On Affirmation and Becoming

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By

Paolo A. Bolaños

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For
Kristoffer and Kristen Paula . . .
. . . may you learn how to live your lives actively,
and not reactively.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Friedrich Nietzsche (cited by book number, then section number or section number, then page number)

AC	*The Antichrist*
BGE	*Beyond Good and Evil*
BT	*The Birth of Tragedy*
D_1	*Daybreak*
EH	*Ecce Homo*
GM	*On the Genealogy of Morals*
GS	*The Gay Science*
HH	*Human, All too Human*
PTAG	*Philosophy During the Tragic Age of the Greeks*
PO	"Postcard to Overbeck"
TI	*Twilight of the Idols*
TL	"On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense"
UM	*Untimely Meditations*
WLN	*Writings from the Late Notebooks*
WP	*Will to Power*
Z	*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Gilles Deleuze (cited by page number)

B	*Bergsonism*
D_2	*Dialogues*
DR	*Difference & Repetition*
EP	*Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*
LS	*The Logic of Sense*
N	*Negotiations 1972-1990*
NP	*Nietzsche and Philosophy*
NT	"Nomad Thought"
PI	*Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (cited by page number)

TP	*A Thousand Plateaus*
WiP	*What is Philosophy?*

INTRODUCTION

> "My ideal, when I write about an author, would be to write nothing that could cause him sadness, or if he is dead, that might make him weep in his grave."
> —Gilles Deleuze, *Dialogues*

The peculiar character of Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) philosophy is its resistance to any definitive reading. Jacques Derrida speaks of the *impouvoir* (powerlessness) that one experiences in reading Nietzsche's text. "Much as a trace which has been marked in what *remains* of this nonfragment, such an account would withdraw it from any assured horizon of a hermeneutic question."[1] It is this very *impouvoir* that opens Nietzsche's text to various, and oftentimes contrasting, readings. It is precisely this peculiar aspect of Nietzsche's writings that captures the interest of Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995). "Nietzsche," according to Deleuze, "is the only philosopher who makes no attempt at recodification" (*NT* 143). Both Derrida and Deleuze stress Nietzsche's *style* of writing over logical clarity; they take advantage of the fact that Nietzsche confounds previous works of philosophy and, as such, the reader is made powerless over his texts. Ironically, it is this very powerlessness which makes Nietzsche worthwhile to read; with Nietzsche philosophy turns against itself. According to Hugh Tomlinson, Deleuze's book *Nietzsche and Philosophy* "directs us to the central problem for philosophers reading Nietzsche: his relationship to philosophy."[2] With Nietzsche, philosophy becomes its own mirror; Nietzsche "calls radically into question the whole idea of philosophy as the sovereign discourse of truth."[3] We are powerless over his texts because they are meant to confuse us by way of disorganizing our predominant frames of mind, ultimately emancipating us from our old image of thought. Our powerlessness is "a period of drifting, of 'deterritorialization'" (*NT* 144). With Nietzsche our well established tables of values are being undermined. Figuratively speaking, through the death of God, we are snatched of our divine security. Are we ready to be left alone? As readers of Nietzsche, are we ready to embrace the consequences of God's death? Perhaps, Nietzsche requires a new breed of readers; but who are these new readers? Even of the highest of men Nietzsche says, "*these* are not my companions" (*Z* IV 20). Ironically, Nietzsche's writings are more at home with the *homeless*, the *nomads* as

Deleuze puts it. The philosophical nomad is sensitive to the affective aspect of Nietzsche's aphorisms,[4] for Nietzsche did not write to inform us; rather, he wrote to destroy us, to make us powerless, to make us *think*, that is, to make us feel again. Like Derrida, Deleuze takes this deconstructive force as Nietzsche's point of departure. But, unlike Derrida, Deleuze goes further and does not stop at the question of method alone. Deleuze is willing to test Nietzsche, he is eager to *experiment* with Nietzsche; for, after all, this is what Nietzsche, himself, implies in his writings.

Alan Schrift stresses Deleuze's *experimental* reading of Nietzsche and comments that "Deleuze moves from an interpretation *of* Nietzsche to an experimentation *with* Nietzsche."[5] Such experimentation entails a radical change in language, that is, a change in the way Nietzsche's texts are being read and, in Deleuze's case, *used*. Deleuze moves away from sheer interpretation of texts because interpretation, for him, presupposes a reading based on representation—the view that there is some inherent meaning behind what we read; this is a type of reading grounded in the "signified-signifier" opposition. Deleuze's reading moves away from this opposition; moreover, it is neither *hermeneutic* nor *deconstructive*, but is a type of reading which commences at the margins of hermeneutics and deconstruction. As such, Deleuze reads Nietzsche *constructively*. In this *constructive* approach to the text, Deleuze activates the *potentialities* of the text and the *creativity* of the reader. He writes, along with Felix Guattari:

> A book has neither object nor subject; it is made of variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds. To attribute the book to a subject is to overlook this working of matters, and the exteriority of their relations. It is to fabricate a beneficent God to explain geological movements (*TP* 3).

