprising to maintain that such positions are essential to an apparently casual book of advice and observation like *Daybreak*. In part the problem may be one of philosophical rhetoric. The handbook of moral aphorisms is not a genre which we are inclined to take seriously. This may be because there are so few examples of it after the age of its great French masters — Montaigne, Pascal, La Rochefoucauld.¹⁸ But even these are not regarded as central figures by contemporary moral philosophers.

The only significant modern instance of the genre which comes to mind is the *Minima Moralia* of T.W. Adorno, a book which is more indebted to Nietzsche than to Marx, despite the official allegiances of its author. A fragmentary, discontinuous book of this sort ought not to be classified immediately as a weak or popular substitute for treatises which deal systematically with the first principles of morality or which argue casuistically for particular moral or social arrangements. The treatise and the work of casuistry, whatever their brilliance, are scholastic works: they depend upon their author and reader sharing a common set of expectations about the sorts of arguments that are relevant to such matters. To read Kant's *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* or Moore's *Principia Ethica* we are expected to have a preliminary if somewhat inarticulate sense of what things count as right and wrong, good and bad, and what will be acceptable as an argument in moral philosophy. To say that Nietzsche's aim in regard to morals is revisionary rather than descriptive captures part of his difference from that tradition. As his title suggests, Nietzsche aims at a new beginning in moral matters. But how does one make a beginning here? The problem is that one who accepts the conventional morality which is the foundation of the standard genre of moral philosophy may simply not see what is going on when his own customs and commitments are challenged. If he does notice this he may dismiss the challenge as irrelevant because totally outside his sphere of discourse.

What is needed then is a form which will allow the greatest possible combination of the familiar and the unfamiliar. The trick is to begin with some common moral prejudice about matters high or low and to invert it quickly and deftly.

Among the objects of Nietzsche's attacks are our sense of responsibility and the overly narrow conceptions of ourselves to which that sense of responsibility gives rise. One of the many new dawns which the book provokes arises from a combination of these. I will quote "Dream and Responsibility" in its full form to exhibit one aspect of Nietzsche's rhetoric of awakening.

You are willing to assume responsibility for everything! Except, that is, for your dreams! What miserable weakness, what lack of consistent courage! Nothing is *more* your own than your dreams! Nothing is *more* your work! Content, form, duration, performer, spectator — in these comedies you are all of this yourself! And it is precisely here that you rebuff and are ashamed of yourselves, and even Oedipus, the wise Oedipus, derived consolation from the thought that we cannot help what we dream! From this I conclude that the great majority of mankind must be conscious of having abominable dreams. If it were otherwise, how greatly this nocturnal poetising would have been exploited for the enchancement of human arrogance! — Do I have to add that the wise Oedipus was right, that we really are not responsible for our dreams — but just as little for our waking life, and that the doctrine of freedom of will has human pride and feeling of power as its father and mother? Perhaps I say this too often: but at least that does not make it an error. (*M* 128)

If this aphorism is somewhat dated, because we now treasure our dreams more and our responsibility less, that may be a testimony to the rhetorical skill of Nietzsche and Freud; only in our time could a poem plausibly be titled "In dreams begin responsibilities" (Delmore Schwartz). Nietzsche's aphorism begins with a clear statement of the moral prejudice under attack, the assumption of responsibility for all of our thoughts and actions, and proceeds to an *ad hominem* argument of great force. That we refuse responsibility for what is most our own suggests that our notion of responsibility is based on pride and custom rather than on a knowledge of the causes of our actions and experiences. A rapid alternation of pride and shame is then evoked in the development of the aphorism. We begin with our own proud sense of responsibility but are brought up sharply by our shame in regard to our own dreams. Oedipus, despite his wisdom and because

