# Nietzsche's Intramundane *Askesis* and Philosophy as a Style of Life

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Submitted as Candidate for PhD
Huston School of Film & Digital Media

October 2018

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**DECLARATION**

I certify that this thesis is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signature

Date

**ABSTRACT**

In its original Greek sense *askesis* means 'exercise.' As such *askesis* is practical; it names the very idea of practice as an activity, and *askesis* is aspirational; it indicates an aim for which the practice is undertaken. While the word has its etymological roots in the sportive realm of Olympic athletics, and finds its later, now common, meaning in the ascetic practices developed in early Christianity, *askesis* also has a place within the context of the philosophical tradition. More particularly, within the context of an ancient Greek inspired conception of philosophy as a way of life. Current scholarship done in this area predominantly defines philosophical *askesis* as therapeutic in aim, referring to inwardly orientated, contemplative or meditative exercises concerned with attaining, as Pierre Hadot has described it, "perfect peace of mind."[1]

This research project is an attempt to develop a conceptual definition and concrete demonstration of what may be termed 'Nietzsche's *askesis*' as situated within an understanding of philosophical practice as immanent to life. But in contrast to the above, I propose that therapeutics is but one aspect and not the overall aim of Nietzsche's *askesis*. Instead, I will hold that Nietzsche's *askesis* is essentially critical and even agonistic in aspiration. And further, that *askesis* as practice does not only suggest an inwardly orientated focus but demands an outward dimension. It is, I will argue, precisely by virtue of this outward, corporeal dimension that the agonistic potential of Nietzsche's *aksesis* comes to light – a potential that, in turn, is what gives Nietzsche's *askesis* contemporary relevance beyond the realm of meditative practices of therapeutics.

[1] Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 102.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Prof. Rod Stoneman and Prof. Felix Ó Murchadha, for their expertise and excellent guidance throughout this research project.

The project has been funded by a Digital Arts and Humanities Scholarship, allowing me to concentrate on the research in ways that would not otherwise have been possible. I wish to extend my thanks to the staff at the DAH programme and at the Huston School of Film and Digital Media, NUI Galway, for all their generous support.

I would also like to thank Dr. Tsarina Doyle at the Department of Philosophy, NUI Galway, for her kind encouragement, and my fellow PhD students, Nora Duggan and Levi Hanes, whose friendship and advice I could not have done without.

I am grateful to the Irish Institute of Hellenic Studies in Athens for providing me with study facilities while working on the film-based part of the project. For her excellent insights, I am grateful to Prof. Béatrice Han-Pile, who supervised the thesis in its final stage, during my time as a visiting research student at Essex University, School of Philosophy and Art History.

Finally, I would especially like to say thank you to Carol and Philip Dine, for looking after me during these last four years, to my parents Helle and Martin, my brothers, and most of all, to John.

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**INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER. Philosophy as a 'way,' 'art,' and 'style' of living.**

In its original Greek sense *askesis* means 'exercise.' As such *askesis* is practical; it names the very idea of practice as an activity, and *askesis* is aspirational; it indicates an aim for which the practice is undertaken. While the word has its etymological roots in the sportive realm of Olympic athletics, and finds its later, now common, meaning in the ascetic practices developed in early Christianity, *askesis* also has a place within the context of the philosophical tradition. More particularly, within the context of an ancient Greek inspired conception of philosophy as a way of life. Current scholarship done in this area predominantly defines philosophical *askesis* as therapeutic in aim, referring to inwardly orientated, contemplative or meditative exercises concerned with attaining, as Pierre Hadot has described it, "perfect peace of mind."[1]

This research project is an attempt to develop a conceptual definition and concrete demonstration of what may be termed 'Nietzsche's *askesis*' as situated within an understanding of philosophical practice as immanent to life. But in contrast to the above, I propose that therapeutics is but one aspect and not the overall aim of Nietzsche's *askesis*. Instead, I will hold that Nietzsche's *askesis* is essentially critical and even agonistic in aspiration. And further, that *askesis* as practice does not only suggest an inwardly orientated focus but demands an outward dimension. It is, I will argue, precisely by virtue of this outward, corporeal dimension that the agonistic potential of Nietzsche's *aksesis* comes to light – a potential that, in turn, is what gives Nietzsche's *askesis* contemporary relevance beyond the realm of meditative practices of therapeutics.

[1] Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 102.

**Philosophy as a way of life.**

Understanding philosophy as being first and foremost, or even essentially, a manner of living, means viewing philosophical practice as an experiential activity, rather than an (exclusively) discursive discipline. It is a perspective which puts emphasis on the performative aspects of *doing* philosophy and on the embodied dimensions and existential implications of *being* a philosopher.

An approach to philosophy understood in this manner is therefore both mundane and meta-philosophical in nature: it suggests a perspective that is concerned with the tangible realm of the lived in its concrete everyday sense and with a speculative questioning of what 'philosophy' as a category is or can be. This dual perspective in turn indicates both a point of intersection, of philosophy and life, and a probing of the conceptual and formal limits of philosophy as a genre, its mode of production and the nature of its materials. Belonging to a conception of philosophy as a lived practice is therefore also a more or less implicitly proposed aesthetics of philosophy: what is the environment in which philosophy may take place, in which formats and through what mediums does philosophy communicate and finally, who is 'the philosopher,' as the main character acting within this environment, and what does s/he do?

Nietzsche clearly voiced his ideas as to what a philosopher and philosophy is or should be and in particular what they are not. In sharp contrast to perspectives that would define and validate philosophical activity in terms of scholarly output and the philosopher in terms of his or her institutional vocation, Nietzsche in an early essay presents his self-professed 'untimely' image of philosophy as manifest in what he calls the "courageous visibility of the philosophical life":

> I attach importance to a philosopher only to the extent that he is capable of setting an example (…) The philosopher must supply this example in his visible life, and not merely in his books; that is, it

> must be presented in the way the philosophers of Greece taught, through facial expressions, demeanour, clothing, food, and custom more than through what they said, let alone what they wrote.[2]

Similarly, in a note from the same time:

> (…) as long as philosophers do not muster the courage to advocate a lifestyle [*Lebensordnung*] (…) and demonstrate it by their own example, they will come to nothing.[3]

This description of philosophy as a lived practice that involves the construction of a demonstrative *Lebensordnung* or lifestyle whereby the philosopher expresses himself outwardly by means of his visible life – his clothing, food, custom and so on – takes, as Nietzsche notes, its inspiration from the ancient Greek tradition.

As John Sellars states in his study *The Art of Living: The Stoics on the Nature and Function of Philosophy,* it is "a commonplace to proclaim that in antiquity philosophy was conceived as a way of life." To be a philosopher in antiquity, whether a Platonist, Stoic, Epicurean, Cynic or even, Sellars insists, an Aristotelian, meant to live in a specifically

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[2] SE, 3. The notion of 'example' can here be understood in an aesthetic sense as referring to a visible demonstration. The philosopher is to put himself forward as the living, embodied example of his philosophy – not necessarily as that of an morally exemplary figure. As the quoted passage from Nietzsche's early essay 'Schopenhauer as Educator' continues: "How completely this courageous visibility of the philosophical life is lacking in Germany! where the body is only just beginning to liberate itself long after the spirit seems to have been liberated; and yet it is only an illusion that the spirit can be free and independent if this achieved unlimitedness (…) is not *demonstrated* [my emphasis] anew from morn till night through every glance and every gesture. Kant clung to his university, submitted himself to its regulations (…) endured to live among colleagues and students: so it is natural that his *example* [my emphasis] has produced above all university professors and professorial philosophy."

[3] KGW III 4, 31 [10]. Quoted from *Unpublished Writings from the Period of Unfashionable Observations* (Autumn-Winter 1873-74), trans. Richard T. Gray (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999), 311.

philosophical manner.[4] This description follows on from Pierre Hadot's seminal work on ancient philosophy as a *manière de vivre*.[5] According to Hadot's (to some controversial) interpretation, Western philosophy in its early form did not primarily concern the production of theoretical discourse but involved what Hadot calls an existential choice and commitment. Philosophy, and becoming a philosopher, was a question of taking up a deliberate way of living in adherence with the philosophical school one belonged to.[6] In this sense, philosophy was not identified as a set of doctrinal propositions. Rather, what philosophy demanded, according to Hadot, was a way of life and what philosophical practice as such amounted to was "a concrete attitude and determinate lifestyle, which engages the whole of existence."[7] Or as Arnold Davidson puts it, philosophy was a lived exercise (*askesis*) "exhibited in every aspect of one's existence."[8] According to Hadot, seemingly in accord with Nietzsche's definition quoted above, the identifiable mark of a philosopher did not then essentially hinge on what one said or wrote: in antiquity the philosopher was "first of all a

[4] John Sellars, *The Art of Living: The Stoics on the Nature and Function of Philosophy* (London: Bristol Classical Print, 2009), 5.

[5] Although Hadot's engagement with the concept of philosophy as a way of life commences in the 1970s, it reaches a larger audience via later works of Foucault (from *The History of Sexuality vol II*: *The Use of Pleasure* (1984) and onwards) and not least, in the English speaking world, with the publication of the translated essay collection *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (1995) edited by Arnold I. Davidson.

[6] For a definition of philosophical 'schools' as scholastic organisation and a way of life see Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 91-146.

[7] Pierre Hadot, 'Spiritual Exercises,' in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2014), 83.

[8] Arnold I. Davidson, 'Introduction: Pierre Hadot and the Spiritual Phenomenon of Ancient Philosophy,' in Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 21. Hadot does emphasise how 'discourse' is not to be positioned as in contrast to, but as intimately linked to, a way of life; philosophical discourse originates in an existential option, it is determined by a choice of life. (Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 175 (172-233).

person having a certain style of life, which he willingly chose, even if he had never taught nor written."[9]

Such an image of philosophy seems completely out of sync with how the genre is predominantly conceived of, and practiced, today. As Alexander Nehamas notes, "philosophy [has become] a theoretical discipline" and as such has "few practical implications for everyday life".[10] Similarly Hadot: "In modern university philosophy, philosophy is obviously no longer a way of life or form of life – unless it be the form of life of a professor of philosophy. Nowadays philosophy's element and vital milieu is the state educational institution; this has always been, and may still be, a danger for its independence."[11]

But the contrast between philosophy understood as a way of life and what may be called 'university philosophy' does not strictly correspond to a dichotomy of ancient versus modern modes of philosophical practice. While Hadot suggests diverse figures such as Descartes, Schopenhauer, Thoreau, Marx and various 20th century Existentialist thinkers as heirs to the ancient tradition, in recent years, a growing interest in the concept of philosophy as a way of life, prompted by a renewed interest in Hadot, is extending the category further to contain examples such as Guyau, Deleuze and Barthes, to name a few.[12] But it is Nietzsche – who, as seen above, assigned

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[9] Hadot, 'Preface,' in *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques,* 11-12. Quoted in Davidson, 'Introduction,' in Hadot, *Philosophy as Way of Life*, 30.

[10] Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (California: University of California Press, 2000), 1.

[11] Hadot, 'Philosophy as a Way of Life,' 277. See also Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 146-171. Here Hadot traces the background for the 'birth of the professor,' the early development of the philosopher into a civil servant and the professionalisation of oral practice into textual exegesis and commentary.

[12] See for example *The Re-invention of Philosophy as a Way of Life* Discovery Project at Monash/Deacon/Warwick University (investigators Michael Ure, Matthew Sharpe and Keith Ansell-Pearson). The project focuses on post-Kantian thinkers that can be seen to reanimate or reinvent the ancient idea of philosophy as a way of life and its therapeutic aspirations

importance to a philosopher only on the condition that the latter, like his Greek predecessors, is capable of expressing himself through a particular *Lebensordnung*, and who also on several occasions vehemently dismissed what he called 'professorial philosophy' – who stands as the most obvious and most often recognised example of an heir to the ancient tradition of philosophy lived.[13] Just as Foucault, with respect to his later work, stands as the most immediate, contemporary one.[14]

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and is supposed to produce several extensive publications on the subject in the near future. As described on the project website https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/philosophy/news/?newsItem=094d43d542375aee01427042ec2e658b. Accessed July 15, 2018. From a literary angle see for example Lucy O'Meara, 'Barthes and the Lessons of Ancient Philosophy' (Paper presented at the 'Interdisciplinary Barthes' Conference, The British Academy, October 2015) and Gabriel Trop, *Poetry as a Way of Life: Aesthetics and Askesis in the German Eighteenth Century* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2015).

[13] Hadot, Nehamas and Sellars all treat Nietzsche as key figure in the works cited above. Nietzsche's critique of 'university philosophy' is, among other places, formulated in SE: "The only critique of a philosophy that is possible and that proves something, namely trying to see whether one can live in accordance with it, has never been taught at universities; all that has ever been taught is a critique of words by means of other words" (SE, 187). See also footnote 2 above.

[14] As the respective subtitles of Hadot's and Nehamas' books suggest – *Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* and *Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* – Foucault stands as the latest incarnation of this lineage. For an extensive treatment see Edward F. McGushin *Foucault's Askesis: An Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007). McGushin proposes that we read Foucault "as a sort of manual to the art of living philosophically and as a genealogy of a few of the different forms this art has taken" (xi). As Davidson describes, the idea of philosophy as a way of life, is "one of the most forceful and provocative directions of Foucault's later thought" (Davidson, 'Ethics as Ascetics: Foucault, the History of Ethics, and Ancient Thought', in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 123) and it is, in my view, clear that Foucault is more or less implicitly directed by Nietzsche (also) in this context. This is affirmed by McGushin who notes, but does not discuss further, that Foucault's engagement with an art of living philosophically should be understood as a way of becoming who one is and, as such, as a reference to Nietzsche (*Foucault's Askesis*, 277–278), and by Ansell-Pearson who notes that although it is clear that Foucault at this point, as before, turns to Nietzsche, while Nietzsche's influence on

Crucial to discussions of philosophy understood as a way of life is the concept of *askesis*, marking a shift away from the term's Christian connotations in favour of an emphasis on the word's original Greek sense as 'exercise' or 'training.' Originally related to athletics, *askesis* in the shape of bodily exercise was a training for competition with the aim of Olympic success. This success would potentially elevate the athlete's existence and his body to the status of an ideal – an ideal of (male) beauty and strength that was respected, admired and desired. Later, for the devout Christian, *askesis* was to become a strenuous exercise in severe self-control and self-denial whereby the ascetic seeks to elevate his existence by renouncing the earthly needs and desires that spring from the organic nature, the flesh, of his mortal body. While the form and function of the athletic and Christian versions of *askesis* can be seen as radically different, even inverted, both involve a working on and of the body, a disciplined attempt at self-transformation, informed by an upwardly orientated aim.

In between (or connecting) these two versions, or historical stages, of *askesis*, sits a third one. In late antiquity, philosophers, believing that man had the ability to train, to modify, improve and as such elevate himself beyond the realm of mere bodily strength and physical ability, philosophical schools appropriated the notion of *askesis* as a metaphor for the activity

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Foucault's earlier work is well treated "to date there has been little speculation on how the Foucault of the 1980s would read Nietzsche (…) what is surprising about the late work (…) is the lack of references to Nietzsche." (Ansell-Pearson, 'Questions of the Subject in Nietzsche and Foucault: A Reading of *Dawn*', in *Nietzsche and the Problem of Subjectivity*, eds. Bartholomew Ryan, Maria Joao Mayer Branco and Joano Constancio (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 413). See also for example Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, 'The Aesthetic and Ascetic dimension of an ethics of self-fashioning: Nietzsche and Foucault,' *Parrhesia*, no. 2 (2007), 44-65 and James Urpeth, '"Noble" Ascesis: Between Nietzsche and Foucault,' *New Nietzsche Studies*, no. 2:3/4 (Summer, 1998), 65-91. While this thesis will not explore this in any explicit manner, the suggested connection has informed and underlies my attempted construction of Nietzsche's *askesis*.

involved in their endeavour. Just as the athlete is able to form and enhance his body through regimented physical exercises, so the philosopher may perform a similar procedure of working on himself in a philosophical manner, an analogy made all the more resonant by the fact that the actual space where philosophy was taught in many cases was the same as where bodily exercises were performed, the gymnasium.

One of few surviving texts on the subject comes in the shape of a collection of notes taken by a student of the Roman Stoic Musonius Rufus, entitled *Peri Askeseos*, which besides emphasising the need for anyone wishing to practice philosophy to exercise, designates two kinds of training [*askesis*]; exercises appropriate for both the soul and body, and exercises proper to the soul alone.[15] Although many other texts allude to them, we have, as Hadot notes, no explicatory descriptions of what such philosophical exercises entailed, no detailed descriptions of their form or the techniques involved.[16] Nevertheless, Hadot and most current scholars that have followed the definition set up by Hadot, identify the exercises involved in the philosophical *bios* as more or less exclusively 'of the soul.' Although Hadot generally remarks that exercises of the body *and* soul combine to shape the true person as free, strong and independent, the aim of philosophical exercises as discussed by Hadot is, precisely in analogy to the bodily focus of gymnasia culture, to give "new strength and form" to the

[15] Hadot, 'Spiritual Exercises,' 83, footnote 18. As Horst Hutter also remarks, these practices "most likely" also included practices of the body, but that "we do not have sufficient evidence regarding the kinds of bodywork employed in the ancient schools." (Hutter, *Shaping the Future: Nietzsche's New Regime of the Soul and Its Ascetic Practices*. (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006),, 33.

[16] "We do know that some early Stoics wrote books devoted to the topic of *askesis*, notably Herillius and Dionysius, these however are lost to us and only referenced in Diogenes Laertius." We can however, Hadot suggests, "assume them subject of oral instruction" and "linked to the custom of spiritual guidance." Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 188-189.

soul.[17] The methods for such forming and transforming of the soul are what Hadot calls 'spiritual exercises.' Exercises that, as Davidson describes, are lived, practical and require effort, and are 'spiritual' because they involve "one's whole of life." As Davidson's succinct summary of Hadot's conception of philosophy as a way of life and its relation to *askesis* states, if ancient philosophy was a way of life it was so because it was a life that proceeded by such lived exercises, and if spiritual exercises were the core of ancient philosophy, "that is because philosophy was essentially a way of life."[18]

Although Hadot's definition, as described above, suggests that philosophy understood as a way of life indicates an exercise exhibited in 'every aspect' of one's existence, as his further discussions of the particular exercises

[17] Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy*?, 189. The various concepts of soul and theories regarding the soul's material and ontological relation to the body of the different philosophical schools in antiquity is beyond the scope of my discussed here. It will be sufficient in this context to state that Hadot's discussion of *askesis* as spiritual exercises indicates an activity that is essentially 'psychic' and only in an indirect manner (in the phenomenological sense of the subject as in pleasure and pain) physiological in orientation. In the introduction to *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, Hadot offers a more holistic notion of 'spiritual exercises' as practices which can be physical (dietary regimes), discursive (dialogue and meditation) or intuitive (contemplation) (*What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 6). Nevertheless, Hadot's own further discussions of *askesis* do not consider what he here calls 'physical practices.' In the following chapter of the same book, Hadot goes on to describe the choice of life that philosophy as a way of life is, as a turning toward "intellectual and spiritual life," carrying out a conversion involving "the whole soul." Accordingly, the philosophical community is defined by Hadot as an "intellectual and spiritual" community and the undertaking of *askesis* as concerning what he calls "inner" transformation (*What is Ancient Philosophy?*, Chapter 1). Thus, while I am not attributing to Hadot any simplistic body-soul dichotomy – clearly for Hadot the word 'spiritual' is intended to refer to a totality of a persons whole inner life – my point is merely that Hadot's conception of *askesis* is centred around meditative and contemplative exercises and does not give further consideration to what he himself above calls physical practices and their concretely corporeal, outward dimension.

[18] Davidson, 'Introduction,' 23.

belonging to the philosophical life show, *askesis* relates predominantly to one aspect of the philosopher's existence, namely the practitioner's 'inner' life and constitution. As Hadot describes them, spiritual exercises are personal, self-transformative exercises that are predominantly contemplative in effort but should not be understood simply as mental or intellectual exercises since they concern what Hadot calls an individual's "entire psychism."[19] What are concretely involved in such exercises are, following Hadot, practices centred on self-mastery, self-examination and soothing of the passions, taking on various forms, of practices of attention, reading, listening, examination of conscience and memorisation, or more specifically the recollection of past pleasures, and fraternal correction (as with the Epicureans) or training oneself in indifference to indifferent things or preparing oneself for future difficulties (as with the Stoics).[20]

As such, 'spiritual exercises,' meditative in nature and inwardly orientated in form, are essentially therapeutic in aim. As the Greek word *therapeia* suggests, they involve a care or a 'tending to' oneself whereby potentially disturbing and painful elements of existence – anxieties, disappointments, excessive desires – may be overcome or at least regulated and diminished so as not to gain a hold of, and overwhelm, one's being. All of the philosophical schools each had their therapeutic methods but what unite them is, according to Hadot, the linking of their respective therapeutics to the self-transformative practices of *askesis*; that is, spiritual

[19] Hadot, 'Spiritual Exercises,' 81-82: "It is (…) necessary to use the term [spiritual] because none of the other adjectives we use – 'psychic,' 'moral,' 'ethical,' 'intellectual,' 'of thought' (…) 'of the soul' – covers all the aspects of the reality we want to describe (…)"

[20] Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 189-90. Although Hadot states that all of the philosophical schools engaged in 'spiritual exercises,' he admits that the latter can be best observed in the context of Hellenistic and Roman schools of philosophy (Hadot, 'Spiritual Exercises', 87). For a systematic presentation of the Stoic exercises see for example Rodrigo Braicovich, 'On the notion of ethical exercises in Epictetus,' *Prometeus Filosofia*, vol 7 (2014): 126-38.

exercises.[21] We can then conclude that if philosophy understood as a way of life is a way of life because it proceeds by spiritual exercises, then the characterisation of the relation between philosophy and life is therapeutic, and the aspiration of philosophical *askesis* is "a state of perfect peace of mind. From this viewpoint philosophy appears as a remedy for human worries, anguish and misery." In this sense, "all these philosophies wanted to be therapeutic (…) this is the choice of philosophy, thanks to it we may obtain inner tranquillity and peace of mind."[22]

To define philosophical activity as essentially a 'spiritual exercise' has been criticised by, amongst others, Martha Nussbaum, who claims Hadot overemphasises 'exercises' (Foucault 'techniques') and ignores the role of rationality and commitment to reason fundamental to the Hellenistic schools. As Nussbaum remarks in *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*: "(…) all these habits and routines are useless [in terms of philosophical activity] if not rational."[23] This criticism is repeated, from another angle, in John M. Cooper's *Pursuits of Wisdom: Six Ways of Life in Ancient Philosophy from Socrates to Plotinus*, stating that what Cooper calls philosophy 'proper' should not be confused with other, "non-rational" practices. When considering the ancient view of philosophy as a way of life, Cooper proposes, "one must take with uttermost seriousness" that what is proposed is that "we live our lives from some set of argued through, rationally worked out, reasoned ideas." To be a philosopher in this ancient tradition is to be "fundamentally committed to the use of one's capacity for reasoning in living one's life: the philosophical life is essentially simply a life led on that basis."[24]

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[21] Hadot, 'Spiritual Exercises,' 83.
[22] Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 102.
[23] Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 373.
[24] John M. Cooper, *Pursuits of Wisdom: Six Ways of Life in Ancient Philosophy from Socrates to Plotinus* (New Jersey: Princeton University

Another question that may be put to all therapeutically oriented conceptions of philosophy, including Nussbaum's, concerns the instrumentalisation of philosophy. Should philosophy be *essentially* a means for, in Nussbaum's words, "grappling with human misery"? And even for finding possible solutions and consolations for such misery, offering itself as a "compassionate" form of philosophy "that exists for the sake of human beings, in order to address their deepest needs, confront their most urgent perplexities"?[25] Should philosophy, in other words, be asked to perform a function that would, perhaps, seem better suited to religious or, in a modern context, psychotherapeutic practices?[26]

Yet another related critique aimed more generally at the conception of philosophy as a self-transformative undertaking, and not least the attempt to revive it in a contemporary context, is that it really amounts to a self-involved, even narcissistic, project.[27] This may seem especially pertinent in a current context, where a conception of philosophy as a nurturing practice that aims, above all, towards individual attainment of wellbeing and contentment, is at risk of conflation with recent, late-capitalist notions of 'wellness,' 'mindfulness,' 'self-help' and so on. An explosion in the popularity of what may be called life-coaching philosophy publications over

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Press, 2013), 17-18. Hence Cooper states that Hadot's definition of the philosophical life as essentially an 'existential option' "is incorrect. Any specific philosophical views and orientations that might characterise an ancient philosopher (…) do not result from anything 'existential.' They result simply from coming to accept different ideals, all of them supported by philosophical reasoning in pursuit of the truth, that these philosophical schools might put forward about what, if one does use one's powers of reasoning fully and correctly, one must hold about values and actions." (Cooper, 19). Matthew Sharpe has argued convincingly against Cooper's interpretation. See footnote 30 below.

[25] Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, 3.