Deleuze's approach is an attempt to emancipate Nietzsche from the image of thought which Nietzsche himself sought to criticize—the "metaphysics of transcendence." As such, one should devise an approach which does not allow Nietzsche to fall into the same trap he sought to avoid. Strictly speaking, Deleuze's *creative experimentation* of Nietzsche is an affirmative gesture at the wake of the dead God. It is a gesture that announces that *reading* is still possible sans the presence of a divine *telos*. On the one hand, a *hermeneutic* reading presupposes the presence of an a priori meaning or a guiding principle which gives sense to the text; often it is supposed that meaning itself ensues from the book's author. A *deconstructive* reading, on the other hand, exposes the limits of the hermeneutic approach—Hermes has lost his purpose, and we wonder

whether Hermes and Sisyphus are one and the same! Deconstruction does not *seek* meaning but, rather, it divests meaning of its divine or authoritarian stature. As such, the *deconstructive* approach opens up the possibility of celebrating the secularity of meaning. Oftentimes, however, what we are left after the destruction of meaning are mere traces; most of us recoil from the sight of mere traces—of fragments. We turn away from the secular, the illogical, the irrational, the fragmentary. Meanwhile, Deleuze delights at the sight of textual imperfectability; for him, it is a spectacle worthy of celebration. At this juncture, we may interchange "textual celebration" and "textual experimentation." Deleuze's experimental approach celebrates the expediency of the fragmentary, that is, the aphoristic structure of Nietzsche's texts. For Deleuze,

> An aphorism means nothing, signifies nothing, and is no more a signifier than a signified . . .. An aphorism is a play of forces, the most recent of which—the latest, the newest, and provisionally the final force—is always *the most exterior*. Nietzsche puts this very clearly: if you want to know what I mean, then find the force that gives a new sense to what I say, and hang the text upon it. Following this approach, there is no problem of interpreting Nietzsche; there are only mechanical problems of plotting out his text, of trying to establish which exterior force actually enables the text to transmit, say a current of energy (*NT* 145).

Deleuze justifies his "legitimate misunderstanding" of Nietzsche by claiming that an aphorism is a "phenomenon, one that waits for new forces to come and 'subdue' it, or make it work, or even to make it explode" (*NT* 146). This image of Nietzsche's texts serves both as an invitation and a warning. It is an invitation to celebrate, to create; nonetheless, it is also a warning that the buoyant nature of texts makes it parasitic to various and, oftentimes, dangerous ways of reading. In this sense, anybody can be Nietzschean, whether one is a "fascist," "bourgeois," or "revolutionary" (See *NT* 146). However, Deleuze pays heed to this warning and makes sense of Nietzsche's philosophy by not caging Nietzsche's text; instead, Deleuze plays with Nietzsche, and inasmuch as Nietzsche underscores risk and play in his new ontology, Deleuze, for his part, makes his reading a venue wherein the dynamism of risk and play is exemplified.

Deleuze's "textual experimentation" of Nietzsche manages to go in between *hermeneutics* and *deconstruction*. Deleuze's is a reading of Nietzsche, but it is a reading which does not presuppose any definite "signified," thus also suspending the presence of a "signifier." Deleuze gets around the nostalgia of hermeneutics. Moreover, he does not anymore seek to deconstruct, for his reading begins at the end of deconstruction—its point of departure is the fragmentary nature of texts; it is, in a sense, a

post-deconstructive act. Thus, as a moderate alternative, Deleuze's reading does not dispense of hermeneutics and deconstruction, but rather attempts to overcome them through his emphasis on the "function" of the text, instead of focusing on the inherent a priori meaning or lack of it. With regard to reading a book, Deleuze tells us, "We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed" (*TP* 4). With Deleuze, Nietzsche's ideas become alive; they are neither confined within the boundaries of traditional academic philosophy nor are they compromised by the lack of scholarship on the part of Deleuze. On the contrary, Deleuze places Nietzsche at the forefront of academic philosophy by making Nietzsche's ideas work. Nietzsche's ideas become alive because they are put to *use*, thus restoring their very own philosophic dignity. There is, in other words, a symbiotic relationship between Deleuze and Nietzsche. There is no single Nietzsche in the eyes of Deleuze; through Deleuze's experiment, Nietzsche's philosophy grows more in scope, that is, it gathers more sense.

From a *second-order* point of view, however, Deleuze's *post-deconstructive* reading of Nietzsche is only secondary to my main aim. My primary aim is to present a critique of a way of thinking characterized by Nietzsche as *nihilistic*. Therefore, it should be noted that this book is not about Deleuze's reading per se; rather, I am offering an appraisal of Nietzsche's "critique of nihilism" using Deleuze's style of reading. I will accrue Nietzsche's critique and Deleuze's *post-deconstructive* reading in order to appraise Nietzsche's critique itself. Insofar as I have underscored Deleuze's purported experimentation with Nietzschean themes, I will also present an *experiment* with Nietzsche and Deleuze. I will take the risk of reading Nietzsche through the lenses of Deleuze and to find out whether it is possible to partly gloss Nietzsche's critique of nihilism through Deleuzian phraseology. Far from presenting a mere exposition of Nietzsche's text, I am, rather, re-reading, that is, re-evaluating Nietzsche's critique of nihilism through Deleuze's experimentation. This is my way of thinking *with* Nietzsche. Nihilism is the central problem upon which Nietzsche's philosophical musings are directed; he deems nihilism as a cultural experience and, as such, a phenomenon to be reckoned with.[6] In my reconstruction of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism, I locate two related elements which constitute the structure of the book: 1) the contextualization of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism and 2) the prescription of a cure, i.e., the ethics of affirmation and the ontology of becoming.