of his pride (how could we neglect his *hybris* in this context?), also denied our responsibility for our dreams; nevertheless he was able to use his wisdom to rationalize that denial. Yet dreams are a potential source of great pride when we pause to think that they exhibit a fresh poetic composition every evening. Just as we are beginning to puff ourselves up with this new sense of accomplishment Nietzsche submits his claim that we are responsible for *neither* our dreaming *nor* our waking life. (The point is argued more explicitly elsewhere in *M*, e.g. 119). Pride is to be overturned by our shame and our sense of consistency; here Nietzsche appeals to one aspect of the moral conventions in order to throw another part into question. This is not a simple inconsistency; rather it begins in the only possible place, with those beliefs, prejudices and customs which we actually hold; then they are turned against themselves. This is the sense in which Nietzsche could describe his book, in a later preface, as one which retracts the confidence in morality out of moral motives. Nietzsche's own flourish of mock-humility at the end of the aphorism, conceding the repetitive quality of his own style is part of that same questionable stance. If this book has to do with waking and dreaming, then one of the stranger implications of this passage is that no one is responsible — neither the book's readers nor its author — for the experiences of illumination which it provides.

In thinking about this aphorism we are drawn to related topics. Dreaming is a rather prominent theme in *Daybreak*. Nietzsche employs the confused sequence of the dream to illustrate the conventional and very imprecise ways in which we seek causal patterns in our waking life. In both cases we are happy to find any obvious element as "the cause" rather than face the novel or inexplicable as such or accept the actual complex tangle of things. This in turn has moral implications, for we are prone to accept conventional causal accounts connected with the morality of custom about the probable "good" consequences of certain actions and the "bad" ones of others. In particular we tend to assimilate causes of a certain type to sins and effects of another sort to punishments. At one point in this apparently discontinuous book Nietzsche indicates that his central idea lies in just such a concatenation of insights:

Question of conscience. — 'And, in summa, what do you really want changed? We want to cease making causes into sinners and consequences into executioners.' (*M* 208)

This brief catechism does encapsulate one significant line of thought in *Daybreak*. We might summarize this perspective as follows: Most of our moral thought supposes the truth of certain causal judgments. We think that some kinds of action lead to happiness and others to unhappiness. When we assign responsibility, praise and blame, we suppose that we can identify the human agent who is uniquely or chiefly the cause of whatever it is which we are evaluating. Lying behind both suppositions is the view that we can, in general, identify a specific agent or event as the unique cause or set of conditions of a later event (cf. *M* 9–13). Nietzsche has doubts about this general view which, he believes, should also lead to doubt concerning the more specific suppositions. For if we are not generally able to identify a unique cause or set of causal antecedents of an event of some general sort, then we will not be able to identify such a cause in the case of human weal or woe or of what are taken to be blamable or praiseworthy actions. Nietzsche's doubts about the general viability of unique causal accounts is not far from the point of view of classical determinism, although he does not employ much of the language of that approach. In Galilean or Newtonian mechanics, as opposed to Aristotelian physics, there are unique causes of specific events only within the limiting condition of an absolutely isolated set of experimental conditions. It is only by supposing that all other possible forces have ceased to act that we can say that this object's striking that one is *the* cause of motion in the latter. Aristotelian science is much closer to the world of common sense, for it supposes that we can generally identify such causes, even in the complex world of ordinary experience. Aristotelian ethics is an application of this view to the moral world, in which very often the cause of an action which can be the subject of moral discourse is said to be a disposition or state of knowledge of the moral agent. When Aristotle is asked what the cause of this state of the agent is, or when he must account for the instances in which a good man (for example) fails to do the good, his analysis becomes notoriously murky. Classical determinism, based on Newtonian and Galilean models, attempts to offer a thorough-going alternative to the Aristotelian point of view. It claims that character and knowledge are strictly the product of genetic and environmental influences and that a given action is the product of established character and knowledge interacting with a given set of contemporary conditions. On such a view there is just no unique condition or state to which we can attach praise or blame when we evaluate human action; nevertheless it may be useful to praise and blame or reward and punish because these may in fact help to determine the cause of future action.