[26] See for example Bernard Williams, 'Do not Disturb,' Review of *The Therapy of Desire*, by Martha Nussbaum, *London Review of Books*, Vol 16 No. 20 (October 1994), 25-26.

[27] See for example Roland Boer, *In the Vale of Tears: On Marxism and Theology, V* (Illinois: Haymarket Book, 2013), 252-260.

recent years confirms that in popular culture this is already lucrative business.[28]

If, as suggested above by Hadot, modern university philosophy as practiced in educational institutions is in danger of losing its independence, the overall concern expressed in the above criticisms is that philosophy understood as a way of living may be in danger of losing its critical function and its specific identity as a rigorous inquiry into the world – and not least philosophy's capacity to rationally question and comprehensibly challenge existing knowledge and presumptions about it. If the therapeutic conception of philosophy as a lived practice indicates, as Horst Hutter has suggested, a focus upon philosophy conceived "not as a set of 'true' propositions about the world," but rather "a praxis of a working on oneself, focused on the question of how to live," it is understandable how such worries may rise.[29]

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[28] See for example Carl Sederström and Andre Spicer, *The Wellness Syndrome* (Cambridge: Polity Books, 2015) and William Davies, *The Happiness Industry: How the Government and Big Business Sold us Well-Being* (London: Verso Books, 2015).

[29] Hutter, *Shaping the Future: Nietzsche's New Regime of the Soul and Its Ascetic Practices*. (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006), 9. This opens up towards a more general contrast between definitions of philosophy as respectively an uncompromising search for truth and a search for truth regarding how to live best. These definitions are not easily reconciled and they may, as Nietzsche seems to suggest, at least in his earlier works, turn out to be mutually exclusive. The connection between philosophy and *askesis* and more specifically, as will be addressed in the two last chapters, between the philosophical will to truth and that of ascetic ideals, points towards the question of nihilism. This question implicates not only the philosopher but also, as Babette Babich shows, modern science, and not least scientific conceptions of philosophy ('Ex aliquo nihil: Nietzsche on Science and Modern Nihilism,' *ACPQ*, 84-2 (Spring 2010): 231-256). Although this thesis in a sense may be seen as an implicit engagement with this problem – of nihilism understood as the inherent danger posited by ascetic ideals, and hence a danger the philosopher as a truth seeker and therefore partaker in ascetic ideals will have to face – my concern is not with the well treated subject of Nietzsche's concept of nihilism but with the less well treated theme of the aesthetic dimension of Nietzsche's engagement with ascetics.

Several of the above mentioned objections may be, and have been, refuted. For example by Matthew Sharpe, who concretely addresses them and helpfully suggests how they rely on a misunderstood or reductive reading of the very idea of philosophy as a way of life and the role and function of spiritual exercises within it. All these criticisms are, however, as Sharpe points out "deeply important and very real barriers to the idea of philosophy as a way of life being taken seriously in contemporary philosophical discourse." [30]

It is beyond the scope of this inquiry to engage in a wider discussion of how the idea of philosophy as a way of life may be taken seriously within the context of contemporary, academic discourse, and equally beyond the limits of my subject to analyse the latter's possible relation to and relevance for public life. However, it is my hope that by focusing on the mundane dimension and agonistic potential, I am proposing an image of Nietzsche's *askesis* that may be defended against at least some of the criticisms mentioned. While I am not attempting to dismiss the therapeutic perspective, or challenge Hadot's and other's conception of philosophy as a way of life, my aim is to present a perspective that highlights how philosophy understood as a lived practice may be viewed not only in terms of an ability to overcome disturbances, but as an ability to disturb.

In order to bring this aspect to light, it is useful to propose a subtle distinction between philosophy as a 'way' of life as described so far, and philosophy as an 'art' and 'style' of living as will be described below.

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[30] See Matthew Sharpe, 'What place discourse, what role rigorous argumentation? Against the standard image of Hadot's conception of ancient philosophy as a way of life,' *Pli*, Special Volume 'Self-Cultivation: Ancient and Modern (2016), 32-54; 'Drafted into a Foreign War? On the Very Idea of Philosohy as a Way of Life,' *Ancient Philosophy and Analytic Philosophy*, edited by Rowett, Catherine and Alberto Vanzo. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); 'How It's Not the Chryssipius You Read. On Cooper, Hadot, Epictetus, and Stoicism as a Way of Life,' *Philosophy Today*, no. 58 (2014), 367-392.

**Philosophy as an art of living and life stylistics.**

John Sellars' study *The Art of Living: The Stoics on the Nature and Function of Philosophy* confirms Hadot's definition of *askesis* as spiritual exercises, as a means by which to clearly separate these from the bodily exercises of athletics. However, Sellars' study also brings another, aesthetic dimension of *askesis* into the foreground which differs from Hadot's perspective.[31]

According to Sellars, in the texts in which the phrase 'exercises of the soul,' *askeseis tis psuches,* appears, it does so in connection to discussions of habituation. As Sellars describes, *askesis* aims to "to habituate the soul so that one's consciously chosen philosophical beliefs shape one's unconscious habits and so determine one's *everyday behaviour* [my emphasis]." In order for theory not to amount to what Porphyry described as an "accumulation of arguments or a storehouse of learned knowledge," theoretical contemplation, as Sellars states, must be absorbed and internalised so as to

[31] That an explicit aesthetic oriented focus is, in some ways, rejected by Hadot's perspective is reflected in his criticism of Foucault's conception of an aesthetically orientated 'arts of existence' which Hadot fears is promoting a new, 20th century form of 'Dandyism.' According to Hadot, Foucault understands an art of existence as a kind of contraction, intensification and aestheticisation of the self while, for Hadot, the aim of spiritual exercises is an expansion or dilation of the self: "In Platonism, but in Epicureanism and Stoicism as well, freedom from anxiety is thus achieved by a movement in which one passes from individual and impassioned subjectivity to the objectivity of the universal perspective. It is a question, not of a construction of the self as a work of art, but, on the contrary, of a surpassing of the self, or, at the least, of an exercise by which the self situates itself in the totality and experiences itself as part of this totality" ('Reflections of the Idea of the "Cultivation of the Self",' in Hadot, *Philosophy as Way of Life*, 206-214). For an attempt to resolve the apparent differences between Hadot and Foucault see for example Davidson, 'Ethics as ascetics: Foucault, the history of ethics, and ancient thought,' which proposes that although Hadot's interpretation of the ancient texts may be the historically accurate one, importantly Foucault's linking of the aesthetic and ascetic must be seen as partially motivated by his interest in a "history of the present (…) what is ultimately at stake is not just differences of interpretation but basic philosophical choices." ('Ethics as ascetics: Foucault, the history of ethics, and ancient thought', footnote 23).

become "nature and life itself."[32] What is relevant in this context is not the correspondence between philosophical theories and personal conduct understood virtue ethically, but rather, viewed from a formal angle, how Sellars' perspective allows for a shift of focus from the purely meditative, inwardly orientated realm to a conception of *askesis* as a material process of incorporation the result of which is concretely *visible*. That is, *how* philosophy can be seen to take on bodily expression, to gain an outwardly visible dimension.

To frame the difference in focus between philosophy as a 'way of life' and philosophy as 'an art of living' (and finally also 'style of living') is, I believe, important. Although the terms are almost always used interchangeably, there is a fundamental difference between them which, as I will outline below, is relevant in order to approach a more precise understanding of *askesis*, in the sense I intend to use it, in relation to Nietzsche.[33]

Sellars does not propose that philosophy *is* a way of life, but rather that philosophy stands in a particular relation to life. According to Sellars, philosophy is an art, *techne*, concerned with one's way of living, *bios*. By inserting 'techne' into the equation, Sellars' perspective shows the particular way in which philosophy directs itself towards and, crucially, is expressed through the philosopher's way of life, and further, what concrete function *askesis* serves within this context. As shown, *askesis* according to Hadot names the spiritual exercises that the philosophical life consists of. *Askesis* in this sense simply *is* philosophy as a way of life, and vice versa. In contrast, *askesis* is, following Sellars, a required component of philosophy understood as an art concerned with one's way of life; it concerns a process

[32] Sellars, *The Art of Living*, 118-123.
[33] Sellars' study is, as the title suggests, focused on the Stoic tradition since, according to Sellars, while the art of living is an inherently Socratic theme it is with the Stoics that it becomes a fully realised practice. However, the inquiry's more general concern opens up towards a broader perspective that will be useful for my definition of Nietzsche's *askesis.*

of incorporation or habituation, whereby theoretical ideas or principles are transformed into embodied behaviour and outward action. It names the practical element that connects and makes possible the transformation of theoretical knowledge into know-how. As such *askesis* is an art, in the sense of *techne*, that produces outward and hence visible manifestations of the philosophical endeavour in the shape of acts, behaviour, gestures and overall conduct.[34]

The proposed consequence of understanding philosophy as an art of living is that philosophy is tied to *bios* not only in the sense of a 'mode of living' but also to *bios* understood as biography – understood here not a genre of literature but as what is recorded in biography, namely the course and manner of an individual's life. If ancient philosophy really was an art concerned with one's way of life, the result or product of which is expressed in one's manner of living, then ancient philosophy should perhaps, as Sellars speculates, be approached "as a series of biographies of philosophers or examples of ideal philosophical lives rather than as a collection of theoretical systems or philosophies." Although, Sellars admits "this may sound strange to a modern philosophical audience, it nevertheless explains the importance attached to anecdotal and biographical material in ancient philosophy."[35] In this sense, the focus of Sellars' study, namely to "explore the possibility of a conception of philosophy in which philosophical ideas are primarily expressed in behaviour" entails making biography not merely incidentally relevant but rather of "central importance" to philosophy.[36]

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[34] Sellars' perspective is clearly sympathetic to what Foucault in a slight modification of the original phrase *tekhne peri ton bion* calls *techne tou biou*, keeping the important etymological connection to *techne*. "While Hadot presents ancient philosophy as a 'spiritual exercise,' Foucault characterises it as a 'technique,' and I suggest that the latter is closer to the mark, if we understand 'technique' etymologically, deriving from tekhne." Sellars, *The Art of Living*, Preface to the second edition, ix-xii.
[35] Sellars, *The Art of Living*, 23-4.
[36] Sellars, *The Art of Living,* 5.

Relevantly, this now enables a view that would make philosophy not only an art 'concerned' with one's way of life, but a performative identification of the two. This identification, I suggest, helps indicate a third distinction to be made, namely that of 'style'. This may be illustrated by the example of Diogenes of Sinope, who Hadot had called a "champion of *askesis*" and whom Sellars positions as a potential key source for ancient treatments of philosophical exercises.[37]

The limited and largely unauthorised sources we have of Diogenes come in the shape of biographies, in the sense described above as anecdotal materials that describe an individual's conduct, the course and manner of a life. Just as the Epicureans were known for their idyllic garden life, Diogenes is known for having lived like a 'dog' in the streets, with no possessions and no respect for social norms or taboos. Cynics like Diogenes are, as Laertius describes, "without a city, without a home, without a country, miserable, wandering, living from day to day" and by whatever

[37] Sellars notably places Diogenes as a key source of ancient *askesis*. Diogenes, as Sellars shows, draws a distinction between bodily exercises and those of the soul but goes on to suggest, like Musonius Rufus after him, that physical exercises also benefit the soul (*The Art of Living,* 112-14). See also Foucault's comments on Diogenes as having advocated training the body and the soul "at the same time" since each of the two exercises according to Diogenes "is worthless without the other, good health and strength being no less useful than the rest, since what concerns the body concerns the soul as well." (Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 33). Hadot's reference to the Cynics as champions of *askesis* is related to the Cynic choice of life as being, with its total break with "profane life," analogous to the monastic calling of Christianity (Hadot, 'Spiritual Exercises,' 103-4). While the Cynic lifestyle shares obvious similarities to the later monastic communities, what Hadot does not address is firstly, how the Cynical life involved an undeniable anesthetisation that is structured as a demonstrative provocation to its surroundings, and secondly, that Cynic *askesis* cannot be contained within the definition Hadot gives of spiritual exercises. Hadot affirms Cynic philosophy as being "entirely exercise [*askesis*] and effort," an "almost athletic training" (*What is Ancient Philosophy*, 110), without however addressing how this would correspond to his own definition of 'spiritual exercises.'

means are immediately available[38] – as such in full coherence with the Cynic ideal of a life lived freely, independently, shamelessly, in uncompromising rejection of the conventions and customs of civilisation and therefore in full accordance with what the Cynic believes to be a state of nature. The Cynic choice of life exemplified by Diogenes' unusual, frugal and, to many of his contemporaries including other philosophers, disturbing, *style* of life does not however merely reflect the propositional content of Cynic philosophy but is itself the unmediated, bodily expression of it. What appears to us through the various descriptions of Diogenes' *bios* is an image of his philosophy live in action. That is, philosophy expressed, without remainder, in visible bodily gestures or acts. One such act is that presented by Laertius, who tells us of Diogenes' strange habit of hugging statues in the middle of winter, training himself – and *showing himself to others* as capable of – enduring, even being indifferent to, extreme discomfort. Another may be the anecdote of how Diogenes, during an argument concerning the non-existence of movement, proved or rather showed his point by simply standing up and walking away. Or, more radically, the act of lovemaking in which the Cynic couple Crates and Hipparchia engaged in public, and not least Diogenes' public masturbating and defecation. All of these 'acts' make up the bodily form and performative method by which Cynic philosophy finds it expression. They are undertaken in order to demonstrate, to demonstratively show before an audience what Cynic philosophy looks like in lived form – or rather, that what Cynic philosophy amounted to was not merely a mode of living, but a project of severe life stylisation. Just as it is impossible to distinguish Cynic philosophy as exemplified by Diogenes from these enactments, it is also impossible to distinguish it from a very deliberately stylised, aestheticised life. Diet, clothes, sleeping arrangements, purging of bodily fluids; all of this must be seen as a visible, public display of philosophy literally

[38] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers*. Quoted in Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 109.

exhibited in '*every aspect* of existence' – rather than that particular aspect of existence relating to the 'inner' life as described earlier in relation to Hadot. In this sense, it becomes possible to see Diogenes' entire *bios* as something like a non-stop, 'live' philosophical performance – or exercise. As Foucault has remarked, "(…) indeed the Cynic life as a whole could be seen as a sort of continuous exercise," that is: *askesis*.[39]

It is exactly because of the intimate assimilation, even identification, between philosophy and a style of life that Laertius had to consider whether Cynicism could even be defined as a philosophical school and later, why Hegel dismissed the kind of Cynicism promoted by Diogenes as not philosophy proper. There is, Hegel says, "nothing particular to say of the Cynics," since "Diogenes is only famed for his manner of life; with him (…) Cynicism came to signify more a mode of living than a philosophy."[40] But Hegel was, as Michel Onfray has claimed, "wrong" to write off the Cynics as not worthy of philosophical consideration. On the contrary, the Cynic is, according to Onfray, the emblematic figure of the authentic philosopher defined as the "'bad conscience' of their age." What the Cynic project consists of is an experiment (or we might choose to say experimental exercise) "with natural life as the condition of a possibility for an aesthetics of existence."[41]

With Cynicism discourse is not only brought to a minimum, but rather must be seen as *supplanted* by bodily and at times highly theatrical, gestures. Without the visible body, understood here concretely as flesh in

[39] Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 73.
[40] Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol I, 389, 479. Quoted in Sellars, *The Art of Living*, Introduction, footnote 4.
[41] Michel Onfray, *Appetites for Thought: Philosophers and Food*, trans. Donald Barry and Stephen Muecke (London: Reaktion Books, 2015),15. Onfray's description echoes Foucault's definition of *askesis* as "an arts of existence by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct but also seek to (…) make their life into an oeuvre that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria." Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 10-11.

the everyday sense, Diogenes' philosophy and mode of *askesis* would have no medium for expression. It is, in other words, by virtue of his body that Diogenes can exemplify how philosophy assumes bodily form in the shape of a life-stylisation, the function of which is essentially antagonistic, that of a corporeal mode of critique of his surroundings. While, as Hadot states, Cynicism may be seen to represent a 'limit case,' Cynicism as exemplified by Diogenes' *bios* stands as a central, and bold, example of philosophy expressed outwardly and further, I propose, as an example of Nietzsche's ideal, described earlier, of a lived mode of philosophy capable of *showing* rather than telling itself through the 'courageous visibility of the philosophical life,' that is through a style of life, a *Lebensordnung*.

While Nietzsche's own particular style of life certainly differed radically from Diogenes' demonstrative public theatrics, Nietzsche inherited the ideal of a performative mode of philosophy – one that must be "demonstrated anew from morn till night through every glance and every *gesture*"[42] – and importantly, of the philosopher as the 'bad conscience' and what Nietzsche calls "dangerous question marks" of their age.[43] For Nietzsche, as for Diogenes, philosophy's aim is not to calm and console disturbances but the opposite, to actively disturb, to be able to threaten – and those are precisely the grounds on which he rejects scholarly, so-called university philosophers:

> (…) It is of course clear why our academic thinkers are not dangerous (…) they cause no alarm, they remove nothing from its hinges; and of all their art and aims there could be said what Diogenes said when someone praised a philosopher in his presence: 'How can he be considered great, since he has been a philosopher for long and has never yet *disturbed* anybody (…)' This, indeed,

[42] SE, 3, 8.
[43] "So far all these extraordinary promoters of humanity who are called philosophers, and who rarely felt themselves to be friends of wisdom so much as disagreeable fools and dangerous question marks – have found their task (…) in being *the bad conscience of their time*." BGE, 212.

> ought to be the epitaph of university philosophy: 'it disturbed nobody.'[44]

The above description of philosophy understood as respectively a 'way,' an 'art,' and a 'style' of living forms the background within and against which I will attempt to draw up the form and function of Nietzsche's *askesis*. As indicated by the thesis title's use of 'style,' my approach will be inherently aligned to the aesthetic dimension and corporeal focus indicated by the 'disturbing' potential of the philosophical lifestyle as exemplified here by Diogenes. The overall orientation and methodology of the inquiry will, however, ultimately deviate from this context, as will be described below.

**Method and problems.**

As stated earlier, an inquiry into philosophy lived suggests a mundane and meta-philosophical perspective that positions it at the margins of philosophy 'proper.' In this sense, the focus of this research project is not primarily concerned with a systematic analysis of the propositional content of Nietzsche's philosophy, but rather with an exploration of the material form it may take, following Nietzsche's conception of philosophy as immanent to life. In other words, what are the consequences of Nietzsche's meta-philosophical definition of philosophy as lived and what does it, concretely, amount to in practice?

I will argue that the consequence of Nietzsche's suggested ideal of philosophy as *Lebensordnung* is precisely what Nietzsche's *askesis* concerns as practice and as aspiration. The challenge will be to show how my proposed construction of Nietzsche's intramundane *askesis* may,

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[44] SE, 8. The idea of the philosopher as a disturber links back to the ancient notion of the philosopher as *atopos*. As Socrates states: "I am utterly disturbing [*atopos*] and I create only perplexity [*aporia*]" (*Theaetetus*). Quoted in Steven V. Hicks and Alan Rosenberg, 'Philosophy as *Atopos*: Disruptive Wisdom as a Way of Life,' in *Mythos and Logos: How to Regain the Love of Wisdom*, eds. Albert A. Anderson, Steven V. Hicks and Lech Witkowski (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 1-8.

however, still be tied to the recognisable philosophical domain and hold significant philosophical relevance. The overall proposition of this thesis will be that Nietzsche's *askesis* is philosophically relevant by virtue of its critical, even agonistic potential – a potential that in turn is activated precisely by the *askesis*' intra-mundane orientation.

As such, my approach to and configuration of Nietzsche's *askesis* differs from the perspective offered in existing scholarship on philosophy as a way of life, as outlined above, in two ways: 1. In opposition to perspectives that treat *askesis* within a therapeutic context of inward-oriented, meditative exercises, I argue that Nietzsche's *askesis* demands an outward, bodily dimension. 2. It is through an emphasis on this visible dimension that the critical, rather than exclusively therapeutic, potential of Nietzsche's *askesis* comes to light. Importantly, this should not be taken as rejection of the therapeutic perspective, nor a denial of the curative quality of Nietzsche's commitment to philosophy lived. I am suggesting that therapeutics may be viewed as a dimension, or necessary component even, of Nietzsche's *askesis*, but not as the ultimate aim of it.

Finally, although the very idea of *askesis* and of philosophy as immanent to life necessarily springs from and must be viewed in relation to the ancient tradition, my perspective necessitates an approach that is orientated towards the present. If, as proposed, Nietzsche's *askesis* is to be understood as essentially agonistic in its aims, Nietzsche's *askesis* must be considered locally: as construed within, and as a response to, a certain historical and cultural situation that was Nietzsche's, and as such is radically different to those of Greco-Roman philosophers. Nietzsche's *askesis*, I hold, cannot therefore be confined – in a straightforward manner – to a definition based on an attempted revival of ancient philosophical practices which themselves were invented and developed as a response to and problematisation of a certain, culturo-historical context. To suggest these practices are generally applicable in a contemporary context is to risk stripping them of their critical potential. What may have risen in one

situation as practices of resistance can, as McGushin formulates it, "freeze into confinement" when they are made to assume an ahistorical, universal nature and thus become "detached from their agonistic source."[45] While Hadot may be right in suggesting that exercises developed in the ancient schools, and particularly those of Epicureanism and Stoicism, "can nourish the spiritual life of men and women of our times," the aim of this thesis is to propose how the agonistic source and disturbing potential – rather than promise of spiritual nurturing – of *askesis* may be retained.[46]

This means that the conceptual framework may be widened. The discussion and construction of Nietzsche's *askesis* undertaken in the three following thesis chapters will be considered in relation to all three existing 'versions,' or historical stages, of *askesis*: Athletic, Philosophical and Christian. As shown in the chapter overview below, this will be done in regards to sections taken from, respectively, three of Nietzsche's texts: Nietzsche's *askesis*' curative focus will be explored in relation to *The Wanderer and his Shadow* and *Dawn*, Nietzsche's *askesis*' athletic-inspired attack on asceticism in relation to *The Genealogy of Morals* and finally, what I propose is the culmination and coming together of these two perspectives in Nietzsche's pseudo-autobiographical *Ecce Homo.*

While the idea of philosophy as a lived rather than academic discipline is present and promoted in earlier works, it is, I suggest, not until later that the consequences, the concrete implications of this idea really become a present and personally poignant issue for Nietzsche, and as such is developed into an actual, experiential practice. Namely after his resignation from his post at Basel and from academic life in general. This radical change coincides with Nietzsche's taking up of a nomadic life style and a turning his attention to his own psycho-somatic constitution, and the material conditions that affect it: what Nietzsche calls 'the most

[45] McGushin, *Foucault's Askesis,* xxv.
[46] Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 280.

commonplace matters,' the 'smallest' and 'closest' things of everyday life in their material sense. This theme, which I take to form the foundation for Nietzsche's intramundane *askesis*, commences, I propose, with *The Wanderer*, continues in the *Genealogy* and, finally, as I will show, culminates with *Ecce Homo*. These works in this sense act as markers, or developmental stages, of what for Nietzsche the philosophical style of life, in the shape of a *Lebensordnung* really consists of; what form it takes and what function it may ultimately serve. As such, they relevantly frame an inquiry into Nietzsche's *askesis* such as I understand it. [47]

As already noted, there exists a general consensus that Nietzsche belongs to the tradition of philosophy as a manner of living and is a key figure in many current discussions of the modern reactivation of this ancient tradition. While Foucault, curiously, never refers to Nietzsche in his later work on *askesis*, Hadot and Sellars name Nietzsche as a prime example of philosophy lived in their earlier mentioned texts.[48] Similarly, James Miller's *Examined Lives: From Socrates to Nietzsche* and Alexander Nehamas' *The*

[47] Nietzsche's idea of philosophy as a lived practice points back to his earliest studies of the 'tragic age' of the Greeks. It is, as Hutter remarks, Nietzsche's engagement with pre-Socratic thinkers that gives him insight into "how the vocation of the philosopher is lived in an exemplary fashion" (Hutter, *Composing the Soul*, 12). My choice to exclude any treatment of *The Birth of Tragedy* and the unfinished *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, may therefore seem problematic. However, as my focus is specifically upon the concept of *askesis*, I hope this omission may be justified. My aim is not to argue why and how Nietzsche can be seen to belong to a tradition of philosophy understood as a lived practice, located in either Pre- or Post-Socratic traditions, but more specifically to address the practical consequences and everyday implications of Nietzsche's proposed commitment to such a practice. The subject of my inquiry concerns what Nietzsche's *askesis* may concretely entail, assuming that philosophy, for Nietzsche, *is* a lived praxis concerned with the mundane dimension and material factors of everyday life.

[48] See footnote 14 above.

*Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* place Nietzsche firmly within, or rather as a modern heir to, the ancient tradition.[49]

Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, through a parallel reading of Nietzsche and Foucault, address the etho-aesthetic dimension of Nietzsche's idea of life as a work of art. However, they refrain from attempting any suggestions as to what this amounts to in practice, in terms of exercise, or *askesis*. As Rosenberg and Hicks rightly note, in this area Nietzsche himself is "short on specifics." They briefly remark that Nietzsche "somewhat obliquely advocates 're-naturalising' the ascetic ideal (meaning, presumably, applying its disciplinary techniques and practices to our everyday lives)" – but do not go into any further discussion of this.[50] James Urpeth's '"Noble" Ascesis: Between Nietzsche and Foucault' similarly addresses the theme of *askesis* in theory rather than praxis, stating that "to go further and sketch the 'content' of a practice of 'noble' *askesis* and what it might involve in the contemporary world (for obviously Nietzsche's emphasis on the historicality of human existence (…) renders any notion of a 'return' to the Greeks meaningless) is beyond the scope of this paper."[51]

The question of 'content,' the drawing up of concrete practices and disciplinary techniques, is taken up by for example Michael Ure and Keith Ansell-Pearson, who, inspired by Hadot's therapeutic perspective, suggest

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[49] Miller, *Examined Lives: From Socrates to Nietzsche* (New York: Macmillan, 2011); Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). Nehamas' influential *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985) transports the idea of an art of living into the realm of literature and textuality, and, as such, outside of the material realm suggested by the concept of *askesis*.

[50] Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, 'The Aesthetic and Ascetic Dimension of an Ethics of Self-fashioning: Nietzsche and Foucault,' *Parrhesia*, no. 2 (2007), 44-65.

[51] Urpeth does suggests that "such a task would require an 'economic' interpretation of such enigmatic texts as 'What is Noble?' (…) and the notes collected as 'Discipline and Breeding'." James Urpeth, '"Noble" Ascesis: Between Nietzsche and Foucault.' *New Nietzsche Studies*, no. 2, 3/4 (1998), footnote 50.

specific 'spiritual exercises' taken from the works of Nietzsche's 'middle period.'[52] Similarly, but much more extensively, Horst Hutter's study *Shaping the Future: Nietzsche's New Regime of the Soul and Its Ascetic Practices* is concerned with locating and defining exercises relevant for an understanding of Nietzsche's *askesis* as a concrete, practical undertaking. Unlike Ansell-Pearson and Ure, Hutter's presentation is not limited to works of a certain period, or to a comparative reading of Nietzsche's ascetic procedures with existing exercises of the Hellenistic schools. Furthermore, Hutter's treatment pays significant attention to the corporeal dimension, suggesting various forms of 'body work' as intertwined with, and as routes to, a project of soul-shaping. Or, as the book title suggests, as techniques for composing 'new regimes of the soul.' As Hutter states, the focus upon *askesis* understood as concrete techniques for self-shaping is his book's "specific contribution" to an understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy as a way of life. As such, Hutter contrasts his own treatment to others that address Nietzsche's ascetic performativity as a quest for autonomy and wisdom, but fail to offer any concrete suggestions as to what techniques may be involved in such a project – "except for that of *reading* Nietzsche."[53]

As the question of the 'content' of Nietzsche's *askesis* is a main concern for my inquiry, Hutter's proposal of a non-exhaustive list of 'exercises' is particularly relevant, not least due to its attention to the bodily regimen involved. However, the question of *askesis* indicates, as noted, a practice and an aim for which the practice is undertaken. In regards to the

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[52] Keith Ansell-Pearson, 'True to the Earth: Nietzsche's Epicurean Care of Self and World' and Michael Ure, 'Nietzsche's View from Above.' Both in *Nietzsche's Therapeutic Teaching. For Individuals and Culture*, edited by Horst Hutter and Eli Friedland.

[53] This is affirmed by Milchman and Rosenberg, who notes that Hutter (together with Keith Ansell-Pearson) is one of the few to pay attention to Nietzsche's positive engagement with ascetic procedures. Milchman and Rosenberg, review of *Shaping the Future: Nietzche's New Regime of the Soul and its Ascetic Practices*, by Horst Hutter, *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 33 (2007), 83-86.

latter my perspective differs from Hutter's. Whereas Hutter sees the ultimate and unambiguous aim of Nietzsche's *askesis* as related to his wish to become a cultural icon and future political legislator "like Plato" and "like Jesus," I suggest that Nietzsche's role as future idol is more ambivalently positioned within a strategic mode of self-staging that suggests an implicit critique of idols and of the very impetus to idolise; a critique that is ultimately achieved through (self-)parodic means. Whereas Hutter holds that Nietzsche's future oriented philosophy is in fact a political ideology which, ultimately, aims at the improvement of mankind (in a future yet to come), my approach will make a point of taking seriously Nietzsche's claim in *Ecce Homo* that "the last thing I should promise would be to 'improve' mankind."[54] As such, the overall therapeutic aspiration – on the grand scale of an improvement of future humanity – of Hutter's presentation of Nietzsche's *askesis* sits in contrast to mine**.**

I have already noted some of the objections that can and have been made to philosophy understood as a mode of living, and suggested how Nietzsche's version such as I construe it may be exempt from at least some of them. One final, self-reflective criticism may however be put to all the texts quoted so far in this introduction, including of course the introduction itself, namely that they all attempt to theoretically analyse, systematise and discursively present a form of philosophy that, according to the authors' definitions, is or should be the very opposite: a lived practice that by definition is not the product of theoretical propositions presented in the shape of systematic discourse. This paradox is naturally inherent in all attempts at scholarly

[54] Nietzsche, EH, Preface, 2. Jessica Berry points out in her review, that Hutter's characterisation of Nietzsche's therapeutics at times "verge dangerously on the contemporary jargon of pop-psychology," and further, that Hutter's rendering of Nietzsche as "one of the most 'altruistic' philosophical teachers" [Hutter, 113] is a "contentious claim." Berry, review of *Shaping the Future: Nietzsche's New Regime of the Soul and its Ascetic Practices*, by Horst Hutter, *Notre Dame Philosophical Review*, August 2, 2006.

writing *about* the subject of philosophical practice being a mode of living.[55] While the written part of this research project will have to accept this

[55] One possible exception may be Foucault. As McGushin suggests, Foucault's 'work' in the last phase of his life "was *himself* in the act of becoming a philosopher"; the purpose of Foucault's *askesis* was "to transform himself, to let himself be altered by the activity of thinking, and to offer this experience of self-transformation to those who would come into contact with his work." (*Foucault's Askesis*, xii). It may be added that the self-altering process of *askesis* for Foucault was not exclusively located, as McGushin states, 'in the activity of thinking,' but also in the bodily activity of erotic practices, as Foucault describes it in some of his later more personal interviews. "Is it possible to create a homosexual mode of life? This notion of mode of life seems important to me (…) To be 'gay,' I think, is not to identify with the psychological traits and the visible marks of the homosexual, but to try to define and develop a way of life." It is, as Foucault goes on to state, up to us "to advance into a homosexual *askesis* that would make us work on ourselves and invent, I do not say discover, a manner of being that is still improbable." Foucault, 'Friendship as a Way of Life,' in *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews 1961-1984*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), 310. This idea is rarely discussed within the context of philosophy as a way of life, as the following remark by Davidson reveals: "As strange as it might sound, Foucault pointed to homosexuality as one resource for answering the question of how to practice spiritual exercises in the 20th century. One link between ancient practices of self-mastery and contemporary homosexuality is that both require an ethics or ascetics of the self tied to a particular, and particularly threatening, way of life. I know it would have given Foucault genuine pleasure to think that the threat the everyday life posed by ancient philosophy has a contemporary analogue in the fears and disturbances that derive from the self-formation and style of life of being gay." (Davidson, 'Ethics as Ascetics,' 126). For further discussion of the link between *askesis* and homosexuality see for example David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* from which the term 'stylising freedom' may be taken as an implicit subtitle: "It would be a mistake and an misreading to treat Foucault's ethical aestheticism reductively or underestimate the radical possibilities contained in ethical stylistics. Foucault seizes the most abjected and often devalued feature of gay male self-fashioning, *style* – repeatedly and phobically invoked against him – and finds in it a rigorous, austere and transformative technology of the self which produces concrete possibilities for the development of personal autonomy. What sets Foucault's stylistics of the self apart from reductively construed notion of "decadent style" [What Hadot's earlier mentioned criticism refers to as 'Dandyism'] is the thoroughly *impersonal* conception of the self on which the model of

contradiction as a premise of the academic format, the practice-based element of the project will be able to performatively address this tension within an expanded, para-academic and extra-textual field.

**Practice, form and content.**

As described, the present inquiry simultaneously involves a mundane and a meta-philosophical perspective. This overall aesthetic focus lends itself particularly well to an audio-visual mode of exploration and presentation. In fact, I propose that, to a certain extent, the latter is crucial: if the subject of philosophy understood as a non-discursive practice is to be critically addressed, then an exclusively discursive treatment is insufficient. Proposing Nietzsche's *askesis* as concerned with a mode of philosophy capable of showing rather than telling itself necessarily opens up towards a visible dimension. While this dimension can only be treated referentially within the limits of the academic format of the written thesis, it may be explored directly through the aesthetic and dramatic means that the practice-based component offers.

The practice-based component consists of a video-essay entitled '*Nietzsche Discourses*.'[56] It is composed of three chapters – 'Visions of Greece,' 'Turin-Sils,' 'Death in Naumburg' – corresponding loosely to and produced in continuous dialogue with the three chapters of the written thesis. The respectively 'visual' and 'written' components should by no means be taken in any referential or epistemologically hierarchical relation: the video work does not act as illustration of the written text, just as the latter does not serve any explanatory or interpretative function in relation to the video. Rather, it is the conceptual interaction between the two that

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stylistics rest." Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 73-4.

[56] The video is approx. 45 min long and submitted on a memory stick accompanying the written thesis. It can also be accessed online: https://vimeo.com/286938210. Please use password: 'Nietzsche Discourses.'

allows for a position which the written thesis on its own would necessarily have to dispense with. The practice-based element introduces the possibility for the project to expand and reflect upon the boundaries of its own form from within its own structure – a mode of self-reflection that the inquiry could not otherwise contain without losing its definition as academic format. As such the overall form of this research project, the fact that it allows for both a written and audio-visual element, itself addresses the underlying issue at the core of its inquiry in a performative manner. Namely, the relation between the discursive and the immersive – and the boundaries between and possible intersection of the two.

Within the context of this research project, the video-essay is then what allows for a viewing and transgression of boundaries – the boundaries of the academic format itself and the boundaries between philosophical and artistic disciplines and modes of production. But the video-essay, as a relatively recent genre, also presents a blurring of categories within the moving image tradition itself.

The video essay like its written counter-part, indicates an experiment, an attempt to try something out in a tentative manner. Firstly, the video essay – or essay film – may be defined, following Laura Rascaroli, as essentially *experimental*.[57] Just as the 'essay' within a literary tradition can be academic, auto-biographic or poetic in style and can contain elements both of fact, fiction and personal reflection, the video essay may merge intimate, personal narrative with documentarist and fictional elements. We may say that the essay film is inherently a transgressive, hybrid format, operating between and at the margins of existing established genres. Or

[57] Not to be confused with the audio-visual essay, a form that is presently gaining ground within film studies as a tool for exploring visual modes of film analysis. See Laura Rascaroli, 'The essay film: Problems, Definitions, Textual Commitments,' *Framework* 49, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 24–47. For a more in-depth discussions see Rascaroli, *How the Essay Film Thinks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

even that the video essay defined as essentially experimental in nature is – paradoxically perhaps – what resists 'genre.'

Secondly, the video essay is necessarily self-reflective. It contains a reflection upon itself as a process and may include openly or ambiguously expressed consideration, even doubts, about its own process of production and achieved means of presentation. In this sense, when a video essay treats a subject it also at the same time treats itself – it asks questions about its own form and its limitations. Overall, the definition of the essay film or video essay as inherently experimental and self-reflective is then necessarily indeterminate: it remains an open form that can be continually developed and invented.

As noted, my approach to the theme of *askesis* is anchored in what Nietzsche calls the smallest and most commonplace matters, the material factors of everyday life. If philosophy, for Nietzsche, is concerned with a styling of life in this mundane manner, it is because philosophy is ultimately the product of the milieu, the place, time and climate, out of which it grows. Philosophy is, in other words, not only dependent upon a certain material environment but is the result of it – of the climates one seeks out, the places one frequents and the company one keeps. While philosophy understood as a lived practice, as seen, concerns how philosophy shapes and is expressed by a certain style of life, so philosophy must also be understood as itself shaped by, as the result of, the philosopher's chosen style of living.[58] As a consequence my inquiry has involved an engagement with the precise locations, climates and landscapes of the places out of which Nietzsche's philosophy must have grown. As such, the production of the video works

[58] As Deleuze describes it, for Nietzsche, "evaluations (…) are ways of being, modes of existence of those who evaluate, serving as principles for the values on the basis of which they judge. This is why we always have the beliefs, feelings and thoughts that we deserve given our way of being or our style of life" (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 1.

has in turn produced a psycho-geographic methodology which has served, in a concrete way, as an experiential framework and material setting for the analysis and understanding of Nietzsche's texts as they are presented in the written thesis. Or more precisely, my journeying to and experience of the landscapes in which Nietzsche's writings were produced has been the immersive environment out of which my own approach to Nietzsche's works has been formed.

What the video-essay presents is a tracing of Nietzsche – of the material and aesthetic conditions that formed parts of Nietzsche's life, and as such provide the context for his conception of philosophy as a question of *Lebensordnung*. But the video-essay is also a record of the journey that was involved in the production of the video. It records my journey to key locations of Nietzsche's philosophical life and retraces or enacts Nietzsche's movements in the shape of what may be called a philosophical tourist trail. The course begins in Athens, marking the point of departure for Nietzsche's career as a classics scholar and, as shown, the conception of philosophy as a manner of living; then from Athens to Turin, where Nietzsche spent some of his most productive years and finally suffered a collapse from which he was never to recover; then from Turin to what Nietzsche considered his 'spiritual home', the Swiss mountain village of Sils Maria; finally to Naumburg, where Nietzsche spent his childhood, before returning again to Greece.[59]

Overall, the video is composed of a montage of found and original footage, interwoven and overlapping so as to blur any clear distinction between the two. While the original footage has been recorded at the

[59] The choice of locations has been informed in part by descriptions found in Nietzsche's letters as well as in Rüdiger Safranski, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*, trans. Shelley Frisch (London/New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), Lesley Chamberlain, *Nietzsche in Turin: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Picador, 1996) and Paolo D'Iorio *Nietzsche's Journey to Sorrento: Genesis of the Philosophy of the Free Spirit*, trans. Sylvia Mae Gorelick (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016).

various locations described above, the found imagery and audio is taken from various sources: TV documentaries, interviews, tourism commercials, recorded conference papers and university lectures. A complete listing of the appropriated imagery and audio is featured in the final credits of the video.

The relationship between so-called 'artistic' modes of inquiry and philosophy has been addressed within the growing, transdisciplinary field of performance philosophy. A recent research project initiated by the 'Performance Philosophy Network,' entitled 'Artist-Philosophers. Philosophy AS Arts-based research' – centred around a questioning of the traditional image of philosophy and what happens to it when art-based practices are implemented into the philosophical discipline, and "philosophers start to stage philosophy" – may here serve as an example. In particular, one output of the project in the shape of a research festival, entitled 'Artist-Philosophers. Nietzsche et cetera' (2015).[60]

That an exploration into the cross-disciplinary relation between, or even immanent conception of, art and philosophy should take Nietzsche as its starting point is by no means coincidental. Not only did Nietzsche famously invent the conceptual persona of what he calls the *Künstler-Philosoph*, his vision of a philosophy of the future which would be inherently creative, inventive and formative in nature demonstrates an artistic ideal for philosophy as a practice. The philosopher, as Nietzsche outlines in *The Gay Science*, must "learn from artists" but must at the same time be "wiser" than them: the philosopher must learn the artistic form-giving skills, techniques for shaping and composing, while the philosopher's superior wisdom, for Nietzsche, consists of being able to *apply* these skills to a different material. Whereas the admirable abilities of the artist "usually cease where art ceases

[60] As described in *Performance Philosophy Journal*, vol 3, no 3 (2017) eds. Arno Böhler, Eva Maria Aigner and Elisabeth Schäfer. https://www.performancephilosophy.org/journal/article/view/191/280. Accessed July 15, 2018.

and life begins," the philosopher's artistry concerns the raw material of life itself "and first of all in the smallest and most commonplace matters." This is why, according to Nietzsche, for the superior philosopher the product is his life.[61]

As noted in the description of the research festival, Nietzsche's staging of the philosopher and what he does marks a disruption of the traditional image of philosophy, suggesting a new one. It is worth noting that the performance philosophy approach to Nietzsche, and to philosophy understood as an art concerned with the material conditions of life, does not consider what is called Nietzsche's 'new' image of philosophy in connection to the ancient tradition of philosophy as an art of living as discussed above, but theoretically frames its inquiry predominantly in reference to late 20th century new Nietzscheans of the continental tradition, such as Deleuze and Derrida.

This disjunction is interesting because it shows how, in spite of willingness to merge the disciplines of the arts and philosophy, the two fields also continue their separate trajectories. While current philosophical scholarship positions the connection between 'art,' 'philosophy' and 'life,' suggested by Nietzsche, within past traditions of ancient practices, current discourses on artistic production and its relation to the discipline of philosophy, as seen above, see Nietzsche not only as a key inspirational figure for contemporary transdisciplinarity but as inaugurator or inventor of a what is perceived as a new, immanent conception of philosophy and the arts, a model of the philosopher-artist from which current explorations into the form and potential of arts-led research may take their inspiration.

This double view on the role of Nietzsche within the philosophy-art-life connection, as heir to an ancient tradition and as inaugurator of a new one, is I believe fruitful. It shows how Nietzsche, who Deleuze described as the initiator not of the birth of a culture, like Freud and Marx, but of a "counter-

[61] GS, IV, 299.

culture,"[62] continues to be used as a tool and model for practical experimentation concerned with the margins and potential transgressions of boundaries of disciplines and formats as they are practiced today – despite the fact that Nietzsche himself only ever produced work in the written form.

It is the hope that this research project can bring out both these roles by offering a discursive analysis of Nietzsche in relation to current scholarship and a considered artistic staging of Nietzsche that is sympathetic to and expressive of the role that Nietzsche's philosophy has played, and continues to play, within contemporary culture and particularly in the arts – namely, as the embodiment of what must be seen as an inherently romantic ideal: the philosopher as artist and as emblem of a "counter-culture." As will be discussed in thesis chapter three, this role of Nietzsche as ideal, although he himself predicted it, was something he himself was deeply critical of and several times explicitly rejects. It is the intention and challenge of this research project to communicate this ambivalence, both in the thesis' analysis and in the video-essay's staging of Nietzsche's life in the shape of what, as already mentioned, may be understood as a tourist trail or even, a pilgrimage. Some further reflections on this issue of pilgrimage and its relation to the tradition of philosophy are presented in the conclusion of this thesis.

**Chapters.**

The first chapter discusses Nietzsche's *askesis* as a curative practice in the context of *The Wanderer and his Shadow* and *Dawn.* I suggest that current discussions of Nietzsche's therapeutics in these works rely on Hadot's notion of *askesis* as meditative 'spiritual exercises' and in this way ignore, or at least downgrade, the concrete bodily aspect which I take as essential to Nietzsche's *askesis*. I position Nietzsche's interest in and concern for his

[62] Deleuze, 'Active and Reactive,' in *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, ed. David B Allison (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 80-106.

own physiology in the context of what was, in Nietzsche's time, a popular preoccupation with health and the metabolic fusion of psychic and physical energies. I hope to show that Nietzsche's particular focus on health and his frequent use of medical language is not *only*, as suggested by the therapeutic perspective offered in current scholarship, reflective of Nietzsche's commitment to ancient therapeutics. Next, I propose that the self-curative nature of Nietzsche's *askesis* 1. must be viewed within the context of Nietzsche's concept of 'great health,' suggesting a non-binary conception of sickness and health and an holistic image of the body of which 'spirit' is a dimension, and 2. must be approached as a medical narrative in which Nietzsche's own personal health struggles are deeply entangled with his attempted critique and undermining of popular morality as a failed therapy (commencing in *Dawn* and more aggressively developed in the *Genealogy* – as discussed in chapter two). Nietzsche's criticism of the failed therapeutics of popular morality finds its inspiration in the antidote of what Nietzsche calls an 'other,' Socratic and individually construed version of morality. However, I argue that this Socratic inspiration does not amount to an attempted reactivation of the practices of antiquity, but rather to the very idea of *askesis* as a practice whereby philosophy would be capable of producing not mere theoretical knowledge but new abilities and know-how. Philosophy is to assume bodily form commencing in an experiential undertaking of trial and error, and as such *askesis*, I argue, must be seen to operate as an experimental technique that turns the philosophical life and the philosopher's corporeal body into the living test site for his or her philosophy. This, I propose, leads to, and lends philosophical importance to, Nietzsche's project of life stylisation and more particularly to his recommendation of a *disciplina voluntatis* and *diaita* concerned with what he calls the 'smallest' and 'closest' things of everyday living. Nietzsche's assertion that the mundane realm is the starting point for philosophical *askesis* serves as the context for drawing a set of concrete regimen recommended by Nietzsche, concerning how to divide the day, social

intercourse, the meaning of sleep and the teching of solitude. (In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche will return to his project of revaluation and bestowing worth upon the 'smallest' and 'closest' things as discussed in chapter three).

The second chapter addresses the explicitly agonistic character of Nietzsche's *askesis* with reference to his critique of ascetics and invention of 'the philosopher's cheerful asceticism' as presented in the *Genealogy*. I discuss and relate the Greek athletic and early Christian versions of *askesis* as both anchored in an intense focus upon and disciplining of the body. Both these versions of *askesis* share an attempt to transform respectively the outer and inner composition of the body, and they share a vertical tension and aspiration. I present the severe procedures undertaken by the ascetic in order to block metabolic processes, slow the flow of blood and halt the production of bodily fluids, as mirrored in Nietzsche's preoccupation with gastric processes of digestion and purging. The condition and activity of the intestines do not, I propose, act as mere metaphor for Nietzsche; as for the starving ascetic who, in an attempt to purify his body of its organic needs, must struggle with the demands of his stomach, so for Nietzsche the same stomach, as the innermost part of our organism, holds an equally prominent place although in a directly opposite manner. Next, I juxtapose the ascetic priest persona and his life style recommendations with those of the philosopher as introduced in the *Genealogy*'s typology and further elaborated on in *Beyond Good and Evil*. I list the priest's so-called "innocent" and "guilty" medicaments and show how Nietzsche can be seen to mimic and counteract these in his own positive prescriptions for the philosopher's naturalised version of a "cheerful asceticism." I argue that while Nietzsche's attempted naturalisation of asceticism may be seen as an inversion of the schema, values and ideals that inform Christian ascetic practices of renunciation, and as such, as an attempt to return ascetics to its original athletic aim of strengthening, this does not equal a straightforward rejection of the former and affirmation of the latter. Rather, it is an

experiment constructed on the basis of an acceptance and even appreciation of our ascetic heritage, and an attempted appropriation of what Nietzsche calls the impressive ascetic artistry of self-vivisecting procedures. In this sense the philosopher's asceticism is above all a strategic seizing of this existing artistry whereby Nietzsche seeks to turn ascetic procedures agonistically against the ideals that motivate and direct them, and hence to experimentally explore the possibility of non-ascetic asceticism, an ascetics without ascetic ideals. However, I will show, such an experiment is bound to fail. Not least because the very notion of *aksesis* implodes in Nietzsche's 'cheerful' version, losing its meaning as a practice of aspiration and effort. In the end there is, as Nietzsche himself concludes in the *Genealogy*, at present no real possibility for challenging the powerful ascetic ideal because even the philosopher is not capable of positing a plausible alternative counter-ideal, revealing himself to be not in opposition to but in allegiance with it. The conclusion is that we have only one possible strategy of *agon* at our disposal. The only available means for attacking and actually hurting the ascetic ideal is, as Nietzsche states, by becoming a comedian of it.

In the third chapter I propose that Nietzsche's self-presentation in *Ecce Homo* may be seen as the unification or culmination of the respectively curative and agonistic elements of Nietzsche's *askesis* discussed in the preceding chapters. I argue that *Ecce Homo* constitutes, firstly, a finalisation of what Nietzsche calls for but never fully develops in the middle works (as discussed in chapter one). Secondly, *Ecce Homo* adopts the agonistic strategy suggested in the *Genealogy* that in order to dismantle ascetic ideals one must become a comedian of such ideals (as presented in chapter two). The final chapter in this way presents two possible assessments of Nietzsche's *askesis* according to two interpretations of Nietzsche's self-telling as presented in his last genre-bending book. One is in accordance with the title's positive reference to an exemplary body, worthy of admiration having carried out the task of life stylisation 'to the hilt,' and one

is in accordance with the title's antagonistic reference, an attempt to degrade ideals. I propose that these two interpretations are not contradictory but complimentary; that the latter necessarily relies on the former and in turn imbues the exemplary mode of self-presentation with an essentially critical function. Finally, I suggest that whereas the first interpretation must conclude that Nietzsche *fails* to live up to his ideal of a mode of philosophy capable of showing rather than telling itself, the second interpretation concludes that Nietzsche *succeeds* in carrying out his philosophical critique through performative, rather than discursive, means. *Ecce Homo* is, I argue, an attempt to carry out a mode of self-staging whereby Nietzsche aligns himself with the figure of an ideal in order to perform an attack on ideals. As such Nietzsche's pseudo-autobiography presents a performative strategy of critique (and self-critique) which, I argue, was unprecedented in its time and would only later be paralleled in the context of Dadaist art-practices and the later, postmodern category of autofiction and self-writing. As such the final chapter presents the conclusive argument for the overall argument of the thesis: to show that Nietzsche's *askesis* is not *ultimately* therapeutic and in this sense does not mark a tranquil hiatus from the better-known, antagonistic nature of his critical project – rather, it is complicit in it.