Through *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, a very strong connection between the thoughts of Nietzsche and Deleuze is revealed: the critique and reversal of Platonism.[7] This grievance against Platonism, moreover, is the seed of their mature thought, and has been the touchtone from which all their writings are anchored. Indeed, Platonism is at the heart of every philosophy of transcendence; and this is where one can locate the archenemy of Nietzsche and Deleuze. Nietzsche's account of what is nihilistic requires special attention and contextualization. Often, he is construed to be espousing a kind of nihilistic or negative philosophy. Careful qualification, however, reveals that this is a mistaken view. This grave misconception is due to the careless use of the term "nihilism" that results from a failure of taking into consideration the context from which Nietzsche draws sense of it.[8] The proper understanding of nihilism requires one to delve into its very Nietzschean context. This amounts to letting Nietzsche speak for himself, which means approaching his texts immanently rather than from the outside. Thus, following the first level of the critique, the description of nihilism that this book picks up is a Nietzschean description. Far removed from a haphazard use of the term nihilism, I will show that such critique will only make sense within the purview of a careful assessment of Nietzsche's diagnosis of nihilism. It is for this reason that I would like to emphasize the significance of Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Ultimately, my aim is to present Nietzsche as an affirmative and not a negative philosopher. Through Deleuze's reading, a *typological* reading of nihilism comes to the fore, emphasizing the difference between "active" and "reactive" modes of being, the latter being an expression of nihilism itself. Through Deleuze, I am able to contextualize Nietzsche's critique of nihilism through the dynamism of force and power. It will become clear that the active expression of power is itself the expression of an affirmative mode of being which is to be contrasted to the negative mode which Nietzsche sought to criticize.

The second level of the critique of nihilism entails a cure. The critique itself is a critique of a peculiar way of thinking: an image of thought which Nietzsche characterizes as reactive, resentful, decadent, or descending. It is this way of thinking that Nietzsche regards as nihilistic. The Nietzschean cure to the problem of nihilism pertains to an alternative *Weltanschauung* or, as Deleuze puts it, a new image of thought—a way of thinking that counters nihilism. Roughly, Nietzsche views the old image of thought as a tradition which has its origin in Socratic-Platonic metaphysics, and by metaphysics Nietzsche takes it in its literal sense: "beyond the physical." The metaphysical image of the world results in a bifurcation between the world of Forms and the physical world of flux; the

universe becomes two dimensional. The problem lies in the priority given to the formal dimension while the physical dimension is considered inferior, even dispensable. Nietzsche aims to deconstruct this classical metaphysical worldview by bracketing any formal dimension of the world. While this, I should say, requires a deliberate abandonment of metaphysics, it does not however mean that Nietzsche does not provide us with an alternative view of reality. Indeed, it will be shown below how Deleuze would highlight Nietzsche's "perspectivism" in order to explain Nietzsche's ontology of becoming based on a new image of thought. It should be noted, however, that Nietzsche's theory of being is no longer a metaphysics but rather an ontology. The privilege I give to the word "ontology" is strategic inasmuch as it is crucial in understanding Nietzsche's account of reality. The term ontology is used in its most general connotation as a theory of being as opposed to "metaphysics," which I deem to be a type of ontology. Following Deleuze, what this study seeks to argue is that Nietzsche offers his own theory of being which is no longer metaphysical, but is presented as a critique of metaphysical ontology.[9]

The two levels of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism will set the basic structure of the book. Since this whole endeavour is premised on an immanent interpretation of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism, the success of explicating a Nietzschean critique of nihilism depends on a peculiar way of reading. It is here that Deleuze's Nietzsche experiment enters the picture. I think that, despite his experiment, Deleuze offers a reading of Nietzsche's philosophy which is closest to the proper context or *sense* of Nietzsche's project. For one, Deleuze is courageous enough to declare that Nietzsche does not offer a metaphysics, because it is precisely metaphysics that he attempts to overcome. Thus, as opposed to a metaphysics of transcendence, Deleuze provides a compelling re-telling of Nietzsche's ontology of becoming. Despite his claim that he does a "legitimate misunderstanding" of Nietzsche's works, Deleuze apparently is the most loyal and honest reader of Nietzsche, because he approaches the texts immanently and his experimental use of his own idiosyncratic phraseology does not do any injustice to the sense of Nietzsche's themes; in fact, they become more dynamic, more alive. Deleuze's honest reading and use of idiosyncratic neologisms result in one of the most original exegeses of Nietzsche. What Deleuze does is to think *with* Nietzsche and not *against* Nietzsche; Deleuze does not endeavour to find fault in Nietzsche's use of language, for, like Nietzsche, he knows too well that depending too much on language would result in an impasse in thinking. It is in the context of *Nietzsche and Philosophy* that one could make ample