As I have said, Nietzsche seems to agree with this much of classical determinism in *The Dawn*, although he will attempt to derive some more radical consequences from the causal complexity of things. Nietzsche suggests his general agreement with the view in aphorisms such as this, on *Origin and Significance* (*Ursprung und Bedeutung*):

formerly, when investigators of knowledge sought out the origins of things they always believed they would discover something of incalculable significance for all later action and judgment, that they always presupposed, indeed, that the salvation of man must depend on insight into the origin of things: but that now, on the contrary, the more we advance toward origins, the more our interest diminishes; indeed, that all the evaluations and "interestedness" we have implanted into things begin to lose their meaning the further we go back and the closer we approach the things themselves. The more insight we possess into an origin the less significant does the origin appear: while what is nearest to us, what is around us and in us, gradually begins to display colors and beauties and enigmas and riches of significance of which earlier mankind had not an inkling. (M 44)

Later, in *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche will employ a systematic distinction between the search for origins or unique causal antecedents and the investigation of the actual complex lines of affiliation or ancestry (*Herkunft*) which lie behind moral phenomena. In the cited aphorism he makes two points which go beyond the quick summary already offered of classical determinism. He suggests that the growth of causal knowledge, since it does not disclose unique moral origins of any relevance to our moral life, leads to a lessened interest in such inquiry. This is contrary to the view of some determinists that it is of the greatest moral significance and interest to perfect our view of human life as a natural phenomenon. Nietzsche recognizes that once the moral enthusiasm has vanished the enterprise becomes boring. What replaces such enthusiasm, however, is a heightened awareness of "what is nearest to us"; that is, the causal approach tends to exhaust itself because it is boring rather than morally interesting, and leads instead to a phenomenological attitude which has bracketed causal considerations. This could be seen as an *Umwertung* of the causal approach similar to Nietzsche's account of how traditional morality must ultimately condemn and reevaluate itself.

The shift from a causal to a phenomenological approach must take care to eliminate the residues of causal thought which still picture the world as consisting of moral causes and effects. Even classical deter-

minism generally held onto such traces by continuing to grant a central place to the ego or self. In this respect, of course, it is hardly alone. Yet Nietzsche believes that the unity of the ego is something of an illusion. For if the world consists of an indefinite multiplicity of causal factors it is unreasonable to suppose that it contains such things as a constant and unalterable self which would always retain its own identity. The presence of "atoms" of any sort in the world, i.e. impenetrable and unalterable substances, must be empirically verified; now the more we learn of human psychology the more human action and experience seem to be subject to a highly complex assortment of influences. There is no evidence for the existence of psychical atoms, then, although we retain the idea of the central, organizing ego from an earlier phase of our knowledge. The belief in the constancy and openness to itself of the ego is enshrined in our language which has been shaped by the belief, among other things, that the ego is an easily identifiable and constant element in the causal order of things; and such a view is reinforced by philosophical views like those of Descartes and of German idealism which are based upon the idea of such an ego. This of course is not merely a theoretical error, from Nietzsche's point of view. Because we believe that we know our own egos we also make unwarranted assumptions about the nature of our actions:

The primeval delusion still lives on that one knows, and knows quite precisely in every case, *how human action is brought about* ...Is the "terrible" truth not that no amount of knowledge about an act *ever* suffices to insure its performance, that the space between knowledge and action has never yet been bridged even in one single instance? Actions are *never* what they appear to us to be. We have expended so much labor on learning that external things are not as they appear to us to be — very well! The same is the case with the inner world. (*M* 116, cf. *M* 115, 117, 118)

Nietzsche approaches the questionability of the ego in two different ways in *Daybreak*. Some of the aphorisms emphasize, as above, that our presumed *knowledge* of the ego, whether our own or that of others, is deficient because it is based on prejudice and mistakes of various sorts. In other places Nietzsche suggests that it is not just a question of knowledge but of *being*; the ego just is not the sort of unitary thing supposed by most of us (and by our moral psychology) when we talk about ourselves and others. It is not the case, then, that there is a deeper, mysterious self which remains hidden from us,

but that in so far as there is a self, it is a much looser and randomly constructed thing than we imagine selves to be. To the extent, then, that we could unearth a self as origin (*Ursprung*) of our acts it would be of little interest (*Bedeutung*) to us. The point is developed at length in an aphorism on *Experience and Invention* (*Erlebnis und Erdicthung*):