## CHAPTER ONE. 'I live my life in a certain way': Nietzsche's curative *askesis* in *The Wanderer and his Shadow* and *Dawn.*

To conceive of philosophy as therapy presupposes that if philosophy is a way of life, it is not just *a* way of life but one that has a specific aim, namely that of wellbeing. The particular role of *askesis*, in the context of philosophy understood as therapeutics, must then be taken as essentially curative, as having to do with a restorative process of healing, of overcoming ill-being.

In recent scholarship Keith Ansell-Pearson suggests that Nietzsche, via his idea of the philosopher as a physician of culture, is committed to the ancient notion of philosophical therapy, and that in his 'middle works' Nietzsche is inspired by Hellenistic and more particularly Epicurean teaching that can "show us how to quieten our being and so help to temper a human mind that is prone to neurosis."[1] Similarly, Michael Ure asserts that Nietzsche is an "epigone" of the Hellenistic tradition and suggests that Nietzsche's analogy between philosophy and medicine shows his commitment to a revival of philosophy as a therapeutic practice, "aimed at achieving eudemonia."[2] In their presentation of Nietzsche's middle-period philosophy as involving a rejuvenation of various therapeutic techniques from the Hellenistic tradition, Ure and Ansell-Pearson both, more or less implicitly, rely on definitions set out by Hadot as described in the introduction – both in terms of the latter's definition of philosophy understood as a way of life and in regards to his definition of philosophical *askesis* as 'spiritual exercises.' Their analyses take Nietzsche's therapeutics as related to contemplative practices that aim at "peace of the soul and

[1] Keith Ansell-Pearson, 'True to the Earth: Nietzsche's Epicurean Care of Self and World,' in *Nietzsche's Therapeutic Teaching. For Individuals and Culture*, eds. Horst Hutter and Eli Friedland (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 97-98.

[2] Michael Ure, 'Nietzsche's View from Above,' in *Nietzsche's Therapeutic Teaching: For Individuals and Culture*, eds. Horst Hutter and Eli Friedland (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 119.

freedom from pain" (Ansell-Pearson) and liberation "from the burden of passions of desire and fear" (Ure): Ure suggests that Nietzsche employs Stoic-inspired spiritual exercise, such as the so-called 'view from above,' while Pearson shows how Nietzsche can be seen to promote Epicurean-inspired exercises of what he calls "slowness" and "attentiveness." Overall, as Ansell-Pearson affirms "if as Pierre Hadot has suggested, philosophical therapeutics is centred on a concern with the healing of our own lives (…) then in the texts of his middle period Nietzsche can be seen to be an heir to this ancient tradition."[3] While this approach serves the helpful role of comparing and aligning Hellenistic cures with those suggested by Nietzsche and thus places Nietzsche within a tradition of philosophy as a way of life, to ignore the explicit bodily dimension of Nietzsche's suggested therapeutics means the corporeal aspect of *askesis* and the aesthetic dimension of philosophy in the form of a lived practice are not addressed.[4]

In the following, I will focus on this underexposed aspect, while discussing the curative nature of Nietzsche's *askesis* as presented in *The Wanderer and his Shadow* and *Dawn*. I will attempt to draw up an initial outline of Nietzsche's *askesis* as not only meditative, inwardly orientated

[3] Ansell-Pearson, 'True to the Earth,' 102. While I recognise both authors consider Nietzsche's later criticism of Hellenistic therapy and hence recognise that Nietzsche's would necessarily be a 'post-Classical' therapy, both locate Nietzsche's engagement with the idea of philosophy lived as founded in an alignment with Hellenistic therapeutics and further, base their definitions of *askesis* on Hadot's conception of 'spiritual exercises'.

[4] Although Ansell-Pearson emphasises Nietzsche's concern with questions regarding nutrition, place, climate and recreation, these in reference to an aesthetics of existence, this is not discussed further ('True to the Earth,' 105-106). These questions are however addressed by Horst Hutter, who combines them under the theme of 'nutritional askesis' in chapter 5 of *Shaping the Future* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006), and by Graham Parkes, who treats them within an expanded field of metaphorics – and hence beyond the literal and mundane dimension I propose – in *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche's Psychology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). In the following I will refer to these works where relevant, while keeping the discussion anchored in *askesis* as I understand it: as a material practice of everyday life.

exercises but bodily practices concerned with the concrete 'stuff' of everyday life – what Nietzsche calls 'the smallest things' referring to matters such as sleep, abode, nutrition and social intercourse. These mundane things are, I propose, highly relevant for Nietzsche's curative *askesis* as presented in *The Wanderer* and *Dawn* and beyond. Not only are they what Nietzsche will go on to suggest the philosopher's art of life should take as its material, but they continue to hold a prominent place throughout Nietzsche's discussions of philosophy lived, commencing, I propose, with *The Wanderer* and culminating in *Ecce Homo* where questions regarding the things closest to us are thoroughly treated and hailed as more important than anything that has been considered important hitherto.[5]

As noted in the introduction an important objection to philosophy understood as a therapeutic practice is that it seemingly suggests an instrumentalisation of philosophy, an attempt to make philosophy serve an

[5] The section entitled 'What we should learn from Artists' in *The Gay Science* suggests that in order to make life the raw material of a poetic practice we must commence "first of all in the smallest and most commonplace matters" (GS, IV, 299). Similarly, in GS, IV, 290, Nietzsche describes "the one thing needful" to be that "great and rare art" of 'giving style' to one's character': "It is practices by those who survey all the strength and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan (…) In the end, when the work is finished, it becomes evident how the constraint of a single taste governed and formed everything large and small". These two sections are often selected as key descriptions or proscriptions for Nietzsche's proposed art of living, understood as a task of self-cultivation. For Hutter and for Parkes, what is involved in such a project is the ordering or composing of 'soul' multitudes into a harmonious whole, an undertaking in which "material in the soul is worked by an inner artistic agent in order to make the whole psyche an art-work." (Parkes, *Composing the Soul,* 169). My particular focus does not include the all-encompassing project of Nietzsche's proposed 'soul-artistry.' Instead, I limit my presentation of Nietzsche's *askesis* to the construing, not of a soul, psyche or self, but more simply that of a *Lebensordnung*. I hope my more narrow perspective may present a modest addition, or alternative angle, to the much more extensive interpretations presented in these mentioned works.

essentially nurturing or consolatory function that would, perhaps, seem better suited to religious or, in a modern context, psychotherapeutic practices. This worry is not easily dismissed; the original Greek sense of the word *therapeia* not only refers to healing, but an 'attending to' in the sense of the rendering of a service. Should philosophy really be asked to perform such a service, to be *essentially* a means for, in Martha Nussbaum's words, "grappling with human misery"? And not only grappling with, but finding possible solutions and consolations for such misery, offering itself as a "compassionate" form of philosophy "that exists for the sake of human beings, in order to address their deepest needs, confront their most urgent perplexities"?[6]

The aim of this chapter is to propose how the curative focus presented in *The Wanderer* and *Dawn* does not necessarily suggest an overall commitment to philosophy as a practice of (psycho)therapeutics understood as above. My intention, importantly, is not to dispute the therapeutic perspective offered in recent scholarship, but rather to suggest that therapeutics is not at all there is to it. The curative function, I will show, is but one aspect and not essentially what characterises Nietzsche's ideal of philosophy lived. This chapter will propose that while Nietzsche in these works can be seen to freely and experimentally appropriate a selection of Stoic or Epicurean inspired recipes, attaining 'peace of mind' and 'freedom from anxiety,' as suggested above, is not the overall goal of Nietzsche's *askesis*. Rather, Stoic and Epicurean inspired attitudes and curative techniques are strategically adapted by Nietzsche at a time of severe crisis where he found himself in need of these particular remedies. In other words, if Nietzsche can be seen to make use of various Hellenistic cures in *The Wanderer* and *Dawn*, these are only to be taken as a *local* and *periodical* form of (self-) therapy and not as normative or generally applicable procedures. This is, as I will show, not only confirmed by Nietzsche's own description but by the fact that, as both Ansell-Pearson and Ure recognise,

[6] Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, 3.

Nietzsche was later to dismiss these cures as no longer relevant and even as 'failed' therapies – precisely on the grounds that they attempt to offer consolation for 'human' misery, understood in a general rather than individual sense, and as such lay claim to universality.

In order to assess what the curative focus of Nietzsche's *askesis* consists of, I argue, it is necessary to both contract and expand the perspective: Taking into consideration both Nietzsche's personal situation at the time of writing and the larger agonistic project which, I argue, Nietzsche's *askesis* necessarily sits within and is expressive of. This dynamic perspective, concentrated and dilated, will be the framework within which the following analysis is carried out.[7]

**"Always healthy again": Great Health as curative capacity and ability.**

The very last aphorism of *Human all too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* vol I is entitled 'The wanderer': "He who has attained only some degree of freedom of mind cannot feel other than a wanderer on the earth – though not as a traveller *to* a final destination: for this destination does not exist (…) such a man will, to be sure, experience bad nights (…)" Wanderers of the earth are at an intermediary stage of only partial freedom and uncertainty as to their destination. As such they are prone to experience not only bad nights but, as Nietzsche explains, days that are even worse. But in this midway condition they are also open to new things, hopeful that a change may be coming. For the wanderer, every dawn signifies the possibility and

[7] Importantly, I am not suggesting that an inclusion of Nietzsche's personal situation serve as an overall methodology. The reason that the personal dimension is particularly relevant for the curative focus discussion presented in this chapter is firstly, due to its focus on the experiential aspect of Nietzsche's suggested self-therapeutics and secondly, it is a dimension that Nietzsche specifically suggests that the texts treated in this chapter must be considered as born out of. In general, I will not be referring to personal details of Nietzsche's life that are not brought up within the published texts discussed in this chapter. See also footnote 29 below.

the need for new "joyful mornings of other days and climes." Wanderers seek, says Nietzsche, "the *philosophy of the morning*."[8]

This image of the wanderer who seeks new mornings points both towards *The Wanderer and his Shadow*, added to *Human all too Human* in 1880, and to *Dawn*, published the following year. This shows not only how these texts are closely connected, but also that they, as Nietzsche describes, together record a slow process of recovery, from bad nights to new dawns "so cheerful and transfigured," from aimless wandering to the first sight of a destination. The period from *The Wanderer* to *Dawn* charts, as Nietzsche says in the later preface, the protracted overcoming of illness and a long period of convalescence, "years full of variegated, painfully magical transformations ruled and led along by a tenacious *will to health.*"[9] This 'will to health' became for Nietzsche not only a personal directive, but a discovery of a profound connection between health, life and philosophy, a trinity he was later to describe, self-reflectively and retrospectively: "I turned my will to health, to life, into a philosophy."[10]

A tenacious will to health is not identical to an achieved state of health, although it may disguise itself as such. It is equivalent to what Nietzsche elsewhere calls 'great health' a healing power – the signs of which appear as "formative, curative, moulding and restorative forces" – a power and hence capacity for self-restoration.[11] Great health is what is employed in the overcoming of sickness and thus in the self-transformative process of the re-

[8] HH, Vol I, IX, 638.
[9] HH, Vol I, Preface, 4.
[10] EH, I, 2. Also GS, 2: "(…) often I have asked myself whether, taking a large view, philosophy has not merely been an interpretation of the body and a *misunderstanding of the body*. Behind the highest value judgments that have hitherto guided the history of thought, there are concealed misunderstandings of the physical constitution." The section ends "I am still waiting for a philosophical *physician* in the exceptional sense of that word (…) to muster the courage to push my suspicions to the limits and risk the proposition: what was at stake in all philosophising hitherto was not at all 'truth' but something else – let us say, health, future, growth, power, life."
[11] HH, Vol I, Preface, 4, 5.

constitution of oneself. Precisely because it is a power to recuperate, to become what Nietzsche calls "always healthy again," it is also what allows one to become sick and remain sick for a long time without perishing from it. But great health is not, however, just something one *has* or possesses. It is, according to Nietzsche, something one "constantly acquires and must acquire, because one continually sacrifices it again, and must sacrifice it!"[12] In this sense, great health even demands periods of illness as a precondition. To become sick and to remain sick for a long time in order to then "slowly, slowly (…) become healthy, by which I mean 'healthier'" is not only necessary but highly instructive. The more frequently one has been ill and has had to recover, the better one will come to know *from experience* what Nietzsche calls the philosophy of "health and recovery." Being ill is then exactly that which gives us intimate, experiential knowledge or know-how in the art of self-healing and acquaints us with what the "teachers of recovery." In this sense there is much "practical wisdom, in for a long time prescribing even health for oneself only in small doses."[13]

'Great health' then is not a condition or state from which sickness is excluded. It is not an antithesis to sickness, just as it is not a state of health achieved. It concerns not the opposition between, but the spectrum and fluctuating states between, health and illness and the ability to move from one to the other, and the capacity to endure all the relapses in between. Great health, for Nietzsche, includes a becoming sick, even a making oneself sick, and a becoming, making oneself, healthy. Because one must, according to Nietzsche, "sacrifice" health again and again, one must equally be capable of attaining it again and again: all of this is contained in Nietzsche's dynamic and procedural concept of 'great health.'

There are several ways of viewing Nietzsche's definition of health as described here, seemingly indicating both an innate *capacity* for self-

[12] GS, V, 382.
[13] HH, Vol I, 5; AOM, 356.

restoration and an experientially acquired curing *ability* taught to us by the so-called philosophy of health and recovery. One would be to distinguish two forms of healing powers according to their origin and relate them respectively to Nietzsche's notion of 'great health' and simply 'health.' Following this, it may be possible to suggest that Nietzsche's notion of 'great health' simply belongs to the restorative forces of the natural body organism, and that the other 'health', the lesser one, belongs to the cultivated techniques of healing, that is, the art of therapy. Or in other words, great health designates something innate, a capacity *of* the living, organic body qua its natural constitution and the 'smaller' health would relate to acquired know-how *about* one's body qua the learned art of therapy.

While it is possible to understand Nietzsche's health in this sense, the problem is that his descriptions seem to suggest a fusion rather than clear distinction between these two realms or origins of healing. 'Health' and 'great health' are used, at times interchangeably, to designate both a power one possesses and something one does not merely *have* but must constantly acquire. As Andrew Huddleston remarks, Nietzsche's concept of health then seems to posit a conflicting issue: it is far from clear whether, for Nietzsche, health indicates something inherent, an innate feature of the person who possesses it, that would be both constitutive of and act as a reinforcement of his or her healthy condition – or if health is in fact something that can be attained.[14] This fusion, or conflict, also opens up to another one; between what Nietzsche respectively calls 'spiritual' and 'bodily' health, as well as sickness of the 'body' and that of the 'soul.' As will become apparent in the following, the same fusing or conflict occurs: while Nietzsche at times attributes so-called illnesses of the soul to physiological causes, at other times physiological illness is suggested as a contributor to great spiritual health. Similarly, while the spiritual and

[14] See Andrew Huddleston, 'Nietzsche on the Health of the Soul,' *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 60 (2017):135-164.

physiological domains are often presented by Nietzsche as coexistent within an intimate causal structure, they do at times, as Huddleston notes, come apart – yet, at other times again they fully integrate to the point of identification, causing Nietzsche to use the terms seemingly interchangeably.[15]

It is beyond the scope of the present discussion to present a further review of the possible interpretations of this ambiguous structure, but what is relevant for the following is to insist on Nietzsche's notion of health as one that deliberately mixes, and plays with, several conceptions, origins and realms of health and sickness, which in turn reflects Nietzsche's holistic concept of the body as an integrated psycho-somatic whole.

"We philosophers," as Nietzsche states in *The Gay Science*, are not free to speak of the body and the soul as if they were separate entities – as "common people" do.[16] The knowing person, Nietzsche asserts later in *Zarathustra*, says: "'I am body entirely, and nothing beside; and soul is only a word for something in the body'."[17] What is called soul belongs to, is immanent to, the body in the Nietzschean sense; it is but an aspect of, or territory within, the body as totality. Because what I am is "body entirely" there is nothing beside, nothing above or beneath, the body. Nietzsche's

[15] Huddleston, 'Nietzsche on the Health of the Soul,' 139. For a reading of the metaphoric reaches of Nietzsche's 'health' and 'illness' treated as an organic-poetic case of 'infections' and 'contaminations' aligned with imagery rooted in romantic poetry, see David Farell Krell, *Infectious Nietzsche* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), chapter 10.

[16] GS, Preface to Second Edition, 3. Immediately preceding Nietzsche's comment is a direct alignment of Nietzsche's plural concept of healths as I discuss it here to philosophical activity: "A philosopher who has traversed many kinds of health, and keeps traversing them, has passed through an equal number of philosophies; he simply *cannot* keep from transposing his states every time into the most spiritual form and distance: this art of transfiguration *is* philosophy." (GS, Preface, 3).

[17] Z, I, 4.

immanent body image in this sense can have no counter-parts but contains within it all possible counter-concepts such as soul, spirit, mind and so on.[18]

Importantly, Nietzsche does not however suggest that since the soul is only an aspect of or a 'word' for something in or about the body, we may get rid of the very concept of 'soul' altogether. Although the idea of the soul such as it is commonly understood is but a fantastical hypothesis that "should be banished from science," there is no need to act as what Nietzsche calls a "clumsy naturalist" and get rid of what is after all one of our oldest and "most venerable" hypotheses. It is not the 'soul' that must be gotten rid of, but rather our belief in the concept of the soul such as it has been taught so far – namely as something "ineradicable, eternal, indivisible" and as such as counter concept to the body organism. Leaving behind a belief in the atomistic nature of the soul leaves the concept 'soul' open as a potentially rich source of reinvention. As Nietzsche suggests, we may then

[18] Nietzsche's vision is, as Hutter affirms, thoroughly materialistic, treating the division into body, soul, and spirit (or mind) as "an analytical distinction and cultural fiction." What is indicated is a "shift in emphasis in which the body is seen as the dominant great reason, as the capacitator of the whole with both the soul and the mind as ancillary and entirely material functions of the whole." (Hutter, *Shaping the Future,* 174-75). As Hutter suggests, a more appropriate word for 'body' in this context would be *Leib* (as contrasted to *Körper*), used as a new "fictional name" for the whole human being: for the visible individual that encompasses all 'biological' and 'cultural,' 'bodily' and 'spiritual' aspects, as well as "all aspects of the old 'soul'." As *Leib* has no English counter-part, conventional translation usually marks the distinction with the terms 'lived body' (*Leib*) vs. 'body' or 'corporeal body' (*Körper*). But for Hutter, since *Leib* in the Nietzschean sense suggests "a new way of symbolising the whole living being" as totality, the word 'body' is kept and placed in quotation marks when referring more narrowly to '*Körper*' understood as part of this totality. (Hutter, 26-27). In Parkes' schema, the 'soul' or 'psyche' (used as translation of *Seele* and kept distinct from *Geist* as 'mind' and/or 'spirit') is given a middle, mediating position within the body-soul-spirit structure. As such suggesting itself "more closely interfused with the body and the physical than are the mental, intellectual and spiritual aspects of our being." Hence Nietzsche's concept of 'soul,' following Parkes, revisions the Western assimilation of soul to spirit; to the aspect of our being that is conceived "farthest away from the body and the physical world." (Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, 12).

begin to construe new conceptions for ourselves, such as for example that of a "mortal soul," "soul as subject-multiplicity," or "soul as social structure of drives and affects."[19] This strategy whereby a concept, no matter how unbelievable or problematic, is not eradicated but rather appropriated and reinvented, as will become particularly apparent in the following chapter, is characteristic of Nietzsche's general approach to critique. The seizure of existing concepts is to utilise the power they hold, in order to deliberately pervert the implicit ideals that have given them power. Rather than a rejection, what is carried out is a deliberate dislocation – of the meaning and hence of the underlying values that have bestowed this meaning upon venerated concepts, such as for example the 'soul.'

Returning to Nietzsche's seemingly conflicted notion of health, it should now be apparent why there is, for Nietzsche, no one normative concept of health in itself, but rather innumerable healths. Furthermore, why the intimate relation between states of sickness and health of the body and the soul fluctuate; why at times they are positioned within a parallel bind, at other times in a proposed causal structure and at other times again they are simply identical. What is suggested is an intimate, complex, at times contradictory connection between the psychic and physical domains that, as Ruth Abbey states, makes it "impossible to reduce their interaction to a simple cause and effect relationship" – the former "shapes bodies" just as the latter "affects the mental and spiritual dimension."[20] But what is involved in Nietzsche's concept of health is not only an underlying

[19] BGE, 12.

[20] Ruth Abbey, *Nietzsche's Middle Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 98-99. Krell suggests that it would seem Nietzsche doubts whether the health of the soul can be defined at all; that there are countless varieties of health in soul and body and "indeed, the very multiplicity of the states and conditions of health and illness ruins any possible blueprint for health, subverts any regimented regimen (…)" (Krell, *Infectious Nietzsche,* 207). As will be shown, my description of Nietzsche's proposed 'regimen' are drawn up in agreement with this; the possibility for developing curative practices relies on them being invented as individually construed self-cures and as such as essentially 'non-regimented' regimen.

construction of a complex intertwinement within an all-inclusive body image, but also a playful experimentation; attempts to possibly redefine and invent new, plural concepts and contradictory names for the soul and the body, along with new conceptions, origins, causes and effects, of healths and sicknesses. As such what is also involved is an attempt to invent, define and experiment with new *cures* – new curative practices that are necessarily of the body in the Nietzschean sense. Not because the body is taken as superior to Nietzsche's concept of soul, which would indicate merely an inversion rather than overcoming of an existing dualism, but because there is nothing *outside* the integrative concept of body, and the 'spiritual' domain as such resides organically within, or as a dimension of, it.[21]

It may be relevant to briefly place Nietzsche's image of the body and of health within the more immediate perspective of his own time and its tendencies. As Gregory Moore shows in his article 'Nietzsche, Medicine and Meteorology,' the explosion of medical and biological knowledge in the 19th century resulted in a great rise in public interest: "No topic more occupied the Victorian mind than health."[22] Moore shows that Nietzsche owned and read a large amount of contemporary books on the topic, and

[21] While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to deal with the large amount of scholarship on this undoubtedly important and complex theme, I hope this brief treatment will be sufficient for supporting the bodily focus I suggest in relation to Nietzsche's *askesis*. It is no doubt possible, as Hutter suggests, to understand the 'soul' as "the mysterious whole world of inner conditions of the body, the space within which a body gives itself an intentionality," but it is also possible that there is "so much more in what has been called 'body' or 'flesh'." (Hutter, *Shaping the Future*, 157). I would like to keep this latter open-endedness and continue to use the term 'body' with the pluralistic, playful and inventive connotations suggested by Nietzsche in the above.