sense of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism. It should be noted, however, that even if I considerably draw insights from Deleuze's book, I have opted to be selective of the themes to be discussed. One reason is for brevity. The book is, after all, not a study of *Nietzsche and Philosophy* per se, but rather of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism. A study solely devoted to Deleuze's book would require a separate undertaking altogether. Another reason is that *Nietzsche and Philosophy* is further loaded with more Nietzschean themes other than the ones treated in this book. Nonetheless, in the attempt to reconstruct the general picture of Deleuze's reading it was inevitable to draw from his other writings, and the most often quoted are *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*, *Difference & Repetition*, and *The Logic of Sense*. In quoting Nietzsche, I tried as much as possible not to privilege one book over the others. Nevertheless, it is inevitable that in a particular chapter, depending on the theme being discussed, one work may stand out over the others. Overall, however, I have relied on the following: *Twilight of the Idols*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *The Gay Science*, *Ecce Homo*, *The Antichrist*, *Daybreak*, *Philosophy During the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, *Untimely Meditations* and passages from the *Nachlass* material.

With regard to the foregoing, the Deleuzian explication of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism will be presented in three major parts. Chapter One will set a framework from which a discussion of Nietzsche's ethics and ontology can follow through. The focus of this chapter is to contextualize Nietzsche's understanding of "nihilism." The contextualization of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism will revolve around three main concepts: nihilism, force, and power. Chapter Two explicates the first half of Nietzsche's cure: the ethics of affirmation. Using the descriptive context of nihilism laid out in the first chapter, an attempt to present an ethics which counters the nihilistic tendencies of classical forms of morality is presented. Chapter Three deals with the second half of the cure: the ontology of becoming. This chapter will also contextualize Deleuze's use of the term "difference"; for most criticisms of the idea of the eternal return of difference ensue from a lack of a clear sense of what is meant by "difference" and how it is related to Nietzsche's use of the phrase "the same" and Deleuze's use of "the Same."

Apart from the three main chapters, I have decided to add a fourth and last chapter; it is written as a corollary to the last part of Chapter Three, the contextualization of Deleuze's use of "difference" in his account of the thought of the eternal return. The beginning of Chapter Four offers a summary of the five peculiar features of Deleuze's treatment of Nietzsche. I argue that interpretations of the eternal return which ignore these five

features miss the mark in not taking into account the bigger context within which the thought of the eternal return is situated. As such, in the last chapter I decided to do the following: 1) critique some interpretations of the eternal return which choose to treat the thought primarily as a cosmological doctrine and 2) briefly discuss some interpretations which are not inimical to Deleuze's reading.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CRITIQUE OF NIHILISM

> "With Nietzsche, nihilism seems to become prophetic. . .. With him nihilism becomes conscious for the first time."
> —Albert Camus, *The Rebel*

The chief purpose of this chapter is to set a framework from which a discussion of Nietzsche's ethics and ontology can follow through. Here, I will attempt to contextualize Nietzsche's understanding of "nihilism." The succeeding chapters of the book depend on a working description of nihilism. The contextualization of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism will revolve around three main concepts: nihilism, force, and power. It is of the utmost importance that these three concepts be clarified at the very outset. Deleuze will clarify the special signification that Nietzsche accords the notion of nihilism. Force and power are essentially differentiated by Deleuze, and it is important to investigate on the dynamics between the two. Thus, this chapter will be presented as preliminary, for the latter aim of discussing Nietzsche's ethics and ontology will be theoretically informed by this contextualization.

According to Deleuze, Nietzsche's notion of nihilism "is undoubtedly expressed biologically, psychologically, historically, and metaphysically" (*NP* 34-36). In the context of these moments, Nietzsche's conception of nihilism is seen as a symptom of decay or sickness of what has hitherto been called culture[1]—and by culture, we understand it to be a collective way of thinking—a mode of being or a typology. Nietzsche's prognosis of the nihilistic culture ensues from a genealogical approach, an evaluation of the origin of forces; the forces revealed, active and reactive, are based on a typological distinction between two modes of being:

> Every individual may be scrutinized to see whether he represents the ascending or the descending line of life. Having made that decision, one has a canon for the worth of his self-interest. If he represents the ascending line, then his worth is indeed extraordinary—and for the sake of life as a whole, which takes the step farther through him, the care for his preservation and for the creation of the best conditions for him may even

> be extreme. . . . If he represents the descending development, decay, chronic degeneration, and sickness . . . then he has small worth, and the minimum of decay requires that he take away as little as possible from those who have turned out well. He is merely their parasite (*TI* IX 33, emphasis mine).