However far a man may go in self-knowledge of himself, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the totality of drives which constitute his being. He can scarcely name even the cruder ones: their number and strength, their ebb and flood, their play and counterplay among one another, and above all, the laws of their nutriment remain wholly unknown to him. This nutriment is therefore a work of chance: our daily experience throw some prey in the way of this, now that drive, and the drive seizes it eagerly but the coming and going of these events as a whole stands in no rational relationship to the nutritional requirements of the totality of the drives. (*M* 119)

Here Nietzsche is showing how our ignorance itself contributes to the formation of a relatively unstructured self. Using the metaphor of nourishment, he supposed that each of us has a number of drives which are capable of being fed or starved in varying proportions. If the care and feeding of these instincts is left to chance, as it must be if we are ignorant of them and their needs, "some cravings will be neglected and starved to death, while others will be overfed." Nietzsche compares this subterranean change to the growth of a polyp, emphasizing that its shape is constantly subject to change and will conform to no specific pattern:

Every moment of our lives sees some of the polyp-arms of our being grow and others of them wither, all according to the nutriment which the moment does or does not bear with it...And as a consequence of this chance nourishment of the parts, the whole, fully grown polyp will be something just as accidental as its growth has been.

Our deeper self, should we continue to use such an exalted expression, is compared not to one of the higher animals (as we sort out the players of the stock market into bulls and bears) but to an amorphous and irrational growth. The search for an *Ursprung* leads to a disappointing absence of *Bedeutung*. Dreams, Nietzsche suggests, are barometers of the irrational growth process for they can be supposed to be vicarious enjoyments by those instincts which have been starved during the day,

what Freud was soon to call wish-fulfillments. The dream is a poetic interpretation of nervous stimuli which is constrained only by the degree to which the various instincts have been tranquilized by feeding. But waking life, Nietzsche claims again, is just like the dream except that its interpretations are less creative, so that "our moral judgments and valuations are only images and fantasies concerning physiological processes unknown to us, a kind of habitual language to describe certain nervous irritations." The language here appears to commit Nietzsche to a biological reductionism. But the language follows from his original metaphor of the polyp, not from such reductionism. In the same aphorism Nietzsche employs his more central images of text and interpretation to describe the same process, suggesting the dream's text (the state of our instincts) gives rise to many different commentaries (the various dreams of one or several nights). The point is generalized to the claim that "all our so-called consciousness is a more or less fantastic commentary on an unknown text." Daybreak is the ordinary time when we wake from dreaming. But ordinary waking simply throws us into another dream, one which is in some respects deeper, because of our almost unquestionable certainty that we are not "dreaming." The genuine break of day which the title of the book suggests comes when we achieve an insight into the principle of *waking* dreams, such as the supposed causal foundations of moral thought and the presumed integrity of the self.

The beginning in philosophical matters is always difficult. Even when one begins with "idealism" in the ordinary man's broadest sense — a confidence in the possibility of an intelligible discourse which is not ineluctably distorted by emotion and prejudice — the question of how a basic method or set of principles is to be established without obviously begging the question is not easily answered. It is a problem which has evoked some of the subtlest flights of dialectic and of dialectical fantasy in Plato, Descartes, Hegel and Peirce. But the problem of making a beginning with a philosophical project that rejects such garden variety idealism is even more acute. "Thoughts Concerning Moral Prejudices," needs to be construed as indicating not only the subject matter to which its discourse pertains but the embodied social and psychological forces against which the discourse must struggle in order to establish itself. If Nietzsche is correct in his analysis of the force of the moral prejudices and of the depth to which they are embedded in the fabric of our lives, it will not be easy to win any atten-