[22] Bruce Haley quoted in Gregory Moore, 'Nietzsche, Medicine and Meteorology,' in *Nietzsche and Science*, eds. Gregory Moore and Thomas Brobjer (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing), 71. It may be added that contemporary Western culture may be defined in exactly the same way. This is why I suggest below that Nietzsche's particular interest in health may also be seen as a forerunner to the growing interest, if not escalating obsession, with the theme of health that has unfolded since.

that in order to understand not only Nietzsche's preoccupation with the theme of health but also how Nietzsche himself may have understood and experienced his own body in sickness and health, we need, as Moore suggests, to consider how the body of the 19th century was discretely perceived in the popular imagination.[23]

One common perception of the 19th century body was, as Moore describes, modelled on the machining system. Like an engine, the body was understood to run on *Kraft* (translated as force, but also meaning power, energy, strength), something of which the body only has a certain amount at its disposal in each instant.[24] Due to the body's limited reserves of *Kraft*, a careful economy must be kept; maintaining equilibrium and avoiding excess becomes of utmost importance in order to balance and uphold *Kraft*. Energy must be released or spent in activity only to the extent that recuperation will be able to restore itself in repose; excessive expenditure of *Kraft* means that the system will be unable to 'recharge.' Particularly, *Nervenkraft* (nerve force or power) was essential to the engine-inspired body image and economy. *Nervenkraft* was thought to be precisely the regulator of *Kraft*, a sort of energy system or "battery [that] expends energy only in proportion to its capacity to store it via a dynamo." This balancing act of expenditure, restoration and storage of energy was, as Moore describes, precisely what health itself consisted of. Ill health, on the other hand, was thought to be caused exactly by a lack of balance "between our powers and the demands we make upon them, and the want of harmonious physical and moral energy."[25] This ideal of a harmonious balance of so-called physical and moral energy shows how the wellbeing of the body and mind did not only go hand in hand, but were directly and quite concretely connected in the

[23] Moore, 'Nietzsche, Medicine and Meteorology,' 73.
[24] Nature, as Herbert Spencer states, is a "strict accountant": the amount of "vital energy that the body at any moment possesses is limited." Spencer, *Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical* (1866), quoted in Moore, 'Nietzsche, Medicine and Meteorology,' 75.
[25] Moore, 'Nietzsche, Medicine and Meteorology,' 75.

idea of *Nervenkraft*. Bain (whose work Nietzsche, as Moore shows, owned and read), in agreement with the majority of his contemporaries, held that the *Nervenkraft* battery acts as a mediator between the mind and the natural forces of the body, and that thought as the activity of the former can never "transcend the physical pace of the *Nervenkraft*." The 'battery' of nerve power is then what directly connects the psychological and physiological domains and, as it were, makes transcendence impossible by embedding and limiting activity of the 'mind' within the body's forces.[26]

Considering Nietzsche's notion of health and the body as described above, it is impossible to make Nietzsche's perspective comply to the machinic body image as drawn up here. But it is perhaps and nevertheless possible to view his dynamic concept of 'great health' in tandem with or at least against the background of the popular idea of *Nervenkraft* understood as a 'battery' that regulates, that knows how to regulate, withhold, spend and restore energy in appropriate measures – a structure that, as seen, not only binds the psychic domain to the physiological one, but places the former firmly within the latter's powers. Although Nietzsche never suggests this connection himself, and although he criticises 'The English Psychologists' such as Spencer mentioned above, he can be seen to attack what he calls the "teaching of pure spirituality" on the grounds that, besides

[26] Alexander Bain, *Mind and Body: The Theories of their Relation* (1873), quoted in Moore, 'Nietzsche, Medicine and Meteorology,' 74. For a parallel consideration of a more 'lyrical' notion of *Kraft* as unifying force, see Parkes' discussion of Johann Gottfried Herder's potential influence upon Nietzsche (*Composing the Soul*, 93-100). Nietzsche would, Parkes suggests, have found Herder's ideas very attractive, "except for Herder's introduction of the figure (…) of the divine creator of it all" (Parkes, 96). Which is, of course, a big exception. See also Deleuze's influential reading of Nietzsche's concept of body as constituted by a relation of – a 'body of' – forces (*Kraft*) in Deleuze 'Active and Reactive', in *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, ed. David B Allison, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1888), 80-106 and *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 39-44.

having taught deprecation and neglect of the body, it has "destroyed nerve force [*Nervenkraft*] with its excesses."[27]

It is not the intention here to discuss whether or how Nietzsche may be seen, as Moore's text suggests, to ironically distort the perspectives suggested by the pervasive biologism of his time. But the widespread perspective in which the intertwined concepts of 'nerves' and 'power,' materially connecting mental states with the physiological tissue, is relevant to the body-image underlying Nietzsche's notion of 'health' as shown above. It shows not only that Nietzsche's frequent use of medico-physical terms are more than, as some commentators call them, analogies or metaphors, but that his terminology reflects perceptions that were popular in society in general. The general preoccupation with health and with the body which saw a close, if mechanics-inspired, intertwinement of corporeal and 'mental' states and of what was believed to be physical and moral energy, contextualises Nietzsche's continuous references to health and the medical domain, making them perhaps somewhat less idiosyncratic. Or in other words, it is possible to suppose that Nietzsche's terminology and his idea of the philosopher as a physician do not *only* prove that he is committed to practices of Hellenistic *therapeia*, as suggested by Ure and Ansell-Pearson at the beginning of this chapter. And especially not if we consider Nietzsche's curative focus outside the context of contemplative, spiritual exercises and instead in relation to the body and to 19th centrury ideas

[27] D, I, 39. " [pure spirituality] has taught deprecation, neglect or tormenting of the body (…) it has produced gloomy, tense and oppressed souls – which believed, moreover, they knew the cause of their feelings of wretchedness and were perhaps able to abolish it! 'It must reside in the body! the body is still flourishing too well!' – thus they concluded, while in fact the body was, by means of the pains it registered, raising protest after protest against the mockery to which it was constantly being subjected. A general chronic over-excitability was finally the lot of these virtuous pure-spirits; the only pleasure they could still recognise was in the form of ecstasy and other precursors to madness – and their system attained its summit when it came to take ecstasy for the higher goal of life and the standard by which all earthly things stood *condemned.*"

about its health and constitution. Indeed, not long after Nietzsche's death, the birth of *Körper Kultur* – which, as the term suggests, put the activity and wellbeing of the body in a central position within cultural and societal development – suggests that Nietzsche's perspective should not only be taken as an attempt to rejuvenate ancient therapeutic practices but was also a forerunner to the health-orientated practices that were to come, and which in perhaps unprecedented fashion continues to dominate the popular imagination and style of life within Western societies today.

It is within this larger 'health' narrative outlined above that I would like to read Nietzsche's curative *askesis* as presented in *The Wanderer* and *Dawn*. I will attempt to uphold rather than overcome the, at times contradictory, tensions between what Nietzsche calls health and sickness, between what he suggests as the 'spiritual' and 'bodily' aspects of health and sickness, and to propose how curative practices are relevant to Nietzsche's idea of philosophy understood as a lived practice, without however making this the ultimate aim of such a practice. As I have suggested that Nietzsche's therapeutics are local and periodical in character, this will necessarily entail a recognition of the personal aspect of Nietzsche's proposed therapeutics as it appears in the middle works without reducing therapeutics to no more than a personal issue. In order to read Nietzsche's *Wanderer* and *Dawn* as therapeutic works it is, in my view, impossible to not (also) read them as *his* story of illness and recovery; as a testament to Nietzsche's own experience and thus to his acquisition of experiential know-how and skilful techniques in the curative art of self-therapy – this is how Nietzsche himself describes them as seen in the quote below. But it does not, however, mean that they are *only* that. On the contrary, I argue, it is by the inclusion of this subjective perspective, without reducing all to this perspective, that the broader, philosophical and critical implications of Nietzsche's curative art developed and discussed in the these works come to light. All of Nietzsche's books speak, according to their author, of his 'overcomings,' of

what he has lived through and hence also what he has survived and recovered from. But importantly, such overcomings as the results of experience, of something lived through and survived, must always be "skinned" or exploited for "the sake of knowledge," as Nietzsche describes it.[28] This intimate relation means the double perspective that zooms in and out between a narrow outlook of subjective experience and a dilated objective one, in which we find the epistemological ends ultimately served by the intimate focus upon the affective experience of oneself, must be kept in mind throughout the discussion that follows.[29]

> Shall my experience – the history of an illness and recovery, for a recovery was what eventuated – have been my personal experience alone? And only my 'human, all-too-human'? Today I would like to believe the reverse; again and again I feel sure that my travel books were not written solely for myself, as sometimes seems to be the case (…) May I venture to commend them (…) above all (…) to you, who have the hardest fate, you rare, most imperilled, most spiritual, most courageous men who have to be the conscience of the modern soul and as such have to possess its knowledge, and in whom all there exists today of sickness, poison and danger comes together – whose lot it is to have to be sicker than any other kind of individual (…) whose comfort it is to know the way to a new health, and alas! to go along it, a health of tomorrow and the day after. [30]

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[28] HH, Vol II, Preface, 1.

[29] As Hutter sums up, "in few philosophers is the personal so directly involved with the philosophical as it is in Nietzsche." (*Shaping the Future*, 73) This is the perspective from which Parkes' study starts, noting that the reason Nietzsche's "psychological acumen" has gone uncelebrated for so long "stems from a failure to discern the figure of the man behind the works, the person in the thoughts, the soul and life in the corpus." Hence Parkes' study aims to approach "the work in the context of the life," from a perspective of twentieth-century depth psychology. I am not attempting any 'depth' study of Nietzsche's character or psyche. In this chapter, I am treating the 'personal' aspect only insofar as it relates specifically to the curative nature of Nietzsche's proposed *askesis* at the time of *The Wanderer* and *Dawn*. The reason that Nietzsche's personal situation is of relevance in this context, is that it was what prompted Nietzsche to start paying attention to the 'smallest things'; the things which I propose Nietzsche's *askesis* concerns.

[30] HH, Vol II, Preface, 6.

***The Wanderer and his Shadow*: Acedia and its antidotes.**

> (…) how often, in an effort to recover from myself (…) where I could not find what I needed, I had artificially to enforce, falsify and invent a suitable fiction for myself (– and what else have poets ever done? and to what end does art exist in the world at all?) Thus when I needed to I once also invented for myself the 'free spirits' to which this melancholy-valiant book is dedicated (…) I had need of them at that time if I was to keep in good spirits while surrounded by ills (sickness, solitude, unfamiliar places, acedia, inactivity (…) a compensation for the friends I lacked.[31]

Nietzsche's melancholy-valiant book, *Human all too Human* is, as he was later to describe it, a "monument to a crisis."[32] It was composed at a time when Nietzsche suffered not only from debilitating health problems which caused him to resign from his post at Basel and leave academic life behind, but also from what he describes in the above quote as *acedia*. As a monastic concept *acedia* is referred to as spleen or a state of torpor experienced by ascetics and caused by their solitary life, literally a lack [á] of care [kndía].[33] What Nietzsche is describing is how what he most needed "again and again" for his cure and self-restoration was the belief that he was "not thus isolated, *not* alone in seeing as I did." The lonely Nietzsche in other words invented his 'free spirits,' to whom the book is dedicated, as a self-cure for the overcoming of *acadia*. The free spirits are, as Nietzsche goes on to

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[31] HH, Vol II, Preface, 1, 2.
[32] EH, III, 'Human All Too Human,' 1.
[33] '*Accidie*' in Greek refers to 'negligence' or 'indifference.' As a term in Christian asceticism it is accountable for one of the seven deadly sins due to its connection to sloth. (Elisabeth A. Livingstone, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). *Acedia* is described by Aquinas as a "species of sadness," quoting from Cassian who in 'Monastic Institutes' states that "acedia disturbs the monk above all around the sixth hour, like an intermittent fever, afflicting the soul of the one it lays low with burning fires at regular and fixed intervals." http://www.pathsoflove.com/acedia/acedia.html
Accessed 1. July, 2018.

describes them, the product of a "hermit's phantasmagoria" – created out of a serious need, a real lack of friends, of sympathetic and cheerful companions in the face of sickness and isolation.[34] This invention of "suitable fictions" to serve the function of self-restoration then involves, according to Nietzsche, a "certain amount of art," of artful deception.[35] Similar to the invention of imaginary friends, in *The Wanderer* Nietzsche also employs other deceptive and self-deceptive artistic strategies for his cure and self-restoration. One of these concerns what he calls the "art of *appearing* cheerful, objective, inquisitive." Nietzsche states in *The Wanderer*, that a "sufferer and self-denier speaks as though he were *not* a sufferer and self-denier."[36] It is thus the very intensity of subjective affect that provokes a rejection to 'appear' and to 'speak' from this subjective perspective and hence drives an insistence upon an objective, sober, and ultimately a gay scientific, perspective. But besides *acedia* what was Nietzsche suffering from and what was he denying?

There were the serious eye problems and gastrointestinal disorders that made him the victim of violent vomiting and severe migraines.[37] But aside

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[34] HH, Vol I, Preface, 1.

[35] HH, Vol I, Preface, 1, 2. Note here the described dangers and maladies of imposed solitude. This stands in contrast to what will be described below as the curative regimen of chosen solitude, and later, in thesis chapter two, as an indispensible ascetic procedure for the free spirited philosopher. 'Solitude' is in this sense both a potentially threatening poison and a fundamental, required medicine. It is, as Hutter remarks, "a very strong *pharmakon*" (Hutter, *Shaping the Future*, 69).

[36] HH, Vol II, Preface, 5.

[37] Nietzsche's physician Otto Eisner diagnosed Nietzsche's headaches as the result of "excessive mental activity" and an overtaxed nervous system. It is worth noting, as Moore describes it, how excessive nervousness along with dyspepsia were disorders that seemed to reach epidemic proportions in the 19th century. Hence Nietzsche in this respect was nothing exceptional. For a reading of Nietzsche through his migraines, see Pierre Klossowski's *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, chapter 2. Klossowski's treatment of the human body as a relational product of impulses and cerebral activity, and the shifting dynamics of automatism and alienation that take place in the 'person' or 'self,' as a product of and simultaneous owner of the 'body,' is beyond the reach of my perspective. However, Klossowski's description of

from these maladies, Nietzsche diagnoses himself as having been seriously sick with the unending disappointments of pessimism. In particular, Nietzsche has in mind the romantic version of pessimism exemplified by the philosophy of his earlier 'educator,' Schopenhauer. Years of indulgence in this area, according to Nietzsche's self-diagnosis, had a devastating effect upon his health. *The Wanderer* tells of "the long war such as I then waged with myself against the pessimism of weariness with life." The cure Nietzsche prescribes for himself amounts to an "anti-romantic self-treatment," whereby Nietzsche not only forbade himself to listen to romantic music but also denied himself his own (former) pessimist disposition.[38] The renunciation of romantic pessimism was, although necessary, also a forceful one. Disallowing himself pessimism was, like the invention of free-spirited friends, a cure undertaken out of self-care but also *against* himself, as a 'war waged' with and *overcoming of* himself – a wilful and vigorous determination to appear cheerful and to keep "composure in the face of life," a life which for Nietzsche at that time was one surrounded by extremely unfavourable circumstances. Having been able to live, and still wanting to go on living under such circumstances, is something which Nietzsche prides himself on and which he also claims is responsible for his attaining a new, changed perspective.

> (…) for it was then that I acquired for myself the proposition: 'a sufferer has no right to pessimism because he suffers!', it was then that I conducted with myself a patient and tedious campaign against the unscientific basic tendency of that romantic pessimism to interpret and inflate individual personal experience into universal judgments and indeed, into condemnations of the world…in short, it was then I turned my perspective around.[39]

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Nietzsche's relationship with therapeutics is helpful: "[Nietzsche] distrusted therapeutics; little by little, he managed to invent a therapy of his own derived from his own observations." (*Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* (Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 1998), 23).

[38] HH, Vol II, Preface, 3.

[39] HH, Vol II, Preface, 5.

A sufferer has 'no right' to pessimism precisely because his own condition disqualifies his pessimism as unscientific, as based not on objective observation and assessment but rather subjectively motivated by personal circumstances. What Nietzsche's own condition of suffering *needed*, what it demanded of him for his own self-restoration, for his recovering from himself, was a new attitude, a new and unexplored *clime of the soul*. The curative quality of the art of appearing cheerful and objective as described above is the first step in such a conversion. What Nietzsche is describing is a realisation brought on by particular, personal circumstances, but a realisation that *denies* the subjective as vantage point for philosophical assessment, interpretation and evaluation. Nietzsche's 'turning around' of perspective then amounts to not only a cure but a realisation; having no right to pessimism, what befits the sufferer is an attitude of cheerfulness and objectivity. A cheerfulness and objectivity which, in turn, now becomes a philosophical ideal. What Nietzsche effectively did was, as he himself describes, turn his will to health into a philosophy.[40]

The wilful self-discipline involved in this shifting of perspective indicates a deliberate, even feigned, attitude that makes a 'sufferer' and 'self-denier' speak as if he is *not* those things. Such an art of appearing cheerful and objective will involve, at least as impetus, some deception and false-coinage: "a certain amount of cynicism, perhaps, a certain amount of 'barrel'."[41] The Cynic, as Nietzsche claims later in *Dawn*, is someone who due to his insistence on appearing to be happy finally becomes happy.[42]

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[40] The relation between 1. insight attained experientially through the affective realm of ills and disillusionment, and 2. the call for an objective, sober distancing from oneself, shows the earlier mentioned dynamic perspective which performs a simultaneous intense consecration and dilation, an extreme up- and down-scaling, of viewpoint.

[41] HH, Vol II, Preface, 5.

[42] D, IV, 367. *Always to seem happy* "– they believed that their happiness was the best refutation of other ways of life, and in pursuit of that all they needed to do was always to seem happy: but by doing that they were bound in the long run to *become* happy! This, for example, was the fate of the Cynics."

Cheerfulness and the demand for sober objectivity in the face of suffering are, it may be said, a Nietzschean therapeutic regimen, an ethos that was to inform his mode of approach to his own life, philosophy and, importantly, the relation between the two. Importantly, the aim of such a regimen, as the above indicates, should not be taken as a way to eradicate pessimism altogether, but rather as a deliberate self-therapeutic strategy for denying the romantic version of it. Pessimism, in other words, is not disqualified as a possible philosophy, but disallowed as a philosophical perspective at times when one's own personal situation could be seen as the subjective source or root for it – and therefore when pessimism as a philosophy is not conducive but rather destructive for health. At future times, if and when we have managed to restore ourselves, we could however regain the right to what Nietzsche calls a "courageous" form of pessimism: "Optimism, for the purpose of restoration, so that some future time I could again have the *right* to be a pessimist – do you understand that?"[43]

***Dawn:*** **Morality as failed remedy and/or as personal key to happiness.**

If *Human, All Too Human* is a monument to a crisis, *Dawn* charts the slow process of recuperation that followed, a becoming healthier. Here the melancholy of *The Wanderer* seems to have subsided and the 'cheerfulness' assumes a less contrived and more playful tone. Having overcome the worst part of the so-called long war he fought with himself, Nietzsche can now focus not only on what must be *denied* in order to go on living, but also on what can be *affirmed* as advantageous for wellbeing and one's way of life in general. Nietzsche's therapeutics, having, according to Nietzsche himself at least, succeeded in the personal project of self-healing, may now open up

[43] HH, Vol II, Preface. It may even be proposed that Nietzsche seems to suggests that optimism and cheerfulness are fundamentally means for attaining, again, a 'right' to pessimism; that the real aim of restoration is in fact that of eventually being allowed back to pessimism in its 'courageous' form.

towards a broader view and appear as a project of inquiry, an analysis, diagnosis and critique of dominant healing procedures that claim to offer cures and medicines for the overcoming of ills.

*Dawn, Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality* is as its subtitle states a reflection on the prejudices of morality and as such foreshadows the genealogical investigation and critique taken up later, in more aggressive form, in *On The Genealogy of Morality, A Polemic*. *Dawn* is an 'underground' work in the sense that it is a "tunnelling into the foundations" and thus an undermining not so much of morals but rather of our *faith* in the popular version: 'morality of custom', *Sittlichkeit der Sitte*. The distinction is important since *Dawn* is itself, as Nietzsche states, a book informed by morality:

> (…) for [this book] does in fact exhibit a contradiction and is not afraid of it: in this book faith in morality is withdrawn – but why? *Out of morality*! Or what else should we call that which informs it – and *us*? for our taste is for more modest expressions (…) In us there is accomplished – supposing you want a formula – the *self-sublimation of morality*.[44]

As a precursor to what would later be unfolded as an extensive medical case study in the *Genealogy*, *Dawn* proposes that the remedies offered by popular morality have not only proved unsuccessful but have in fact worsened the condition they set out to cure.[45] According to *Dawn* we are yet to recover, we have not even begun to recover, from the universally believed "physicians of the soul" and their "unheard-of quack-doctoring with which, under the most glorious names, mankind has hitherto been accustomed to treat the sickness of its soul." Where, Nietzsche asks, is "he

[44] D, Preface, 4.

[45] "(…) what seemed to cure has in the long run produced something worse than that which it was supposed to overcome (…) the fact was not even noticed, indeed, that these instantaneous alleviations often had to be paid for with a general and profound worsening of the complaint (…)" D, I, 52.

who…will again take seriously the antidotes to these sufferings" and put the popular quack doctoring "in the pillory?"[46]

The general faith in the curative abilities of the prescriptions offered by popular morality (which for Nietzsche belongs together with what he calls popular medicine)[47] is totally unfounded. *In so far as* the goal of such prescriptions is to offer a cure for suffering and make life for the afflicted happier, a quick overview of the state of affairs would deliver no proof of such an achievement. It is, as Nietzsche notes, customary to judge recipes by their outcome, whether or not they deliver what they promise – a recipe for bread for example must successfully bring about a bread. But nothing indicates that thousands of years of submission to the prescriptions offered by popular morality have managed to diminish suffering, or make us any more happy than we were before the arrival of the 'good news.' If anything, quite the opposite: the barbarians were, according to Nietzsche, without a doubt happier than us.[48]

Although Nietzsche praises the many other achievements of popular morality and its founders, in its proposing itself as a remedy, it must be deemed a failure, a *failed therapy*. There are at least two reasons for this: 1. lack of appropriate knowledge, and 2. the belief in universal remedies. "The founder of Christianity" as Nietzsche explained in *The Wanderer* "was as goes without saying, not without the gravest shortcomings and prejudices in his knowledge of the human soul, and as a physician of the soul devoted to that infamous and untutored faith in universal medicine."[49]

The founder of Christianity and those who follow his teachings in other words lack the skills essential to the successful physician's art of healing. Firstly, diagnostics, the ability to locate and identify what is to be treated,

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[46] D, I, 52, 53.
[47] D, I, 11. *Popular morality and popular medicine.* – "…belong together and ought not to be evaluated so differently as they still are: both are the *most dangerous* pseudo-sciences"
[48] D,V, 429.
[49] WS, 83.

and secondly and most importantly, the skill to examine and treat each case individually. When it comes to ailments, one remedy does not suit all. As any good physician knows, different patients, afflictions and stages of illness require different types of care and cures. What is needed is therefore first of all broad, extensive knowledge as to the variety of illnesses and their causes, and secondly a wide variety of medicines to choose from. It is what Nietzsche calls the "vanity and over-ambitiousness" of the soul-soothers of Christian morality that have been their main failing; they were all "too anxious to offer prescriptions *for everybody*." Success in this area, Nietzsche continues, is reserved only for those who more modestly direct their prescriptions not to everybody or even limited circles, but to "a single individual."[50]

There is, however, a so-called 'other' morality which Nietzsche praises several times in *Dawn*, namely that which follows the example of Socrates. This kind of morality is an exception, since it offers precisely the *individual* a morality that functions as a "personal key" to his own happiness.[51] Unlike the popular version, Socratic morality does not demand over-enthusiastic devotion or self-sacrifice, but is a sober and severe morality of discipline that offers a route to personal distinction and satisfaction.

> How different an impression we receive from the whole morality of antiquity! All those Greek thinkers, however varied they may appear to us as individuals, seem as moralists like a gymnastics teacher who says to his pupil: 'Come! Follow me! Submit to my discipline! Then perhaps you will succeed in carrying off a prize before all the Hellenes'. Personal distinction – that is an antique virtue.[52]

Discipline in this case is not commanded, but rather recommended and made attractive. Socratic morality does not demand obedience but seeks to convince potential followers of its desirability based on the promise of

[50] D, III, 194.
[51] D, I, 9, 18.
[52] D, III, 207.

personal distinction. The severity of it will lie within the individual's own discretion and is not accompanied by fears of repercussions or punishment. What it amounts to is in other words a strict but voluntary, and hence (good)willed discipline, a *disciplina voluntatis* which one freely imposes upon oneself because its recommendations are in accordance with one's own individual wishes and desires, one's likes and dislikes, and thus with the attainment of one's own personal happiness.[53]

Nietzsche's appraisal of the Greek so-called 'gymnastic' moralists would seem to suggest that the therapeutics Nietzsche offers in his middle works can indeed be seen, as Ure, Ansell-Pearson suggest, as an attempt to revive an ancient tradition. And further, that Nietzsche might see the morality that follows Socrates' example as a possible alternative or antidote to the prescriptions offered by the "quack doctoring" of the popular *Sittlichkeit der Sitte*. But for all his admiration, Nietzsche is nevertheless sceptical as to whether we moderns, in spite of what Nietzsche calls our "so-called classical education," really know or can ever really know anything about moral and philosophical practices of antiquity.

> Did we learn to *practice* [my emphasis] unceasingly the fencing-art of conversation, dialectics? Did we learn to move as beautifully and proudly as they did, to wrestle, to throw, to box as they did? Did we learn anything of the asceticism practiced by all Greek philosophers? Were we *trained* [my emphasis] in a single one of the antique virtues and in the manner in which the ancients practiced it? Was all reflection on morality not utterly lacking in our education – not to speak of the only possible critique of morality, a brave and rigorous attempt to live in this or that morality? (…) were we ever shown the divisions of the day and of life (…) in the spirit of antiquity? (...) Not one real piece of ability, of new capacity, out of

[53] The term '*disciplina voluntatis'* also features, with negative connotations (i.e. not with a 'good will'), in Nietzsche's treatment of asceticism in *The Genealogy*, as will be discussed in the following chapter. For further mention of the phrase in Nietzsche's notes, see Horst Hutter, *Shaping the Future,* 43, footnote 4.