The above passage is probably the best summary of Nietzsche's typology between two modes of being: the ascending and the descending. In fact this whole chapter is premised on the characterization of this typology. It will become clear as the discussion progresses that the ascending and descending lines of life will be interchangeable with the following: noble and base, master and slave, active and reactive (in relation to force), affirmative and negative (in relation to power). Ultimately, whenever Nietzsche uses these terms, what he has in mind is a contextual reference to health and sickness.[2] One could also refer to this as the typology of health and sickness—that there are two modes of being, the healthy (ascending) and sick (descending). It is, however, more important to note that Deleuze's interpretation of these two essentially contrasting lines of life or modes of being are themselves rooted in two poles of power, affirmative and negative, making power a *conditio sine qua non* of valuations in general. Thus, by situating nihilism in the context of force and power, it follows that nihilism is a mode of being which Nietzsche associates with the reactive force resulting from a negative form power. The framework set out in this chapter will give sense to the enemy of nihilism, which is an alternative mode of being, accounted for in an ethics of affirmation and ontology of becoming.

1) Nihilism, Genealogy, and Typology

Nietzsche advances a provocative hypothesis in *On the Genealogy of Morals*: through a genealogical investigation of the history of the Judeo-Christian tradition, we are able to reconstruct the advancement of the "ascetic ideal," which to Nietzsche is the very symptomatic expression of nihilism (See *GM* I 7-17). His obsession with this tradition is the touchtone of his critique of morality and culture in general (European culture in particular). He views the tradition as a symptom of a decaying culture, especially the Christian one. He declares: "Nihilism stands at the door" (*WP* I 1),—what might have caused it?—he adds, "the Christian-moral one, that nihilism is rooted" (*WP* I 1). The decadent characteristic of the Judeo-Christian tradition is understood by Nietzsche as a mode of being typical of the spirit of *ressentiment*. Moreover, in the *Twilight of the Idols*, with regard to Christian morality, he declares: "The church fights

passion with excision in every sense: its practice, its 'cure,' is *castratism*" (*TI* V 1).[3] The practice of this kind of morality, this purported panacea for the ills of humanity, is nihilistic in the sense that it rips "out life by the root," and thus becomes "*an enemy of life*" (*TI* V 1). Nietzsche's critique of Christianity is a consequence of a larger project, viz., the critique of "morality," which deems values as absolute and eternal. He argues that nihilism is rooted in Christian morality, because he views Christianity to be the very epitome of a negative stance towards life—it has proven itself to be the best vehicle of *ressentiment* and bad conscience. Nietzsche envisions the "end of Christianity—at the hands of its own morality" (*WP* I 1). Thus, "Skepticism regarding morality is what is decisive" (*WP* I 1). However, this critique of morality is not limited to the Christian religion alone, but, significantly, also a critique of the more general contexts of religion, psychology, history, and metaphysics; this is the reason why Nietzsche views nihilism as a cultural experience—it is, in a sense, a phenomenon that has the tendency to creep into every nook and cranny of life. It should be emphasized that Nietzsche's use of the term "Christian" has special signification, especially towards the end of his career:

> What are we fighting against in Christianity? That it wants to shatter the strong, that it wants to discourage their courage, exploit their bad moments and weariness, transform their proud assurance into unease and qualms of conscience; that it knows how to make the noble instincts poisonous and sick, until their force, their will to power turns back, turns against itself—until the strong are destroyed by orgies of despising and maltreating themselves . . . (*WLN* Notebook 11, November 1887-March 1888, 55).

Hence, when Nietzsche uses the term Christian to refer to a decadent morality, he is using the term in a more symbolic or metaphorical manner, making it representative of decadent religion, psychology, history, and metaphysics. It is in this sense that both ascetic ideal and Christian ideal refer to the base, slave, reactive, negative, or sick form of evaluation.[4] Indeed, what Nietzsche offers as the genius of his work is his relentless criticism of a decadent or nihilistic mode of being: the ascetic ideal, out of the spirit of *ressentiment* and bad conscience.

According to Deleuze, nihilism and the "spirit of revenge" are synonymous. He writes: "Nietzsche calls the enterprise of denying life and depreciating existence nihilism," and, moreover, "the whole of nihilism and its forms he calls the spirit of revenge" (*NP* 34). The Christian or the ascetic ideal emanate from the spirit of revenge: "this hatred of the human, and even more of the animal . . . an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental presuppositions of life . . ." (*GM* III 28). As mentioned, what is Christian or ascetic is loaded in signification and is not exclusive

to religion alone, but also to other symptoms (psychology, history, and metaphysics). Christianity as a mode of being, therefore, underlies wide-ranging plateaus of our lives; to Nietzsche it is the "uncanniest of all guests" (*WP* I 1), and its corollary is our very incapacity to realize (and thus critique) our very own condition. As a mode of being that has informed our ways of living, the "spirit of revenge is the genealogical element of *our* thought, the transcendental principle of our way of thinking" (*NP* 35). We have, therefore, been trespassed by this uncanniest of all guests; it knocked but did not wait for the door to be opened—it had no respect for privacy!