tive readers for a direct challenge to them. What seems like rhetoric in the pejorative sense — literary brilliance, *ad hominem* arguments and so on — is here a philosophical necessity. The prescriptions which Aristotle provides in his *Rhetoric* for attending to the *ethos* of one's particular audience are, for him, concessions to those who cannot follow an argument from first principles and who are likely to be swayed by passion. In *Daybreak* Nietzsche confronts the problem that, given the primacy of the body and of social custom, there is no distinction in principle between a common and a philosophical audience and so no distinction in principle between a rhetorical and a philosophical method. Accordingly the aphorisms will deal with an extraordinary range of topics, including the problem posed by the division of life into periods of work and periods of holidays (*M* 178, 453). The philosophical reader needs to be caught at that level of habit and compromise which he shares with the common man. Nietzsche warns of the danger of sanctifying the life of custom by the easy route of maintaining appearances despite "our own better judgments":

"It is of no importance if one of us does what every one else does and has done" — so says ignorant prejudice! What a profound mistake! For nothing is of greater importance than that a powerful, long-established, and irrational custom be once again confirmed by the act of someone who is recognized as rational. In this way the proceeding is thought to be sanctioned by reason itself! All honor to your opinions! but little unconventional actions are of still greater value. (*M* 149)

In this light Nietzsche's concern with contemporary culture and politics, his need to challenge current judgments of art and music, and his interest in the apparent minutiae of life can be shown to be integral to his philosophical purpose. The more that these common opinions and judgments can be dislodged a bit and the more that we realize how great an institutional and psychic investment is dislodged with them, the closer do we come to seeing the possibility of a more general *Umwertung*. The point and scope of such an *Umwertung* will be lost, however, unless we see the accumulated weight and density of what is being challenged. Philosophers who want to save Nietzsche's work for philosophy (as they conceive it) often talk of the necessity (and the difficulty) of separating that which is strictly philosophical in his writings from the plethora of jokes, digressions, and cultural criticisms to be found there. Now this material is viewed benignly by some as a sign of the author's vast powers and exuberance which carried him

beyond the bounds of philosophy proper, while more hostile critics have been, ironically, closer to the truth in suggesting that since such matters are central to his work Nietzsche ought not to be taken seriously as a philosopher. Nietzsche refuses to accept such a division of his work into the philosophical and the nonphilosophical. The aphoristic books (temporarily represented by *Daybreak*) flaunt this crossing of genres and concerns by juxtaposing glittering sayings on the problem of mutual love and how to advise the inconsolable with inquiries into the possibility of self-knowledge (see e.g. *M* 379, 380, 116).

Gilles Deleuze, drawing on Nietzsche's account of the foundation of the political state, has suggested that we ought to distinguish imperial and nomadic thought.¹⁹ An imperial political structure is hierarchical, bureaucratic and involves massive standardization and containment of spontaneity. The nomads, who have perhaps been displaced by the foundation or spread of empire, reject the imperial way of life and must adopt strategy which will allow them to remain free from the encroachments of empire while providing them the opportunity for attacks that can eventually destabilize the imperial machine. Imperial politics, Deleuze suggests, is bound up with imperial philosophy; the latter's insistence on first principles, generalizable method, and systematic form both echo and reinforce the demands of its political structure. Nomadic thought is suspicious of all this and so it cannot oppose philosophical imperialism with a different set of first principles, method and system; for if it were successful it would only lead to the replacement of one regime with another which is homologous with it. Nomadic thought must be multiple and adaptable, hunting out the weak points and interstices of the imperial structure. It will not aim at a palace revolution but at what Nietzsche calls a "slow cure" in which old habits are gradually dismantled and replaced (*M*, 462). In his aphoristic books Nietzsche seeks out those who are travelling actually or metaphorically, that is, those who are not tied to a specific place in the imperial structure. As long as movement of any kind is possible, those on the move can be lured by the nomads who constantly circle around the imperial core, striking when appropriate and strategically withdrawing and regrouping. We can expect that Nietzschean aphorism will be a source of power and an exemplary weapon in this struggle.