> years of effort! Only a knowledge of what men were once capable of knowing![54]

Our lack of practical training in the bodily arts, in dialectics, in the philosophers' asceticism and in the experiential attempts to critique morality, means that we are left with *only* knowledge; knowledge of what "men were once capable of knowing," if even that. "And what knowledge!" Nietzsche continues, "nothing grows clearer to me year by year than that the nature of Greek antiquity, however simple and universally familiar it may seem to lie before us, is very hard to understand, indeed is hardly accessible at all."[55]

This is, I believe, crucial to understanding Nietzsche's approach to ancient Greek ideals of therapeutic practices as presented in *The Wanderer* and *Dawn*. While Nietzsche in these works undoubtedly expresses admiration for Socratic-inspired morality, which he repeatedly underlines as 'other' to and hence exempt from his critique of popular morality, he also clearly states here that not only have we had no practical training in the ancient Greek virtues and hence possess no knowhow in (but only knowledge *of*) this area, the meagre knowledge we do possess is highly questionable. We may think ourselves familiar with Greek antiquity but, for Nietzsche, our understanding of and relation to the ancient world of the Greeks is a self-delusion. It is not only very difficult for us to understand, but almost completely inaccessible. Based on this, I argue, it would be incoherent to suggest that Nietzsche is encouraging a return to an ancient Greek model, or a reactivation of specific therapeutic practices or spiritual exercises created by various philosophical schools of antiquity.

Although Nietzsche clearly does favour the Socratic, individualistic version over popular, prescriptive morality, he does so primarily from the point of view of practical or pragmatic evaluation of the former's actual

[54] D, III, 195.
[55] Ibid.

ability to fulfil the therapeutic function it promises. Its success, according to Nietzsche, is based on sufficient insight and sophisticated know-how as to how and by what means the goal of happiness may be individually pursued and achieved – as opposed to 'pseudo-scientific' popular morality's failure in this area which in contrast is based on ignorance and lack of know-how as to the means of achieving this same goal. What informs Nietzsche's appreciation of a Socratic *discipline voluntatis* does not, I propose, concern the content of ancient Greek practices but rather the very notion of *askesis* as practice.

What Nietzsche laments in the quote above is that we have not learned "to practice," that we were never *trained* in the bodily arts, the dialectics, the asceticism and the lived critique of morality as the Greeks were. This does not mean that Nietzsche is suggesting we attempt to undertake training in the specific ancient arts and virtues mentioned, but rather that what we lack is knowing *how* to 'to practice,' how to 'train' – the very endeavour of *askesis* that makes possible transformation of knowledge into a *techne*, in the sense of skilled knowhow that would produce, as Nietzsche states above, real and new 'capacities' and 'abilities.' These would necessarily, and crucially, differ from those of the Greeks since they would be capacities and abilities of our own making, a knowhow relevant to and produced by us. While we will thus never be able to train and become accomplished in *their* art of living, what we may still access and strategically appropriate from what Nietzsche calls the 'spirit of antiquity' is precisely this, the concept, rather than the particular content, of the ancient Greek notion of *askesis*. An experiential practice that would allow us to gain not mere knowledge *of* but knowhow *in* real and relevant practical capacities and abilities. That, is *our* art of living.

This means that when it comes to developing specifically curative practices, again this does not entail adopting those of the schools of antiquity nor rejuvenating the particular therapeutic remedies prescribed by them, but rather inventing, constructing and developing them oneself. There

can only ever be one type of prescription, namely self-prescription. "It seems to me", Nietzsche reflects, that one is much more "frivolous" when adhering to prescriptions from without than when one "takes care of his health himself."[56] Frivolous because rules imposed from without make one adhere unthinkingly, without proper attention paid to whether the prescriptions undertaken are in fact successful in creating the desired results. Self-prescriptions, on the other hand, necessitate that one carefully observe and assess and hence become intimately familiar with and attuned to one's own state of health and what affects it. Taking care of one's own health then requires not only strict self-discipline but also daring self-experimentation. In order to be able to prescribe correctly for oneself, to know from experience whether a prescription is useful or harmful for me, it becomes necessary to engage in an extensive and experiential practice of self-testing. It requires an experiential knowhow that can only be achieved through trial and error. To make oneself into a site for such experimentation which will either prove or disprove the validity of one's self-curative prescriptions, means then to offer oneself up as the site of a lived medico-moral experiment. It is therefore necessarily a self-sacrificing, but of a very different kind to the one demanded by popular morality as described earlier. For Nietzsche, "the fairest virtue of the great thinker is the magnanimity with which (…) he intrepidly, often with embarrassment, often with sublime mockery and smiling – offers himself and his life as a sacrifice."[57] Self-sacrifice understood in this sense as daring self-experimentation is and continues to be an open-ended practice; there are, Nietzsche exclaims, "so many experiments still to make! There are so many futures still to dawn!"[58]

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[56] D, IV, 322.
[57] D, V, 459
[58] D, III, 187. "I submit only to the law which I myself have given, in great things and in small. There are so many experiments still to make! There are so many futures still to dawn!"

Although there can be no educators but only self-educators in the disciplinary and experimental art of self-therapeutics those who have themselves attained insight based on experience, in the practical sense of knowhow, may nevertheless be called upon for assistance – not, importantly, "as an educator but as one who has educated himself and who thus *knows how it is done*." Considering that Nietzsche did manage, according to his own testimony, to eventually restore himself, that his middle works tell the story of an illness and recovery, these same works may be read as the log of a *successful experiment*. Hence, it may be suggested that Nietzsche proposes himself as someone who may be called upon for assistance, as someone who has educated himself in the curative art and thus 'knows how it is done.' This, at least, is Nietzsche's own hope as seen in the foreword to *The Wanderer* quoted earlier:

> Shall my experience – the history of an illness and recovery, for a recovery was what eventuated – have been my personal experience alone?… Today I would like to believe the reverse; again and again I feel sure that my travel books were not written solely for myself, as sometimes seems to be the case (…) May I venture to commend them (… ) above all (… ) to you.[59]

[59] As Parkes describes, Nietzsche's 'travel' books are not only referring to the conditions under which they were written, but also to the fact that "they encourage the reader to undertake some psychological wandering to other cultures, climes and times." Parkes addresses the notion of climes as metaphorical constructs, conducive for understanding Nietzsche's naturalistic perspective, but more so for illuminating the depth-psychology aspects at work; as 'landscapes' of the interior pointing towards pre-Socratic panpsychism and the Augustinian 'inner realm.' Parkes thus focuses on a mode of travel that "does not necessitate actually moving from place to place through literal space," but rather psychological excursions into the strata of the individual and of culture; "an inner space of planets, moons and galaxies; an 'inscape' of land and sea, rock and waves, sun and winds," the whole "vast realm within the human soul" that corresponds to the world of external nature." (*Composing the Soul*, 124-127). Keeping in line with my definition of *askesis* as a concrete practice anchored in the 'smallest things.' my focus is upon the material and mundane dimension of 'literal space,' physiological rather than psychological wanderings, and actual rather than 'inner' climates.

In light of this, I would now like to draw an outline of what I propose may be seen as the curative element of Nietzsche's proposed *askesis* as presented in *The Wanderer* and *Dawn*.

**The Smallest Things: Care, design, *diaita*.**

> When we look around us we can always encounter people who have eaten eggs all their lives and have never noticed that the longer ones are the best tasting, who do not know that a thunderstorm is beneficial to the bowels (…) that speaking well or listening intently at mealtimes is harmful to the stomach.[60]

It is easy to dismiss Nietzsche's assessment of the shape of eggs and the benefits of certain meteorological events as irrelevant, eccentric or even embarrassing pseudo-scientific observations. But this would be to overlook the particular body-image and concept of health as described earlier as well as the wider cultural context in which they were conceived. Discoveries in biology and medical sciences, not least the discovery of the 'metabolism', meant that in Nietzsche's time a great amount of amateur interest was taken in health, and particularly the role of the digestive system and the effect of meteorology upon it. Those of Nietzsche's contemporaries who had the means travelled around Europe to various health resorts, spas and mountain springs, searching for climates, qualities of air and light that could soothe their ailments, calm their nerves and invigorate their metabolic system. Ailments, in the words of Susan Sontag, became reason "for a life that was mainly travelling" and further "a pretext for leisure, and for dismissing bourgeois obligations."[61] The previously discussed preoccupation with

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[60] WS, 6.

[61] Susan Sontag has described the Romantics' well-known infatuation with illness as signifier of an artistic nature as exemplified in Shelley's letter to Keats: "[your] consumption is a disease particularly fond of people who write such good verses as you have done (…)." According to Sontag, the Romantics "invented invalidism as a pretext for leisure, and for dismissing bourgeois obligations in order to live only for one's art." She further

health meant that excessive nervousness and varieties of dyspepsia seemed, as Moore notes, to reach "epidemic proportions," particularly the digestive system (which was understood to transform one *Kraft* into another) "had a peculiar grip on the Victorian imagination" – and Nietzsche was no exception in this respect.[62] These issues also permeated popular philosophy of the time, in the shape of a 'medical' mode of materialism, represented by for example Ludwig Feuerbach and his student Jacob Moleschott's hugely popular dietetic ontology. Thomas Brobjer suggests that Nietzsche along with Feuerbach can be seen as representatives of "what might be called the 'you are what you eat' school."[63] A term taken from Moleschott's slogan '*Der Mensch ist, was er iBt*', playing on the verbs 'to be' and 'to eat.' Inspired by Moleschott's "gastrointestinal vision of the world," Feuerbach suggests an extreme materialist reduction that attempts to overcome the problem of the mind-body dualism which is, understandably, sometimes linked to Nietzsche: "food is the link we have been searching for (…) only sustenance is substance (…) where there is no fat, there is no flesh, no brain, no spirit (…) no thought." Because what makes living possible is food, thought, as the activity of the brain, must be seen as conditioned by food, by food that "becomes blood," blood that "becomes heart and brain, the stuff of thought and attitudes."[64] In this perspective not only is man what he eats, what he eats is transformed into the material, the stuff, of thinking. Although Nietzsche saw himself as the "sternest opponent" of such

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describes the sufferer as a "dropout, a wanderer in endless search of the healthy place" and lists locations considered particularly beneficial for health in the 19th century as those of Italy and various Mediterranean islands; places that in the 20th century would be substituted for mountain and desert landscapes. Sontag, *Illness and Metaphor* and *AIDS and it's Metaphors* (New York: Picador, 1988), 26-43.

[62] Moore, 'Nietzsche, Medicine and Meteorology,' 79. Worth mentioning in this context is Walt Whitman's 'Manly Health and Training' from 1858.

[63] Brobjer, 'Nietzsche's reading and knowledge of natural science, an overview,' in *Nietzsche and Science*, eds. Gregory Moore and Thomas Brobjer (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing), 21-51.

[64] Feuerbach quoted in Brobjer, 'Nietzsche's reading and knowledge of natural science, an overview,' 21-51.

reductionist materialisms, the above perspective must be kept in mind at least as the cultural background in which Nietzsche lived.[65] We may assume that the general popularity of Molechott's gastrointestinal perspective and preoccupation with dietetics more or less implicitly formed the backdrop against which Nietzsche presents his observations in this area; furthermore, Nietzsche like many of his contemporaries, travelled around Europe searching for, or testing out, various climates and diets that could soothe his migraines, nerves and gastric problems – and as such engaged concretely in a health-oriented, peripatetic style of life that cannot be separated from his philosophy's focus on this particular theme.

Although Nietzsche in the above aphorism does acknowledge that the examples concerning eggs and thunderstorms may seem inadequate, "one is" he argues "bound to admit that most people see the *closest things of all* very badly and very rarely pay heed to them."[66] To Nietzsche, this lack of observation and attention is, contrary to what most think, not at all a matter of indifference: the general disregard of the smallest things is according to Nietzsche the "chief cause" of almost all our earthly frailties, physical and psychological alike: "Being *unknowledgeable in the smallest and most everyday things* and failing to keep an eye on them, – this it is that transforms the earth for so many into a 'vale of tears'."[67]

In *The Wanderer and His Shadow* and in *Dawn* Nietzsche makes several references to the common neglect and disrespect shown towards the "closest" things. Several times he bemoans that they are not made the object of "reflection and reform" and are deprived of any serious "intellectual and artistic consideration."[68] But what exactly are those small things that are closest to us and what makes them of such importance? They are described as concerning what is beneficial and harmful to us "in the institution of our

[65] GM, III, 16.
[66] WS, 6.
[67] WS, 6.
[68] WS, 5.

mode of life." More concretely Nietzsche refers to the division of the day, social intercourse, leisure, eating and sleeping, housing, clothing, weather and vegetation. The closest, smallest things are the mundane things that constitute the way we live day by day and the material, social and geographical climate in which we dwell.[69]

Since childhood we have, according to Nietzsche, been educated in the belief that our individual requirements, our needs within twenty-four hours of the day, are not worthy of our attention and care. We have been taught by priests, teachers, metaphysicians and "idealists of all kinds," that they are to be viewed not only with indifference but as something contemptible, compared to the objective to which we are told to concern ourselves and invest all of our concern, namely "the service of the state, the advancement of science, or the accumulation of reputation and possessions, all as the means of doing service to mankind as a whole".[70] The problem, according to Nietzsche, is not that we lack knowledge, but that it has been *artificially diverted*, directed by our idealist teachers, in the wrong direction. Namely, away from the personal and closest things and towards those furthest and most impersonal ones.[71] It is this arrogant neglect and devaluation that we must attempt to counteract by redirecting our intellectual and artistic attention, so that the ignorance and disregard that has been bred into us concerning what is "beneficial to us and what is harmful in the institution of our mode of life" may be overturned. Just as the prescriptions of a physician imposed on us from without, as seen, lead to thoughtlessness and lack of

[69] As will be discussed in thesis chapter three, these things will later be compartmentalised more schematically into the four categories of nutrition, place, climate and recreation in Nietzsche's 'Casuistry of Selfishness' as laid out in *Ecce Homo*.

[70] Nietzsche refers this issue also back to an ancient Greek context where what he calls the "arrogant neglect of the human for the benefit of the human race" was already fought against by Socrates who "loved to indicate the true compass and content of all reflection and concern with an expression of Homer's: it comprises, he said, nothing other than 'that which I encounter of good and ill in my own house'". (WS, 6).

[71] WS, 6.

attention paid to ourselves, the result of not knowing what is harmful and beneficial in the everyday institution of our mode of life is according to Nietzsche that "habit and frivolity" come to rule unthinkingly.[72] And just as we should attempt not to depend on physicians but rather become our own physicians, so we may, by turning our intellectual and artistic attention to the things closest to us, attempt to break free of the teachings that have reduced us to "a disgraceful dependence and bondage – I mean to that, at bottom wholly unnecessary dependence on physicians, teachers and curers of souls who still lie like a burden on the whole of society."[73]

What becomes clear from the above is that Nietzsche's proposed care of the smallest things of everyday living, is (also) an attempt at liberation – from physicians, metaphysicians and 'curers of souls' and from their popular morality and medicines, but also an attempt to break free from, to unlearn, the ideals that they have bred into us. Or in other words, it is in the area of the smallest things that a liberation from dominant ideals and hence independence from those who teach them may commence. In order to free ourselves of our "disgraceful" and "wholly unnecessary dependence" on teachers and curers of souls, the task consists not only of developing knowledge but also learning a curative art of everyday living concerned with the institution of our mode of life. According to Nietzsche, in order for that which has hitherto been called practical morality to be transformed into an aspect of the "science and art of healing," what are needed are promoters of health who will teach "care of the body" and "dietary theory."[74]

This is why, I propose, belonging to the earlier described *discipline voluntatis* is an especially designed *dietetic*. While popularity of the theme of nutrition and digestion among Nietzsche's contemporaries has already been mentioned, the theme necessarily also links to the ancient tradition

[72] WS, 5.
[73] Ibid.
[74] D, III, 202.

where the concept of dietetics does not only relate to diet in the narrow sense of physical food.[75] In its original Greek sense, *diaite* refers to a much broader area and included " (…) physical exercises, bathing and massage, sleep, sexual activities, and one's general habits and way of life (…) the verb *diaitomai* – from which the word *diaita* is derived – means '*I live my life in a certain way*'."[76] Hence, dietetics as it will be used here, is the name given to the regulating and disciplined stylisation of one's way of life through what may be called regimen concerned with the physical life, regimen being the Latin translation of *diaita*, as noted by Agamben:

> In ancient medicine there is a term – *diaita* – that designates the regime of life, the 'diet' of an individual or group (…) [*Diaita*] is something like the mode of life, variously articulated according to seasons and individuals, best adapted to good health.[77]

A regimen may then be taken as a therapeutic system that involves diet, understood in the sense above as a practice concerned with an organisation

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[75] For a succinct contemporary treatment of Nietzsche's philosophy's relation to physical food see for example Michel Onfray, *Appetites for Thought: Philosophers and Food*, trans. Donald Barry and Stephen Muecke (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), 64-75. For a useful rendering of Nietzsche's expanded concept of 'food' see Hutter, *Shaping the Future*, chapter 5. Here Hutter encompasses questions regarding place, climate and recreation under the general theme of 'nourishment,' understood in the broadest sense as any form of intake that may nourish the body, soul and spirit composites of the human totality. We must, as Hutter states, think of 'food' not just as gross material foods and drinks, but broaden the concept to involve "everything that is taken in by human beings. Human totalities are involved in metabolic exchanges with the world that includes also the air we breathe and exhale, the things we read, the ideas we accept (…) what we see and hear." More schematically, Hutter suggests three different kinds of food: material food for the body, food for the soul in the form of things read and music heard, and food for the mind or spirit in the form of ideas received and accepted. (Hutter, *Shaping the Future*, 146-7).

[76] Yorgos Tassaoulas, 'Health-Hygeine,' in *Hygieia: Health, Illness, Treatment from Homer to Galen*, eds. Nicholas Stampolidis and Yorgos Tassoulas (Athens: Museum of Cycladic Art, 2014), 102-3.

[77] Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2016), 225.

of life and governance of the body – a "set of rules or guidelines" intended to ensure well-being.[78]

What follows is an outline of what may be called Nietzsche's *diaita* or bodily regimen in the context of *The Wanderer* and *Dawn*. I emphasise that these are not Nietzsche's own, but my construction. In these two related texts, Nietzsche does not himself offer or propose any cohesive form or content for such regimen, and there are obvious arguments for why to artificially construct one would seem in discord with Nietzsche's intention. Nevertheless, keeping in mind that all prescriptions must be self-prescriptions, in order to assess the concrete implications of Nietzsche's own definition of these two books as "health prescriptions," I will attempt to piece together a list of five general regimen. These will be compartmentalised as follows: *time of day*, *sleep*, *silence*, *solitude and social intercourse* and finally, *climate and occupation.*

**Nietzsche's Regimen.**

*Time of day.* The preference of one particular time of day has already been noted, namely that of the morning. Mornings, together with "sunshine, forests and springs" are, Nietzsche says, the teacher of the "philosophy of psychical health and recovery."[79] This favouritism is also reflected in Nietzsche's recommendation as to when to pass judgment on one's work, oneself and on life in general. "It is not wise," Nietzsche states, "to let the evening judge the day" since the weariness and fatigue caused by a long day's strain will tend to cause unnecessarily negative assessment. To reflect on the day's work when one is tired means one will be prone to "melancholy conclusions" which are often not fair representations of the quality of the work, but merely the reflections of one's tiredness. Although

[78] Bryan S Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory* (London: SAGE Publishing, 2008),152.
[79] AOM, 356.

we usually don't allow ourselves the leisure to pass judgement while we are still in a state of energy, tending to save it for when we are spent, it is recommendable to judge at a time when strength and good will are still available. If we do so "we should no longer agree with him who waited for the seventh day and its repose before he decided that everything was very beautiful – he had let the *better* moment go by."[80] In a wider perspective, this also indicates that one ought not to pass judgments upon existence during periods dominated by exhaustion and weariness. In such conditions of low vitality, one must attempt to abstain from making evaluations since the value or lack thereof we would bestow upon things, our own existence included, would necessarily be tainted by our unfavourable condition. The importance of knowing the right time of day thus involves knowing when to perform – and when to abstain from – evaluation and conclusions regarding ourselves, our work and life in general. The importance of 'time of day' in other words means paying close attention to our general state, the levels of vigour and exhaustion, and, most importantly, recognising and appreciating the importance of *timing*. It is not enough to know what is beneficial or harmful but precisely *when* they are, within the twenty-four hours of the day and the curves of energy moving between dawn and evening and within different stages of life, vitality and health – all of this reflecting Nietzsche's critique of pessimism as discussed earlier. For Nietzsche, our physiological condition not only informs but guides our conclusions, which is why we must pay such close attention to the issue of timing: "When you are physically tired you will bestow on things a pale and tired colouration, when you are feverish you will turn them into monsters! Does your morning not shine upon things differently from your evening?"[81]

*Sleep.* The curative benefit of sleep is not only recommended for physical exhaustion but also as a cure for melancholia and self-loathing; when one

[80] D, IV, 317.
[81] D, V, 539.

has "had enough" of oneself and when one is weary with life, the best is "*plenty of sleep*, real and metaphorical."[82] The function of sleep does not only serve restoration but can also means a deliberate withdrawal from an unfavourable situation. In fact, knowing how to fall asleep at the right time is, according to Nietzsche, "the art in the wisdom of life."[83] In the 'metaphorical' sense, sleep as a cure for world weariness, disappointment and general ennui facilitates an important rest from oneself; a distancing or retreat from oneself and from the realm of personal affect. Sleep, in the 'real' sense, as a minimisation of sense impression, a quieting of thought and consciousness, here becomes a deliberate form of *hibernation* induced at the right time, namely when one is at a low point of strength and self-regard, in order that one may awaken again to more favourable circumstances. A strategic shutting down of the cognitive and nervous system, the "great stream of thought and feeling," and a minimisation of the metabolism undertaken, like the hibernating animal, as a self-protective strategy of withdrawal in order to reach 'a new morning,' to awaken again rejuvenated to sunshine, spring and more favourable living circumstances.[84]

*Silence.* Rest however is not always to be sought in sleep, but also in a wakeful condition: "If, as the thinker does, one usually dwells in a great stream of thought and feeling, and pursues this stream even in nocturnal dreams, then what one desires of *life* is rest and silence."[85] As dreams also activate our mental faculty and stir our emotions, peace and repose must also be sought in the waking state in the form of silence. Since the thinker spends a significant proportion of his life engaged in the activity, the great stream, of thinking and feeling, he must be sure to designate a part of his waking life to non-thinking and a quietening of his emotions. The curative effect of "lying still and thinking little" is according to Nietzsche "the

[82] D, IV, 376.
[83] Ibid.
[84] D, V, 572.
[85] Ibid.

cheapest medicine for all sicknesses of the soul."[86] Stillness and quietude are also involved in the appreciation of what Nietzsche terms "*great silence*," aligned to or inspired by the 'tremendous muteness' of the sea: "Now all is still! The sea lies there pale and glittering, it cannot speak (…) This tremendous muteness which suddenly overcomes us is lovely and dreadful (…) I begin to hate speech…even thinking."[87] This overwhelming muteness which is both lovely and dreadful provokes not only a repose from but distaste for speaking and intellectual activity. Inspired by the sea, it induces a condition that makes the desire to speak and to think cease, and as such life offers us a rest, a *refugium*, from reflection and communication. The benefits of such silent retreat can however also act as a teacher, a so-called school for the speaker: if "one stays silent for a year one unlearns chattering and learns to speak."[88]

*Solitude and Social Intercourse*. "One should," Nietzsche says, "take care not to live in an environment in which one can neither preserve a dignified silence nor communicate what is of most moment to us, so that our complaints and needs and the whole story of our distress must remain untold."[89] The reason for this is that such an environment will worsen the already disagreeable state that caused our complaints in the first place. In a situation in which one's anguish cannot be fully communicated or understood, one will develop a dismay with oneself in appearing the constant "complainant." While most of us act as if we have no choice in this matter and go on living in disagreeable contexts like these, we do in fact always have a choice, namely to live "where one *is ashamed* to speak of oneself and does not need to."[90] The benefits of solitude are the most

[86] AOM, 361.
[87] D, V, 423.
[88] D, IV, 347.
[89] D, IV, 364.
[90] Ibid.

persistent of Nietzsche's regimen.[91] It is also the necessary condition for the previously mentioned regimen; for the *great silence* and for *sleep* – that curative state of hibernation in which one is always alone. Solitude is also a precondition for thinking in the affirmative sense. In order to become what Nietzsche calls a "thinker" one must spend "at least a third of the day" away from people, and since for Nietzsche even reading means to be in the presence of people, namely the book's author, no one can become a thinker if he does not spend at least a third of the day away from books.[92] But just as silence is a teacher of speech, so solitude serves a positive role in terms of sociability. Solitude provides what Nietzsche calls "distant perspectives." Being away from people offers an opportunity to think well of those whom, in close contact, have agitated us and activated our dislikes. Solitude means release for an anxious, aggravated disposition to whom being in the company of many removes one from oneself and as a result creates aversion: "When I am among the many I live as the many do, and I do not think as I really think; after a time it always seems as though they want to banish me from myself and rob me of my soul – and I grow angry with everybody and fear everybody."[93] To retire to solitude is to cure oneself of such inadvisable passions of anger, fear and blame. After confrontation with the company of many, one requires solitude in order to, as Nietzsche says, "grow good again," to again think well of other people and oneself. But solitude is also something like a testing of oneself, an exercise in fortitude and resilience. One of the main "deficiencies," a universal flaw in contemporary education and cultivations, is that "no one learns, no one

[91] As noted, 'solitude' is a recurring theme of Nietzsche's *askesis*. This is affirmed by Hutter, who proposes Nietzsche's *Einsamkeitslehre* as the one regimen under which all others may be lodged (See *Shaping the Future*, chapter 2). I will discuss the regimen of solitude as an ascetic procedure in thesis chapter two, and eventually problematise the essential place of solitude within Nietzsche's *askesis* in thesis chapter three.
[92] WS, 324.
[93] D, V, 491.

strives after, no one teaches – *the endurance of solitude*."[94] In this way, the prescription of solitude is to be taken as a cure or tonic after social interactions which have left one in an unfavourable state of agitation, a return to oneself and to how one "really thinks" – furthermore it is also an exercise of strengthening which one must or should learn. However, while the learning of solitude is crucial, the thinker nevertheless needs company "now and then so as afterwards to embrace his solitude the more tenderly." And if and when such company is not available in the flesh, one may either invent suitable friends (as discussed earlier in relation to Nietzsche's own creation of the 'free spirit' as the product of a hermit's phantasmagoria) or they may be sought amongst the dead: "As a substitute for the living" the thinker has "the dead."[95] Long dead philosophers for example, of the kind who "like chestnuts which have been put on the fire and taken from it again at the proper time" have grown "gentle, well-tasting and nutritious" to us.[96]

*Climate and Occupation.* In regard to the physical landscape and the particular climate in which one dwells, a few preferences have already been noted for their beneficial effect; near the mute sea, "sunlight, springs and forests" and what Nietzsche calls "southerly" living.[97] This may now be expanded on slightly further via descriptions drawn up in the aphorism entitled 'Spiritual and physical transplantation as remedy.' Here Nietzsche proposes that various cultures amount to "spiritual climates" and that each such climate is "especially harmful or healthful to this or that organism." He further proposes that 'history' (which he defines here as knowledge of these various cultures) is a *pharmacology* and that what is needed is a physician who will be able to put this pharmacology to use and "send each person to the climate favourable precisely to him – for a period of time or forever." Such a "spiritual regimen is paralleled by a physical one," namely a

[94] D, V, 443.
[95] D, V, 566.
[96] D, V, 482.
[97] D, V, 566.