For Nietzsche, as for Deleuze, there is only one ontological fact: the fact of life.[5] Hence, any analysis of nihilism must take into account this ontological fact, because nihilism is an enemy of life. Life, therefore, could be construed as either nihilistic or not. But if the question is whether life is either nihilistic or not, how do we know? In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche writes:

> . . . do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes! Poison mixers are they, whether they know it or not. Despisers of life are they, decaying and poisoned themselves, of whom the earth is weary: so let them go.
>
> "Once the sin against God was the greatest sin; but God has died, and these sinners died with him. To sin against the earth is now the most dreadful thing, and to esteem the entrails of the unknowable higher than the meaning of the earth (*Z* I prologue 3).

Here Zarathustra warns the crowd against the poison mixers, the despisers of life—people who have lived decadent lives, whether they are conscious of it or not, and have as their vow the recruitment of more of their kind. Deleuze illuminates this point:

> Life takes on the value of nil insofar as it is denied and depreciated. Depreciation always presupposed a fiction: it is by means of fiction that something is opposed to life. The whole of life then becomes unreal, it is represented as appearance, it takes on a value of nil in its entirety. The idea of another world, of a supersensible world in all its forms (God, essence, the good, truth), the idea of values superior to life, is not one example among many but the constitutive element of all fiction (*NP* 147).

In the *Antichrist*, Nietzsche distinguishes between fiction and dream, and how the former becomes opposed to life:

> This *world of pure fiction* is vastly inferior to the world of dreams insofar as the latter *mirrors* reality, whereas the former falsifies, devalues, and

> negates reality. Once the concept of "nature" had been invented as the opposite of "God," "natural" had to become a synonym of "reprehensible": this whole world of fiction is rooted in *hatred* of the natural (of reality!); it is the expression of a profound vexation at the sight of reality (*AC* 15).[6]

Thus, the poison (fiction) that these despisers of life feed us are the very transcendent values that we have hitherto accorded the value of truth which we usually regard as the foundation of life. Little did we know that these values, which we have highly esteemed, are themselves the very values which could poison and kill us. Life is devalued when it is projected in this lowly way, that is to say, in a nihilistic way. Nietzsche defines nihilism in the following: "*That the highest values devaluate themselves*" (*WP* I 2), that life is itself devalued. Nihilism, therefore, operates whenever one's sensitivity to life is disparaging, and that life itself is rendered dispensable. In this sense, it is not surprising that Nietzsche considers Socrates to be the ancient precursor of this base mode of being.

The point to be reckoned with here is that Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism is typological. As pointed out earlier, Nietzsche distinguishes between two types or modes of being, the ascending and descending, which will be referred to as affirmative and negative modes respectively. The affirmative and negative are basically evaluative modes. Deleuze explains this further: "Evaluations, in essence, are not values but are ways of being, modes of existence of those who judge" (*NP* 1). In other words, there are two modes or attitudes of evaluating life; our way of looking at life depends on whether, in the first place, we follow the ascending or descending mode of life. The value accorded to life depends on the "image of thought"[7] or perspective which initiates the person into evaluation. This is the meaning of genealogy, according to Deleuze. Genealogy entails origin/beginning (in this sense the "differential element" between noble and base) and also the origin of valuations. Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* presents a prognosis of "the origin of our moral prejudices . . ." (*GM* preface 2),[8] that is, of our moral valuations: the values we accord to life and, thus, to ourselves. Therefore, the sense of genealogy in this context is a form or "critique," an attitude which is sensitive and not blind to the differential element of moral valuations. To quote Deleuze:

> Genealogy means both the value of origin and the origin of values. Genealogy is opposed to absolute values as it is to relative or utilitarian ones. Genealogy signifies the differential element of values from which their value itself derives. Genealogy thus means origin or birth, but also difference or distance in the origin. Genealogy means nobility and

> baseness, nobility and vulgarity, nobility and decadence in the origin (*NP* 2).

Through a genealogical analysis, we are able to discover the two ways of making differences: the affirmative mode of the master and the negative mode of the slave. "This distinction," according to Deleuze, "is not only quantitative but also qualitative and typological" (*PI* 73). This means that the ascending and descending modes of being are not only expressions of quanta of forces or symptoms but, more importantly for Deleuze, they are qualities or distinguishing characteristics. The master originates by affirming himself and accords goodness to his nature. The "noble man lives in trust and openness with himself" (*GM* I 12); he differentiates himself from the slave by affirming himself and not by negating the slave. The self-affirmation (in contrast to the Hegelian emphasis on external or inter-subjective recognition)[9] of the master is what makes him "good," while he labels the slave "bad" (*schlecht*) upon recognition of the slave's baseness (*GM* I 4). When the master labels the slave "bad," it is not a gesture of negation, rather of "differentiation." Nietzsche refers to the master's gesture as the "*pathos of distance*"—the ability to differentiate or set oneself apart (*GM* I 2).[10] Meanwhile, by contrast, although the slave recognizes the difference of the master, he reacts to this difference negatively and resents the master because he could not be equal to the master. The "man of *ressentiment* is neither upright nor naïve nor honest and straightforward with himself" (*GM* I 12). When the slave labels the master bad, it is a gesture of negation; the slave does not begin from himself but rather from a reaction to the master. Deleuze refers to the slave's reaction as a paralogism that runs unnoticed: "birds of prey are evil (that is, the birds of prey are all the evil ones, the evil ones are birds of prey); but I am the opposite of a bird of prey; therefore I am good" (*NP* 122). In Nietzsche's formulation: "these birds of prey are evil; and whoever is least like a bird of prey, but rather its opposite, a lamb—would he not be good?" (*GM* I 13). Hence, depending on whether the evaluator is ascending or descending (both regard themselves "good'), their appropriations split into two contrasting senses of "bad": bad as base and bad as evil (*Böse*). Nietzsche writes:

> This, then, is quite the contrary of what the noble man does, who conceives the basic concept "good" in advance and spontaneous out of himself and only then creates for himself an idea of "bad"! This "bad" of noble origin and "evil" out of the cauldron of unsatisfied hatred—the former an after-production, a side issue, a contrasting shade, the latter on the contrary the original thing, the beginning, the distinctive *deed* in the conception of a slave morality—how different these two words "bad" and

> "evil" are, although they are both apparently the opposite of the same concept "good." But is not the same concept "good": one should ask rather precisely who is "evil" in the sense of the morality of *ressentiment*. The answer, in all strictness, is: *precisely* the "good man" of the other morality, precisely the noble, powerful man, the ruler, but dyed in another color, interpreted in another fashion, seen in another way by the venomous eye of *ressentiment* (*GM* I 11).

This typological distinction between the affirming master and the resentful slave sets the foundation for Nietzsche's ethics of affirmation. I will delay a deeper analysis of this theme until the next chapter. At this juncture, however, it is important to maintain that the origin of values is revealed through a genealogical critique of the two typological modes of being. Our life, our mode of being is itself a typology of either good or base. We live our lives according to how we view it. "This is why we always have the beliefs, feelings, and thoughts that we deserve given our way of being or style of life" (*NP* 1). This also means that the value we accord life is informed by these immanent forces within us. Nihilism, in this context, simply reflects the negative attitude towards life—the slave's mode of being—for it is the depreciation of the value of life emanating from a decadent way of evaluating.

2) Force: Active and Reactive

With the typological reading of nihilism, Nietzsche leads us to a critique of the origin of values referred to as "genealogy." Values result from two evaluative modes, affirmative and negative, and it is with the latter that nihilism is symptomatic. This means that the nihilistic attitude towards life ensues from a negative image of thought or perspective, wherein the slave negates what is immanently affirmative. In other words, nihilism is an evaluative or interpretative mode of existence which is hostile to life.

Nietzsche's proposal in *On the Genealogy of Morals* is to study the development of morality through linguistics (*GM* I 17), and this is taken by Deleuze to be the first axis of Nietzsche's philosophy which is referred to as a "general semeiology," that is a study of "forces" (*NP* x). Signs, in this instance, are considered forces, and by forces we pertain to "Phenomena, things, organisms, societies, consciousness and spirits," or in other words "symptoms" (*NP* x). It is in the study of the symptomatic nature of forces where Deleuze finds Nietzsche's distinction between two modes of existence, the affirmative and the negative, which respectively are manifested in active and reactive forces. These modes of being, as has

been pointed out earlier, are evaluative modes, for they represent two different ways of seeing life; this ensues from the typological nature of evaluation. Later, it will be explained why "evaluation finds the principles of values in the will to power" (*PI* 74). Suffice it to say, for the moment, that active and reactive forces are informed by the typology or quality of evaluation. This being said, we could trace the origin of nihilism back to a type or a mode of being, which Nietzsche deems, as has been pointed out, as a negative way of looking at life. Thus, nihilism follows from a reactive way of looking at life. The negative mode of being is itself the very quasi-principle of movement of being reactive.

The important question which arises after positing the two evaluative forces, active and reactive, is: "where do they begin?" In dealing with this question, Nietzsche is careful enough not to put forward an answer which appeals to any form of transcendence; he attempts to provide an explanation of the origin of forces without having to posit an *Ursprung* or transcendent origin. Henceforth, he answers the question of origin from the point of view of "immanence" as opposed to "transcendence." This is precisely where Nietzsche breaks away from metaphysical methods of dealing with the question of origin. It is this very immanence of reality that allows Nietzsche to put forward an ontology of affirmation. Deleuze takes note of Nietzsche's point of departure: "What is the body? . . . Being composed of a plurality of irreducible forces the body is a multiple phenomenon, its unity is that of a multiple phenomenon, a 'unity of domination'" (*NP* 40). The internal dynamism of the body is, therefore, Nietzsche's point of departure; furthermore: "In a body the superior or dominant forces are known as *active* and the inferior or dominated forces are known as *reactive*" (*NP* 40).