NOTES

1. Arthur Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (New York, 1965), p. 20.
2. References to Nietzsche's works are given by means of his own numbered sections and paragraphs: *Menschliches*, *Allzumenschliches* = MA; *Die Morgenrote* = M; *Zur Genealogie der Moral* = GM. In the case of *Die Morgenrote*, I have used the translation by R.J. Hollingdale, *Daybreak* (Cambridge, 1982).
3. It may be helpful here to think of the pulsational conceptions of experience developed by William James and A.N. Whitehead.
4. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1, trans. by David F. Krell (New York, 1979), p. 11.
5. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1, p. 9.
6. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1, p. 134.
7. Cf. *Hegel's Aesthetics*, translated by T.M. Knox (New York, 1975), p. 103: "We may well hope that art will always rise higher and come to perfection, but the form of art has ceased to be the supreme need of the spirit. No matter how excellent we find the statues of the Greek gods, no matter how we see God the Father, Christ, and Mary so estimably and perfectly portrayed: it is no help; we bow the knee no longer." Cf. also pp. 104–5 and the entire section entitled "Dissolution of the Romantic Form of Art," pp. 593–611. Hegel's conception of the *Auflosung* of art has been the subject of much discussion; perhaps the most illuminating account is given by Albert Hofstadter in "Art: Death and Transfiguration" in *Review of National Literatures*, volume I, no. 2 (1970), (special issue on "Hegel in Comparative Literature"), pp. 149–164.
8. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York: Oxford, 1973) and *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford, 1975).
9. Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).
10. *Hegel's Aesthetics*, p. 11.
11. Hegel discusses Goethe constantly in his *Aesthetics*, always with the highest praise. The following assessment, drawn from a sketch of Goethe's character as a lyricist expresses a judgment diametrically opposed to Nietzsche's: "Seldom can an individual be found who was so actively interested in anything and everything and yet, despite this infinite spread of interest, lived throughout in *himself* and transformed into poetic vision whatever touched him" (*Aesthetics*, p. 1131). For a discussion of the "owl of Minerva" saying, in which Hegel alludes to Goethe, see Gary Shapiro "The Owl of Minerva and the Colors of the Night," *Philosophy and Literature*, Fall 1977.
12. Nietzsche, *Samtliche Werke, Kritische Studien Ausgabe* (KSA) vol. 8, pp. 473–4.
13. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York, 1975), p. 79.
14. The first emphasis would attempt to show the proto-fascist nature of Nietzsche's work along the lines suggested by Georg Lukacs in *The Destruction of Reason*. The second would lead to a psychobiographical study in which Nietzsche would be shown to be living out and intensifying the theme of isolation through a willful narrowing of his audience.
15. Nietzsche suggests this description of his procedure in MA I, 1.
16. For a phenomenological account of the need to read the text as a unity see

Roman Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art*. A more conventionalistic approach is given by Jonathan Culler in *Structuralist Poetics* (Ithaca, 1975). The deconstructive alternative is represented by Jacques Derrida who has used Nietzsche as his text in *Eperons/Spurs*.

17. Cf. Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago, 1981) and Ronna Burges, *Plato's Phaedrus* (Alabama, 1980).
18. For an examination of Nietzsche's use of La Rochefoucault, see Brendan Donnellan, "Nietzsche and La Rochefoucault," *The German Quarterly*, May 1979 (vol. LII, no. 3), pp. 303–318. For those who are still tempted to confuse the aphoristic with the fragmentary, it may be useful to give a partial list of the literary masters of the aphoristic form whom Nietzsche cites as models at one time or another: Bacon, Chamfort, Pascal, La Rochefoucault, Lichtenberg.
19. Gilles Deleuze "Nomad Thought" trans. by David Allison in *The New Nietzsche*, ed. David Allison (New York, 1977), pp. 142–149.