"medical geography"; through this physical regimen of medical geography, one must experiment in order to discover which particular regions of the earth can offer him curative effects, and which ones, on the other hand, may have negative, even degenerate effects upon his health. No one single clime will, according to Nietzsche, do as a universal remedy. Each must explore and attain knowhow in such pharmacology and in this way become his own geographical medic. Then he will be able to "transplant" himself for as long as is needed, perhaps forever, to the specific climate that will prove useful in order for his "inherited physical infirmities to be conquered." "In the end," Nietzsche quips, "the whole earth will be a collection of health resorts."[98] In order to undertake this medical geography in practice, one must then become a traveller; to experientially discover, through trial and error, which climates and geographical locations are beneficial to one's particular constitution. Such an undertaking requires a way of life free of the duties and responsibilities of an institutional vocation. A job is precisely what dictates where we live but also of how we live and with whom. In fact our vocation is our "greatest prejudice"; it ties us to a rigid, un-free lifestyle in which, precisely, the division of our day, the people and places we frequent are not our own choices but are imposed upon us.[99] This reflects what Nietzsche had earlier described as the problem of philosophy as institutional vocation as exemplified by the case of Kant: "Kant clung to his university, submitted himself to its regulations, retained the appearance of religious belief, endured to live among colleagues and students." Kant, in other words, was incapable of constructing for himself an art of living, and, as with any university philosopher, had to live with the prejudices imposed upon and bred into him by the lifestyle forced on him.[100] In short

[98] WS, 188.
[99] D, III, 186.
[100] It may be added that Kant remarked: "The ancient Greek philosophers, such as Epicurus, Zeno, and Socrates, remained more faithful to the ideal of the philosopher than their modern counterparts have done. (…) The point is not always to speculate; ultimately, we must think of actual practice.

philosophy as *Lebensordnung* as opposed to the professorial, university kind requires the creation of a disciplined *diaita* in which our intellectual and artistic attention is directed towards and concerned with the smallest things. In order to do so, the thinker must liberate himself from the prejudices imposed upon him so that the division of the day, the company he keeps and the locality he frequents may become of his own making, must become our own carefully considered art of living – an art that consists of a deliberate, personal shaping of the mundane details of our day-to-day life.[101]

In this chapter I have drawn up a preliminary picture of what Nietzsche's bodily-oriented *askesis* may, in part, amount to in practice. In the context of *The Wanderer* and *Dawn*, the *askesis* takes on a particular curative focus which I propose is not only informed by an attempted revival of Hellenistic therapeutics, but is also a reflection of popular themes in Nietzsche's time and, not least, his own particular situation at the time of writing. Although I do not propose that Nietzsche's continuous engagement with questions of health and illness should be simplified into nothing more than the result of his own personal struggle with various debilitating ailments, the importance placed on repose and convalescence in *The Wanderer* and *Dawn* is impossible to read without reference to Nietzsche's personal situation: they contain, not only but also, a record of Nietzsche's own attempt at a self-cure – which, as he states, informed a break with his own former ideas and philosophical ideals. It is in this sense that the aim of Nietzsche's curative *askesis* may also be seen as an attempt at liberation – a liberation from

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Nowadays, however, he who lives in a way which conforms with that he teaches is taken to be a dreamer". Quoted in Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 267.

[101] D, V, 435. "(…) – the everyday, hourly pitiableness of our environment which we constantly overlook, the thousand tendrils of this or that little, fainthearted sensation which grows out of our neighbourhoods, out of our job, our social life, out of the way we divide up the day. If we neglect to notice this little weed, we shall ourselves perish of it unnoticed!"

'idealist' physicians, teachers, soul-soothers and as such, a breaking free from our 'wholly unnecessary' dependence on their proposed remedies, cures and consolations. As such it is also a liberation, viewed in self-therapeutic terms, for Nietzsche from his own former teachers (Schopenhauer), philosophical ideals (pessimism) and ambitions (an academic career) – in short a liberation from himself, a self-overcoming.

By emphasising that what Nietzsche appropriates from the ancient tradition is the concept and not the content of *askesis* – the experimental and experiential approach to making philosophy into a lived, bodily practice and not the particular practices of the Hellenistic version of an art of living – I have sought to propose a perspective beyond the therapeutic one offered in contemporary scholarship informed by Hadot's notion of *askesis* as inwardly oriented exercises of the soul. In order to defend this view, it is necessary to return to a quote from Nietzsche's unpublished notes which is often taken as the basis of the Hellenistic-inspired therapeutic interpretation:

> So far as praxis is concerned, I view the various moral schools [of ancient philosophy] as experimental laboratories in which a considerable number of recipes for the art of living have been thoroughly practiced and lived to the hilt. The result of all of their experimenting belongs to us today as our legitimate property.[102]

While this quote clearly indicates that Nietzsche saw the appropriation of 'recipes' taken from the ancient tradition as legitimate, highly useful and recommendable, the suggestion that Nietzsche to the same extent would recommend the form, function and overall *aim* of certain Stoic or Epicurean 'spiritual exercises,' is I think uncertain. What, in my view, is suggested in the above is that when it comes to *praxis* a variety of existing recipes have already been lived through and thus thoroughly tested out in the flesh. We can therefore benefit from the results of all their experiments, by selectively

[102] KSA 9, 15 (59).

taking from them *when* and *where* as we see fit, in order to create further lived experiments that correspond to different, namely *our*, particular situations – and hence also for other aims than those of the ancient schools. Nietzsche's approach to the 'experimental laboratories' of the ancient moral schools is in other words itself experimental. While Nietzsche himself does borrow from the Stoic, Epicurean or any other school's medicine cabinet when appropriate, when he cannot find what he needs he invents and tests out new medicines himself – medicines which, since they have now been tested, lived through and proven successful by Nietzsche, may then be added to the growing collection of recipes and, as Nietzsche states, recommended to 'you.' Again, this would not involve 'you' simply copying these Nietzschean recipes or medicines. If Nietzsche's proposed therapeutics is first of all a self-therapeutics, it consists in creating a bricolage for oneself, a rich variety and combination of existing recipes for the art of living and the invention of new ones that suit one's own particular constitution and situation – at a particular time, in a particular place. In order for it to suit and be carefully adjusted to one's own particular constitution, it must ultimately be construed and thoroughly tested out by oneself.

Finally, if as I have suggested, what Nietzsche appropriates is the very idea of an experiential and experimental practice, this is, I would propose, essentially at odds with the aspiration of Hellenistic therapeutics understood as an attempt to overcome disturbances and attain perfect peace of mind. When the philosopher becomes a living laboratory for philosophy, his or her life, in the shape of a medico-moral experiment, is by definition a *hazardous* life. This is precisely why, according to Nietzsche, for the philosopher more so for than anyone else, the question of great health, of being able to attain health again and again is crucial. Remembering Nietzsche's concept of health as one that is not opposed to sickness but on the contrary allows for sickness, the philosopher's lot is to be more sick than anyone else precisely because he continues to expose his life and his

health to the experimental risks involved in being a living laboratory. Great health is what "grants to the free spirit the dangerous privilege of living experimentally and of being allowed to offer itself to adventure."[103] Hence, for the philosopher, the question of great health is fundamental precisely *because* philosophy involves the health risks involved in wilful self-experimentation and not because philosophy is a way of life aimed at *overcoming* disturbances that pose a threat or danger to a state of tranquillity or to one's perfect peace of mind. What Nietzsche's concern with the theme of health and his curative *askesis* shows is, I propose, that philosophy is essentially a *dangerous* way of life.

[103] HH, Vol I, Preface, 4.

## CHAPTER TWO. Ascetics without Ascetic Ideals. Nietzsche's agonistic *askesis* in the *Genealogy of Morals*.

In the preceding chapter I discussed the curative aspect of Nietzsche's *askesis* in a context of Hellenistic-inspired philosophical therapeutics. That is, within a context in which *askesis* has not yet assumed its later, and now common, meaning of religiously informed renunciation, but also, importantly, in a context in which *askeo* had already been transported from its original, athletic realm referring specifically to the bodily exercises undertaken by men training for Olympic athletics. [1]

Whereas the movement from Greco-Roman to early Christian versions or meanings of *askesis* may, as Pierre Hadot's work testify, show a close connection or continuity, there is also a distinct point of contact between the athletic and the early Christian versions.[2] Just as the philosophers of late

[1] I take the common meaning to correspond to the definition given of 'asceticism' in for example the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "severe self-discipline and avoiding of all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons." A conceptual definition of asceticism as a 'performance' intended to inaugurate a new subjectivity, social relations and an alternative symbolic universe can be found in Richard Valantasis, 'Constructions of Power in Asceticism,' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol 63, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 775-821. For a comprehensive reference work on the subject considered within a contemporary context see Valantasis and Wimbush, eds., *Asceticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[2] Hadot's influential definition of *askesis* as 'spiritual exercises' draws its inspiration from P. Rabbow *Seelenführung: Methodik der Exerzitien in der Antike* (Spiritual Guidance: Methods of Spiritual Exercise in Antiquity), 1954 and Ilsetraut Hadot *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung* (Seneca and the Greco-Roman Tradition of Spiritual Guidance), 1969. But, according to Hadot, later Christian versions such as Saint Ignatius of Lyola's *Exercitia spiritualia*, is "nothing but a Christian version of Greco-Roman traditions," hence the religious idea and terminology of *spiritual exercises* "correspond to the Greek term *askesis*." Hadot's definition can in this way be seen to start from a Christian context, emphasising that *askesis* understood as spiritual exercises 'already' existed within the classical philosophical tradition. For Hadot, we must therefore *return* to Antiquity in order to "explain the origin and significance" of spiritual exercises (Hadot, 'Spiritual Exercises,' 82).

antiquity had seen in the disciplined, bodily endeavour of athletic *askesis* an image and ideal that could be strategically appropriated and transported into their field of practice, so too did influential figures for the development of early Christian asceticism, such as Paul the Apostle: "Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in this way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I was shadowboxing." Similarly, "Train yourself for devotion, for, while physical training is of limited value, devotion is valuable in every respect, since it holds a promise of life both for the present and for the future." [3]

In the above Paul appropriates the concept of *askesis* in order to align and compare the training of the athlete with that of the devoted ascetic. In doing so he also, unlike the Hellenistic philosophers before him, seeks to devalue the practice and aspiration of athletic *askesis* as aimless and even illusory in its endeavour – mere "shadowboxing." According to Paul, the bodily training of the athlete must be seen to be of very little value since it only holds a promise within mortal life, in the shape of a perishable prize, whereas the *askesis* in Paul's new, radically reconfigured, version is, as he describes it, valuable 'in every respect' because what it promises concerns the life of the practitioner beyond its mortal limits; his prize, unlike that of the athlete, is an imperishable crown in the eternal kingdom of God.

With this comparative presentation, Paul downgrades the already existing concept of *askesis* in order to form his own version, and to convince his audience of the latter's superior value and hence desirability. What is involved is a strategic attempt to overrule or even outbid the

[3] 1 Cor 9:24-27, 1 Tm 4:7-8. The Greek noun *athlon* initially means 'prize' or 'award' and the *athletes* is someone competing for such a prize. In this sense, athletics "was not simply about competition; it concerned winning a prize." Stephen G. Miller *Ancient Greek Athletics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 11. The clear distinction made by Paul concerns the aim of disciplinary *askesis*, the *value* of the prize won.

physical version of *askesis* by promising new and better, because eternal, rewards than those offered by Olympic success. The bodily virtues and ideals of the Greek (and Roman) athletes are exchanged for other (ascetic) virtues and ideals that inspire the training of the devout Christian.

For the athlete who undertakes disciplined training of his body in order to optimise its powers and refine its abilities, physical training is an attempted enhancement of strength, acceleration of speed and overall grace of movement.[4] All of this is done in order to make the body excellent – to make it perform beautifully and excel in competition – and by such displays of excellence attain personal distinction, an elevated status. What is achieved through physical training is not only an enhancement of bodily abilities but a concrete shaping of the body's visible form – its muscles, tendons, size and weight – a modification and beautification of its physique, overall composition and texture. The shaping of the body in this manner does not only concern endurance and performance but also a transformation of the body into a virtuous and aesthetic ideal of antiquity; a visually pleasurable object to behold, admire and desire. Optimisation of bodily abilities, beautification of physique and the heightened, even exalted status that Olympic success would bestow upon the body as an ideal and upon the athlete as revered idol is what *askesis* in its original, athletic version aims for.[5]

Similarly, we may view the early ascetic practices of renunciation, and in some cases severe self-mortification, as strenuous work performed on the body in order to reach an ideal, elevated state. As with the athlete, the ascetic also attempts a modification of his body, although in a much more

[4] In this sense the athlete's life is "an ascetic life." Felix Ó Murchadha, *A Phenomenology of Christian Life: Glory and Night* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 145.

[5] As Kenneth Aggerholm notes, little attention has been paid to the concept of *askesis* within contemporary sports studies. (Aggerholm, 'On Practicing in Sport: Towards an Ascetological understanding of Sport,' *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, vol. 43 (2016): 350-364.)

radical sense. What is aimed for is not only the discipline but the alteration of the body-organism and a fundamental change in what is perceived to be the true nature of the body, its essence and origin. The ascetic, as Peter Brown shows, is engaged in an attempt to restructure his body according to what is believed to be its original, divine and hence other-worldly nature – to turn it into an 'autarkic' system freed from or cleansed of its earthly and therefore, to the devout ascetic, *unnatural* dependencies.[6]

As an example of what this attempted alteration amounts to, we may look at one of the most extreme procedures of the early desert ascetic, who not only renounces indulgence but seeks to deprive himself of anything that may be seen to cause bodily excitation, including physical nourishment. Food avoidance is a strategy for the ascetic involved in a project of turning his body into a precisely calibrated instrument. It is a means of reducing the physiological needs of the body to an absolute minimum. The severe ascetic procedures of food deprivation, or starvation, aspire, like the athlete's strenuous exercising, towards a physiological transformation of the body. In this case not a shaping of its muscles and tendons, but its inner organs: the starving ascetic is contracting his stomach, slowing the flow of blood and diminishing the activity of metabolic processes. This attempted reshaping in the sense of minimisation – reduction of stomach and the bladder, a narrowing of the veins thought to be the effect of lowered blood flow and reduced intake and the drying out of the fluids in the bones[7] – may in this way be seen to parallel, and invert, the transformation sought in athletic *askesis*, concerned with a reshaping of muscle mass, texture and the visible shape of the body. The ascetic is, as Brown describes, seeking to prepare *his* body for the glorification that will be bestowed upon it, no longer by the

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[6] See Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), 213-240.

[7] As described by Philoxenus of Mabbug (*Letter sent to a Friend*, 18), quoted in Brown, *The Body and Society*, 225.

fame and glory offered by Olympic success, but by the promise of the coming resurrection that will give it new life and deliver it to eternity.[8]

For both the athlete and the ascetic, the aim of their strenuous bodily exercises is then what, in the respective contexts of antiquity and early Christianity, is believed to be an ideal and desirable state. Where for the athlete, such a state is necessarily designated by and cannot transgress the natural limits of the organic body, the Christian ascetic, believing the essence of his being to be of other-worldly origin, attempts to return his body to its original, uncorrupted and hence 'natural' state, by delivering it from the demands of the mortal flesh into which the human being is believed to have fallen – and can therefore also be freed from. The extreme bodily exercises of the ascetic, whereby the most fundamental need of the organic body is renounced, are in this sense an attempt to construct an ideal body, true to its other-worldly origin and thus purified of the organic processes – an ideal also expressed in the belief that "Jesus never defecated."[9]

In this chapter I will expand and develop the conception of Nietzsche's *askesis* as presented so far, by focusing on Nietzsche's engagement with these two closely connected pre- and post-philosophical versions of *askesis* that bookend the therapeutical perspective treated in thesis chapter one: ancient Greek athletic *askesis* and early Christian ascetics. Although it is common to contrast these two practices as expressive of respectively the love and idealisation of the (male) body that permeates the Greek world of antiquity, and the renunciation and even hatred of the body that informs the Christian version, the two versions, or historical stages, of *askesis*

[8] Brown, *The Body and Society*, 213-240.
[9] "It was widely believed (…) that the first sin of Adam and Eve had been not a sexual act, but rather one of ravenous greed. It was their lust for physical food that had led them to disobey God's commandment (…) In this view of the Fall, greed (…) quite overshadowed sexuality." Brown, *The Body and Society*, 220.

nevertheless meet, precisely, in their shared focus upon and intense interest in the body and its constitution. Both concern an intense working on and of the body, and an attempt to push the body to or even beyond its limits – although informed by fundamentally different ideals and for what appear to be radically different ends.

If the difference between athletic *askesis* and Christian ascetics is not essentially located in a shift from love to hate of the body but in the respective 'ends' they aspire towards, this is because these ends are positioned as respectively immanent to and transcendent of worldly reality. As seen, what drives the ascetic work performed on the body as living, mortal substance is the dream of a life not without a body, but an *after* life for the body. It is a dream of immortality, but an immortality that is believed already to be *of* the body itself, in the sense that its essence and origin belongs to, and will make it capable of returning to, its original 'unfallen' state. This vision of a life without end is not so much a hatred of the body but, as Nietzsche remarks, something even worse: an attempt to "make the body holy." [10]

Making the body holy relies on two premises: firstly the belief in, and secondly the committed devotion to, a propositional truth about the body; that its true nature is not of this world and that it will not return to the earth as its final destination. Which in effect means that the body as it appears in its earthly setting as an aesthetic, temporally limited and organic substance, appears as inauthentic or illusory, *untrue* to its real nature, origin and destiny.

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[10] EH, IV, 8. That the body plays an essential role in the spiritually oriented practices of the ascetic and even acts as what Brown describes as a 'discrete mentor' is revealed in the earliest desert tradition, where the ascetic and his life was formed by "the rhythms of the body," in the shared labour and exhaustion with his fellow ascetics, and as such affected and eventually changed the ascetic's personality. The material conditions of the monk's life were "held capable of altering consciousness itself." Brown, *The Body and Society*, 222-224, 237.

For Nietzsche, the problem of the ascetic constellation is not so much that the truth proposed about the body is false, but that making the body holy creates a transcendental value hierarchy, in which corporeal, worldly existence as it appears and is experienced, is devalued. The ascetic truth about the body is positioned in contrast to and even in opposition to it's earthly life, hence the latter may be legitimately employed in the service of, because it is inferior to, the ascetic truth. Just as Paul had suggested that athletic *askesis* is aimless and the mortal prize it aspires towards is of very little value, so life in its immanent earthly and mortal dimension has no aim and is of very little value, and as such may be wholly *devoted* to the aim of winning the truly valuable prize that will be bestowed upon it later – after death, in the shape of an after life. What is created by the ascetic truth about the body is an encouragement to degrade or even sacrifice the latter for the sake of a truth believed to reign above and beyond it in terms of worth, validity and authenticity. As will be discussed at the end of this chapter, this ascetic perspective which does not position 'truth' in service to life, but on the contrary positions life in service to truth, will eventually become a problem not only for the religious practitioner but also for the truth-seeking philosopher.

Nietzsche's general appreciation of the ancient Greek ideals of bodily *arete* and combative *agon* is well known. As is his vehement critique of the practices of renunciation developed in the context of Christianity. [11] The latter is often referenced in relation to Nietzsche's critique of ascetics as

[11] In this context see for example Yunus Tuncel, 'Nietzsche's Agonistic Rhetoric and its Therapeutic Affects,' in *Nietzsche's Therapeutic Teaching. For Individuals and Culture*, ed. Horst Hutter and Eli Friedland (London: Bloomsbury, 2015),81-97. Religious asceticism is, according to Lawrence Hatab, "simply the most obvious and telling manifestation of the deeper issue animating the whole of Nietzsche's philosophy: the diagnosis of life-alienating forces in human culture." (Hatab, 'How Does the Ascetic Ideal Function in Nietzsche's *Genealogy*', *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 35 (2008), 114).

presented in *The Genealogy of Morals*, and more particularly in relation to the third essay in which Nietzsche dissects what he calls the saint and ascetic priest 'type.'

In order to develop Nietzsche's concept of *askesis* further, beyond the curative aspect, discussed in thesis chapter one, I propose that it is crucial to treat Nietzsche's engagement with ascetics in the *Genealogy* within this dual bind – to view his critique of asceticism in close connection to his attempt to subvert ascetic procedures, which in my reading, is what Nietzsche experimentally explores with his description and construction of a 'cheerful' version of asceticism suited for the philosopher 'type.' A version that denies any ascetically oriented *other* realm of truth for the body, and remains 'true' instead to its earthly nature, essence and origin. This may be seen to relate closely to a task Nietzsche had set himself in another text: "I also want to make asceticism natural again; in place of the aim of denial the aim of strengthening (…) a gymnastics of the will, an experiment with adventures and arbitrary dangers."[12]

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[12] WP, IV, 915 [Spring/Fall 1887]. Note here the similarities to Nietzsche's earlier description of great health as that which grants "the dangerous privilege of living experimentally and of being allowed to offer itself to adventure" (HH, Vol I, Preface, 4), as discussed in thesis chapter one. Following this perspective, it can be suggested that Nietzsche's attempted naturalisation of asceticism would concern not so much an unleashing as a cultivation and refinement of our natural drives in the shape of Nietzsche's so-called 'gymnastics of the will.' Such a gymnastics would be in full accord with our *homo naturae* and sit within Nietzsche's larger project of a naturalisation of morality which indicates not a return to, but rather a translation of the human 'back' into nature. The practice of such a translation, carried out through the cultivation of drives, is suggested for example in D, III, 109 and D, V, 560. Although not directly positioned in relation to a 'making asceticism natural again,' Hutter's and Parkes' earlier mentioned treatments of Nietzsche's soul-artistry concern a project of drive cultivation. The ascetic practices involved in forming Nietzsche's new soul regime means developing techniques for economising "the 'wild waters' of the soul," the aim of which is to create a new order of the soul "by the respective starving or nourishing of certain drives." (Hutter, *Shaping the* Future, 51). Although, unlike Hutter, Parkes does not focus on outlining concise ascetic procedures, he sums up the Nietzschean project of soul-

What could be inferred from the above quote is that Nietzsche's expressed wish to make asceticism natural *again*, by changing its aim from a denial to a strengthening, is a straightforward rejection of Christian ascetics in favour of a *return* to the original, athletic version of 'natural' *askesis*. However, as I will propose in the following, Nietzsche's engagement with ascetics in the *Genealogy* does not equal a call for a return to, or reactivation of, pre-Christian practices. Such a move would be not only impossible, as shown in the preceding chapter, but undesirable. Undesirable because such practices would not be capable of responding to, and hence would not be useful for, the particular situation that we moderns find ourselves in, as heirs to the Christian tradition and as such to expressively ascetic rather than Classical ideals.