From a Spinozistic viewpoint,[11] Deleuze attempts to show how Nietzsche puts to the fore a philosophy of immanence by seeing the body as the originary stratum of forces. By giving the body this status, Nietzsche is able to move beyond the metaphysical interpretation of forces. According to Deleuze, Nietzsche conceives of "Subtle relations of power and of evaluation between different 'selves' that conceal but also express other kinds of forces—forces of life, forces of thought . . ." (*PI* 59). Forces emanate from bodies which are assemblages of forces; the body is a unified multiplicity, an assemblage. By declaring the body as an assemblage of forces, the value given to a "transcendent subject" becomes nil. This is Nietzsche's way of criticizing and overcoming the Modern adherence to a "subject."

> The human body, in which the most distant and most recent past of all organic development again becomes living and corporeal, through which

> and over and beyond which a tremendous inaudible stream seems to flow: the body is a more astonishing idea than the old "soul" (*WP* III 659).

This implies that there is no soul or subject which acts as the substratum of the body. "There are nothing but quantities of force in mutual 'relations of tension'" (*NP* 40). These relations of tension refer to the interaction between active and reactive forces within a body. Deleuze further writes: "What defines a body is this relation between dominant and dominated forces. Every relationship of forces constitutes a body—whether it is chemical, biological, social or political" (*NP* 40).[12] Ultimately, with this reversal of the Platonic dualism what is emphasized is the dynamism inherent in the material relations in the body; the soul as consciousness is merely an epiphenomenal consequence of this dynamism. This dynamism is realized immanently and not transcendentally. When two forces enter into a relationship, they at once constitute a body. For Nietzsche, however, there is no default configuration of these forces; thus, the constituted body is always a product of chance.[13] This is the reason why the body is more astonishing than the soul, the latter is so exacting while the body as a unity of multiplicity of forces could still surprise us. Deleuze notes:

> The originality of Nietzsche's pluralism is found here. In his conception of the organism he does not limit himself to a plurality of constituent forces. What interests him is the diversity of active and reactive forces and the investigation of active forces themselves (*NP* footnote 2 204).

The body, therefore, is in itself defined by this struggle of active and reactive forces. "Active and reactive are precisely the original qualities which express the relation of force with force" (*NP* 40). This means that the immanent dynamism of forces lie in the differential element between active and reactive forces. It is in this difference where the tension of forces lies and where a body is constituted—the body is not a dualism but a tension of forces. Therefore, there is neither an "originary priority" nor a primordial succession given to any force: both active and reactive are immanently at hand.

After establishing that the body, as a constitution of active and reactive forces, is Nietzsche's point of reference, we have to ask: "how are these forces related?" Nietzsche associates this question of forces to "life" itself:

> "Life" would be defined as an enduring form of processes of the establishment of force, in which the different contenders grow unequally. To what extent resistance is present even in obedience; individual power is

> by no means surrendered. . . . "Obedience" and "commanding" are forms of struggle (*WP* III 642).

To repeat, it is in this difference where the tension of forces lies and where a body is constituted. Nietzsche distinguishes between the gestures of "command" and "obedience," understood as the basic difference between active and reactive—the master and the slave. Active forces are forces of command, while reactive forces are forces of obedience. If we recall the distinction between the master and the slave, the master is the one who utters "I am good, you are bad," while the slave merely reacts to the previous assertion and cries in despairing resentment, "Since you are evil, I am good." It has been shown above that the syllogism of the slave ensues from a paralogism, a careless way of argumentation. We observe that the master's gesture is not directed towards the slave, but to himself—"I am good" is a self-command. Meanwhile, the slave's gesture does not originate immanently, but depends on the master's assertion—"you are evil" is a gesture of obedience because it cannot stand on its own. This is why Nietzsche thinks that the slave's gesture is "an after-production, a side issue, a contrasting shade . . .." The goodness of the slave is not a self-command; it is one of obedience or, to put it another way, compliance. Succinctly put, the master's command is active (a vigorous assertion not directed to the slave), the "noble type of man experiences *itself* as determining values; it does not need approval . . ." (*BGE* IX 260), while the slave's obedience is reactive (an imprudent and resentful denial of the master). These are the two forces in dynamic struggle within each person, or "singularity," in the Deleuzian sense, the person is itself a constitution (assemblage) of these forces.

3) Power: Affirmative and Negative

The explication of the nature of forces above leads us further to a more elemental Nietzschean concept: the will to power. It is, according to Nietzsche, "the primitive form of affect, that all other affects are only developments of it" (*WP* III 688). This very crucial aspect of Nietzsche's work merits special attention for it has proven itself to be prone to misunderstanding; thus, resulting to faulty interpretations or dangerous misappropriations which has tainted Nietzsche's name: one could not over emphasize the way the National Socialists abused this concept.[14] Apart from extricating Nietzsche from grave misappropriations, we also have to pay heed to the value he accorded the conception of the will to power itself: "But *what is life*? Here we need a new, more definite formulation of the concept 'life.' My formula for it is: Life is will to power" (*WP* II 254).