Nietzsche's respective critique of Christian ascetics and positive rendering of the philosopher's version are not ultimately to be understood as counter-positions, nor as expressive of an unconditional dismissal of the former. What is involved, rather, is a tactical experiment in which Nietzsche seeks to apply the power of the former towards the latter – an attempted strategy of subversion in which the severe techniques of renunciation and self-mortification that form the ascetic way of life are not rejected but recognised, even admired, and *seized* in order to redirect ascetics back upon itself – upon its ideals, and the transcendent value hierarchy they produce.

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composing, or what he calls 'Nietzsche's prescription for psychological creativity,' as follows: "Open up to the maximum number and force of conflicting drives; let them be mastered by a single, dominant drive, or group of drives; to avoid monotony, subject the multiplicity to protracted discipline at the hands of a series of ruling passions; then, when the discipline has been fully embodied, control can be relaxed, one can dare to be natural and the multiplicity will spontaneously order itself." (Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, 377.) As noted in the preceding chapter, my overall focus is not upon the construing of a regime of the soul or a composing of the psyche. As such, the project of drive cultivation lies beyond the limits of my approach to Nietzsche's *askesis*, which I treat in this chapter specifically in relation to the overt bodily focus of existing ascetic procedures.

To claim existing ascetic procedures as 'ours,' to make them serve 'our' values and virtues and as such become affirmative of, and the singular expression of, the philosopher's style of life, is to invent a new concept of asceticism: *ascetics without ascetic ideals.*[13]

Intended as a clarifying supplement to *Beyond Good and Evil*, *The Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic* is today generally regarded as Nietzsche's most systematic, complex and also most well treated text. But, as noted in the preceding chapter, the *Genealogy* is also the continuation of the project started in *Dawn: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality.* With this chapter I propose this continuation may also be considered useful in relation to the development of Nietzsche's concept of *askesis* as situated within the context of philosophy lived.[14]

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[13] That ascetic procedures may be severed from ascetic ideals is affirmed by Aaron Ridley, who notes there need not be anything in ascetic procedures that necessitates a transcendent move. Ascetic procedures "needn't be associated with evacuation of value from this to another world" and carry therefore "no automatic negative charge in the *Genealogy*." (Ridley, *Nietzsche's Conscience* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), 59-60). See also David Owen, *Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morality*, 113 and Lawrence Hatab, 'How Does the Ascetic Ideal Function in Nietzsche's *Genealogy*', 107.

[14] I want to emphasise that I am not purporting to provide a reading of the *Genealogy*, but much more narrowly of Nietzsche's concrete engagement with, and, I propose, experimental appropriation of, specific ascetic procedures, as described in the book's third essay. I am therefore not claiming to be able to treat the far reaching ideas and comprehensive concepts and conclusions that Nietzsche directly and indirectly draws up with his genealogical uncovering of morality. Which is to say an uncovering of our shared cultural heritage, or, as Keith Ansell Pearson calls it, the whole 'drama' of how we became what we are. (Ansell-Pearson, 'A "Dionysian Drama on the 'Fate of the Soul'": An introduction to reading *On the Genealogy of Morality*,' in Christa Davis Acampora (ed.) *Nietzsche's on the Genealogy of Morals: Critical Essays*, 21). The themes of 'guilt,' 'bad conscience' and, more broadly, that of 'ascetic ideals' are addressed in the following only insofar as they posit the necessary framework, or dramatic setting, for exploring the agonistic aspect of Nietzsche's *askesis*.

In his article 'Nietzsche's *Genealogy* Revisited,' David Owen retroactively notes: "it strikes me that I (and we [referring to his contemporary *Genealogy* commentators Daniel Conway, Lawrence Hatab and Christopher Janaway]) should have drawn more explicit attention to the way in which [Nietzsche's style of prose] is directly related to ancient, rather than modern, conceptions of philosophy." A conception that "at least if we endorse the views of Pierre Hadot in *What is Ancient Philosophy?* and, relatedly, Alexander Nehamas in *The Art of Living*," is "committed to a view of philosophy as a way of life and of philosophical discourse as a transformative medium that seeks to act on the conduct of its auditors." Owen goes on to confirm that Nietzsche sees his task "much as the Hellenistic Schools did," namely, to engage in the therapeutic task of ethical re-formation and a curing of diseases of the soul and as such as the "spiritual analogue" to the discipline of medicine. This is where, Owen suggests, one would find the relevant site for reflecting on the *Genealogy* essays as training exercises or, "better, as therapeutic/spiritual exercises."[15]

For Owen, what connects the *Genealogy* to a conception of philosophy as a way of life as described by Hadot (and Nehamas) is, then, the transformative function of its discourse; the effect of *reading* Nietzsche, in the sense that Nietzsche's particular style of prose seeks to act upon the conduct of its auditors. It is Nietzsche's "rhetorical strategies" and "methodological commitment to psychological *realism*" that should be

[15] David Owen, 'Nietzsche's *Genealogy* Revisited,' *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 35 (2008), 145. Owen distinguishes this proposed therapeutic conception of spiritual exercises from Daniel Conway's description of the *Genealogy* as a pedagogical 'training exercise.' Conway's reading presents the *Genealogy* as a *Bildungsroman*, stating that the book's main narrative describes "the reader's passage from innocence." The book's preface, which recounts Nietzsche's own process of *convalescence*, is aimed at illuminating the path "along which he now offers to conduct his best readers." The preface, in other words, is meant to convince us of Nietzsche as a credible leader or guide on "the route to self-discovery that is about to commence." (Daniel Conway, *Nietzsche's 'On the Genealogy of Morals: A Readers Guide*, 9, 24).

understood as "part and parcel" of his commitment to a therapeutic conception of philosophy.[16]

In continuation of the stated focus of my inquiry, I concentrate on the idea of a 'style of life' rather than 'style of prose,' as that which connects the *Genealogy* to the notion of philosophy as a lived praxis and frames the concept of *askesis* as bodily oriented procedures. A styling of life that lets philosophy find expression not in the rhetoric reaches of writing and/or affective dynamics of reading, but in a concrete construing of a materially manifest and outwardly visible *Lebensordnung*.

**The Ascetic Priest dissected.**

"There is no way around it: (…) the whole morality of self-renunciation must be mercilessly called to account and taken to court (…)"[17] The morality of self-renunciation is, according to Nietzsche, of dual nature and must be seen both as a consequence and a cause, a symptom and a remedy, a stimulant and a poison. What is required in order to sufficiently examine the table of values of morality of self-renunciation is, Nietzsche proclaims, not a psychological but rather a physiological investigation and examination.[18] In the *Genealogy* such an examination is carried out in relation to different groups or types in what might be called a 'typology' of morals. More particularly, through an assessment of the ascetic ideal (henceforth AI), what it *means*, what it indicates and expresses and how it manifests itself in relation to respectively priests and saints, philosophers

[16] Owen, 'Nietzsche's *Genealogy* Revisited', 146. It could be suggested that Owen's description does not consider Hadot's definition of philosophy as a way of life as quoted in the introductory chapter: that a philosopher in Antiquity was "first of all a person having a certain style of life, which he willingly chose, even if he had never taught nor written." (Hadot, 'Preface,' in *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques,* as quoted in Davidson, 'Introduction,' in Hadot, *Philosophy as Way of Life*, 30.)

[17] BGE, II, 33.

[18] In order to carry this out, the relations between philosophy and physiology, along with that of medicine, must, as Nietzsche suggests, be brought into the "most amicable and fruitful exchange" (GM, I, 17)

and scholars, the majority of mortals and, treated more briefly, artists and women.[19]

In the following I will set up a seemingly opposing pair of conceptual personas: the ascetic priest, in whom the ascetic ideal manifests itself not only as what Nietzsche calls 'a form of madness' but as a power instrument; and the philosopher, to whom ascetic ideals are given a positive meaning as 'something like a sense and instinct' for the conditions of higher spirituality. This comparative schema is simplified and forced, but it is constructed in order to show not only the contrast between the respective asceticism of these two types, but more importantly, the ways in which they are connected. It is this connection that makes clear what I propose is Nietzsche's appreciation and appropriation rather than rejection of Christian ascetics and what such an appropriation consists of concretely.[20]

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[19] For a rendition of Nietzsche's notion of 'type' see for example Aaron Ridley, 'Nietzsche, Nature, Nurture,' *European Journal of Philosophy* 24, no 4 (October 2016): 129-43. By rejecting a sharp distinction between nature and nurture Ridley's interpretation attempts to avoid the so-called paradox of 'fatalism' and 'self-creation' suggested by Leiter et al. Similarly, another attempt to resolve, or rather dismiss, the dualism suggested by Leiter's doctrine of types is found in Mark Alfano's definition of Nietzsche's notion of 'type.' According to Alfano, 'type' names a "drive set" and 'instincts' are "subsets" of drives. Whereas instincts, following Alfano, are innate, drives can and do in fact change, although within limits and not easily, and hence may be either innate or acquired. (Alfano, 'Virtue in Nietzsche's Drive Psychology.' http://www.alfanophilosophy.com/publications/articles-and-chapters/2014/12/16/virtue-in-nietzsches-drive-psychology, accessed 15 January 2018). A further discussion of 'type' is, however, not necessary for the following which, as already noted, does not concern the possibility of drive-cultivation. I use the term 'type' in a more straight forward manner to highlight how the personified figure of 'the priest' can be seen as staged antagonistically against that of 'the philosopher.'

[20] As will be shown below, what is at stake in Nietzsche's attack upon the priest type consists, ultimately, in a recognised appreciation and, to a certain extent, attempted identification with him. While the ascetic priest type appears as ultimate enemy, he is – not least due to his immense success – also an admirable enemy. A worthy opponent with whom Nietzsche can

The ascetic priest (henceforth AP) type, also called "sportsmen of 'sanctity'" (and hence activating Paul's vision and appropriation of *askesis* as described earlier), appears in Nietzsche's character study, in the first instance, to be a life-inimical type and as such a self-contradiction. What rules this type is an insatiable instinct to dominate and master not only an aspect of life but the "most profound basic conditions of life itself." That is, the basic conditions of natural life as organic principle.[21] The AP appears as a "terrible antagonist" who in his fight for dominance must employ "force to block up wells of force" in order to pervert the most basic expressions of life. Physiological wellbeing must be viewed sideways in order for pleasure not only to be felt but *sought out* in its opposite, in "ill-constitutedness," in a forceful diminishing of vitality. As such the AP presents something like a physiological and p sychological absurdity, albeit a willed absurdity; a "discord that wants to be discord" which, according to Nietzsche, shows itself most outrageously in the fact that the success of the ascetic life

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therefore engage in an honourable battle of *agon*. This is affirmed by Ridley who defines Nietzsche's struggle with the priest as "a struggle for the right to succeed him, for the right to exploit his achievements in ways that the priest himself is unwilling or unable to do." According to Ridley, this is what renders Nietzsche's enmity toward the priest "so fraught with contradiction." (Ridley, *Nietzsche's Conscience*, 63). While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to address the complex character and wider genealogy of the ascetic priest type, in the following I will aim to render Nietzsche's enmity toward the ascetic priest not so much a contradiction but part of a strategic mode of attack.

[21] GM, III, 2. The valuation the AP puts on life is, following Nietzsche, construed as follows: Life, and with it 'nature,' 'world,' 'becoming', and 'transitoriness,' is juxtaposed to a radically different mode of existence. Earthly life is opposed and excluded "*unless* it turn against itself, *deny itself*: in that case, the case of the ascetic life, life counts as a bridge to that other mode of existence." The ascetic, in other words treats life as "a 'wrong road,' a 'mistake' – that one *ought* to put right." And one the ascetic thinks *can* be put right.

increases the more its presupposition, namely the "physical capacity for life," *decreases*.[22]

Nietzsche's characterisation affirms the earlier description of Christian *askesis* as a strenuous attempt to deliver the body from the organic needs of its 'flesh,' through dominance over and an attempted halting of vitality and an overall decrease in the most fundamental bodily functions – what Nietzsche calls the physical capacity, the most profound, basic conditions for life. Among these most profound, fundamental conditions for life are of course not only those of intake and secretion mentioned earlier, but also sexual desire and activity. The well-known (psycho)analysis of the affective paradox underlying asceticism as essentially driven by a libidinal source, or even sexual pathology, is also seemingly affirmed in Nietzsche's rendering of the AP as a debauched sensualist, for whom the ascetic life is one that "triumphs in ultimate agony" and as such presents an obscure image of torment and delight, torture and rapture, that, as Nietzsche states, constitutes an "enigma of seduction."[23] While the issue of sexual desire is no doubt

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[22] GM, III, 11. As will be shown, the self-contradictory nature of the AP as a form of anti-life can however only be apparent. The ascetic priest is, in fact, a great, life-preserving force.

[23] GM, III, 11. There is, as Nietzsche highlights early on in the essay, no antithesis between chastity and sensuality but rather a strong correspondence (GM, III, 2). As Wimbusch and Valantasis note, particularly 19th century secular criticism of asceticism is informed by an understanding of the ascetic impulse as expressive of a sexual pathology. While Nietzsche's *Genealogy* is one such example, they recognise only two "fully articulated proposals for a typology of asceticism" of this period, namely Oscar Hardman 'The Ideals of Asceticism: An Essay in the Comparative Study of Religion' and Max Weber 'Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism'; 'Sociology of Religion.' Valantasis and Wimbusch eds., *Asceticism*, xix. Brown's *The Body and Society* quoted above offers an exciting presentation of the theme of permanent sexual renunciation in early Christianity. Foucault's posthumously published *Confessions of the Flesh* is no doubt inspired by Brown and both these works would offer a very relevant perspective for approaching the body-orientated focus of Nietzsche's *askesis* that I propose. I have chosen not to address in further detail this important but also complex issue as it would necessitate a larger discussion of sexuality that is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, my

essential to an understanding of asceticism and its practices of renunciation, the focus of this chapter concerns Nietzsche's attempted critique of the ideals that inform and give these practices their meaning and value – which are not confined to the traditional ascetic's denial of physical urges but include the metaphysical attitudes and with them transcendent value hierarchies displayed by 'ascetic' philosophers and scientists alike – and the possible strategies for launching an attack upon them. The real question for Nietzsche, as will be shown, ultimately concerns an investigation into the power of ascetic ideals: why have they been able not only to survive but to dominate and flourish, and for so long? What follows from this is a more speculative question: why has the domination of the ascetic ideal not been resisted? And further, is it in fact possible, or even desirable, to attempt such a resistance? Nietzsche's answer to this, as will be seen, is more ambiguous.

One thing made clear from Nietzsche's profiling of the AP type as what he calls a 'terrible antagonist' is how the aggressive, agonistic element of athletic *askesis* in its aspiration for personal distinction has not been discarded but intensified and continues to drive the AP –highlighting the earlier mentioned appropriative connection suggested by Paul, proposing the bodily training and combative effort of Olympic athleticism as no more than pointless shadowboxing. The AP's combative instinct becomes *agon* transferred from the battle of the games and internalised within the ascetic himself, who struggles not with competitors from without but with his own physiology – or rather, with the most basic conditions and expressions of his physiological nature. In this sense, the ascetic is not in fact the opposite

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focus is orientated towards the subject of physical nourishment and digestion which is a theme of profound interest for both Nietzsche and the early ascetics. As Brown shows, for the desert ascetic the issue of food dwarfed that of sex: the ascetic's battles with the ache of fasting "always counted for more than did the sexual drive (…) The most bitter struggle of the desert ascetic was presented not so much as a struggle with his sexuality as with his belly" (Brown, *The Body and Society*, 218).

to, but rather the extreme, paradoxical extension of the athlete. The vertical drive that informs athletic *askesis* is itself driven to its outermost, distorted limits and the agonistic character of *askesis* now plays out within the ascetic himself as arena. As Nietzsche had noted already in *Dawn*, this is the "final tragedy" of the original, Olympic, virtuous drive for distinction: "The triumph of the ascetic over himself, his glance turned inwards," whereupon he beholds himself "split asunder."[24] This self-agonistic splitting asunder is what is displayed in the ascetic's attempt to dissect, locate and potentially amputate what are perceived to be the dangerous elements that are, as Brown describes, "lurking" inside his body. These elements are those of the flesh – those which bind his body to the earth via the needs and desires that spring from its organic tissue and to its earthly premise of finitude and as such make the body vulnerable to death. In short, the conditions that confine life within an inauthentic (mortal) structure must be eradicated because they are what hold the body in the grip of falsity, and hence stand in contrast to, or as obstacles to, the body's realisation of its own truth.[25]

However, a critique of ascetics does not ultimately concern the violent self-dissecting practices of the ascetic type. Rather it posits a general problem for humanity, in the shape of an ideal that has reigned over it for millennia – a problem that, according to Nietzsche's interplanetary perspective, dominates all of life as it appears today.

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[24] D, II, 113.

[25] For Hutter, this 'splitting asunder' is viewed as the "long-term consequences" of dualistic Christianity. A poisoning of the human totality that creates a schism, causing part of that totality to be "split off" as 'the body' – a part to be despised and left out of account with all benevolent attention, "in favour of the soul." (Hutter, *Shaping the Future*, 152). But viewed from the ascetic body-image as drawn up by Brown, it is possible to see an attempted transformation of the body, rather than a clear dualistic splitting that would suggest neglect of the body in favour of the soul. As shown, this is not as much a dismissal or neglect of the body as an attempted recalibration of the body organism (in accordance with its true nature). This is what amounts to an attempt to, as Nietzsche calls it, 'make the body holy.'

If viewed from a distance, the Earth, Nietzsche claims in usual hyperbolic style, would appear as "the ascetic planet par excellence" and the human race a life form which seemingly thrives on discontent and a "fundamental disgust with itself," apparently finding its only pleasure in self-inflicted torment.[26] In order to trace not the origin but rather the genealogy of our ascetic situation, Nietzsche offers an existentialist story of creation of which I am presenting only a short, simplified version here:

> *This* is what the ascetic ideal meant: something was *missing*, there was an immense *lacuna* around man, – he himself could think of no justification or explanation or affirmation, he *suffered* from the problem of what he meant…The meaninglessness of his suffering, *not* the suffering itself, was the curse that has so far blanketed mankind – and *the ascetic ideal offered man a meaning*! (...) Within it, suffering was interpreted; the enormous emptiness seemed filled; the door was shut on all suicidal nihilism.[27]

The tremendous, and to a certain extent for Nietzsche admirable, achievement of the ascetic ideal (henceforth AI) was an opportunistic and hermeneutical one; filling a horrendous vacuum by offering interpretation and with that meaning, justification, cause and aim, for 'suffering' defined as an existential premise when faced with the problem of what man means. Hence what is treated is not suffering itself but the lack of justification or explanation for it; the suffering that springs from the moment when existence lacks affirmation and appears as a problem.[28] The ascetic ideal in this sense functioned as a problem solver. The "enormous emptiness" appeared to be filled and the threat of total annihilation in the shape of mass

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[26] GM, III, 11.
[27] GM, III, 28.
[28] Unexplained suffering is, as Ridley describes, "fatal (…) a standing approach not just to the manner of existence but to the fact of it." The problem for the self-conscious, mortal sufferer becomes: "Why exist at all?" A problem concerning not as much individual bits and pieces of suffering, but "the whole business of being alive." A problem of existence on the terms that lead one to suffer from being oneself in the first place. (Ridley, *Nietzsche's Conscience*, 43).

suicidal extinction was warded off. Hence the ascetic ideal, and the AP as apparent enemy of life, who in this respect functioned as a means for saving, of preserving the human life form at a highly critical stage. The ascetic ideal in this way worked successfully as a form of disaster management; the problem is what kind of life was preserved thereafter, what conditions for life were implicitly created by this act of preservation.[29]

The comprehensive interpretive structure by which the ascetic ideal managed to give suffering meaning involved, following Nietzsche's narrative, the invention of several fantastical concepts – or rather the invention of several interpretive truths about human existence that will, if accepted as true, make the disparate human animal capable of accepting the suffering of life or even willing it. First, an *other* world and with it a promise of an *other* life for which we must, and for which we will find it acceptable to, suffer in this one. Second, there needed to be accountability, hence the invention of a *guilty* agent. To the vexed question "I suffer; someone must be to blame for it" the AI answered, "Quite so, my sheep!

[29] Following this, since the AP "springs from protective instinct of degenerating life" he is in fact an "artifice for *preservation* of life." The AP, the apparent "enemy of life" belongs therefore "among the greatest conserving, yes – creating forces of life." (GM, III, 13). It is in this sense that the ascetic ideal may also be seen as a remedy, something like an emergency potion. What is drawn up is a naturalistic schema concerning the inner, self-preserving functions of degenerating life itself. When forms of life, as Hatab describes, are losing their "original natural vitality," life itself will engender new strategies to "prevent an utter abnegation of life" (in the shape of suicidal despair, for example). Hatab suggests, a distinction may therefore be made between 'life-enhancing' and 'life-affirming': While life-denying perspectives, as presented by ascetic ideals, can be life enhancing, in the sense of being capable to preserve life at a highly critical stage, they are not life *affirming*. Hatab proposes this as indicative of Nietzsche's shifting attitude, between polemic and appreciation of the ascetic ideal (Hatab, 'How Does the Acetic Ideal Function in Nietzsche's *Genealogy*', 109-110). It may also be suggested, more simply, that the function of ascetic ideals are both enhancing and affirming; that they are instrumental for *preserving* a degenerate, thoroughly weakened state of life, by *affirming* this state of life as valuable in itself. By bestowing upon it, as Nietzsche had described in GS, "an interpretation that makes it appear illuminated by the highest value." (GS, 353).

someone *must* be to blame for it, but you yourself are this someone, you alone are to blame for it – *you alone are to blame for your self!*", hereby revealing itself as predestined shepherd and saviour.[30] Hence the proposed truth about existence, that suffering not only has purpose but is its own purpose, as that through which self-affirmation is attained, was bought at the a price of more suffering, intensified and internalised within the perspective of resentment eventually turned inward as guilt. Man, encouraged and directed by the extensive existential interpretation of the AI, came to express his need not just for an aim, but for blame and for revenge for his suffering, upon himself – making suffering not only the condition, but the redemptive factor of existence itself. And herein lies, finally, the impetus and, more importantly, *justification* for the continuous invention of endless ways to mortify and punish oneself; the foundation for the development and sophistication of all the disciplinary ascetic techniques of self-surveillance, self-dissection, self-punishment and renunciation.

The rich variety of ascetic techniques that have grown from the interpretive structure offered by the AI concerning the proposed true meaning and aim of life *as* suffering, of existence affirming itself as justified *as* suffering, may now be viewed in a broader perspective as prescriptions – what Nietzsche in this context also calls "regimen" and a "form of rigorous training" – that purport to treat the existential condition of discontent driven by an appropriation, channelling and reinforcement of resentment. These can be divided in to two main groups: 1. what Nietzsche calls 'innocent' medicaments, concerned with the dulling of pain and warding off of boredom, and 2. 'guilty' medicaments, described as an art of vicious exploitation of affects amounting to what is called the "chief trick" of the AP.[31]

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[30] GM, III, 15.

[31] GM, III, 20. A life of self-denial and -mortification, was as Nietzsche shows obviously an already and long existing way of life. But it existed only as one possible style of life amongst many and without, as Nietzsche states, "sensing itself as of special value." The originality of the ascetic

**Innocent medicaments and self-neglect.**

The innocent medicaments prescribed by the AP are: *mechanical activity*, *petty pleasure* and *herd organisation,* and are all defined by Nietzsche as generally anaesthetic, or hypnotic in nature.

*Mechanical activity* is one of the easier regimens for alleviating pain and can be aligned to what is today called the "blessings of work." It amounts to an everyday diversion tactic whereby attention is directed away not only from one's suffering but from oneself as such. Mechanical activity is prescribed in order to minimise self-consciousness and consciousness in general. All such tactics aim to invoke absolute regularity, "unthinking" obedience and "the filling up of time," turning existence into something "fixed, rigid (…) and predictable."[32] Idleness in this context must appear as dangerous, even intolerable. It was for example a "masterpiece of the English instinct to render Sunday so holy and boring that the English would unconsciously lust for their week- and workdays – as a kind of cleverly invented and inserted fasting (…)"[33]

The medicament of *Petty Pleasure* is closely related to the overall avoidance or shutting down of self-awareness involved in mechanical activity. What is prescribed is a minimum of pleasure, "described as

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priest, is "his *seeing* it, *selecting* it, and *guessing* for the first time to what use it can be put, how it can be interpreted" (GS 353). As Ridley describes it, what the priest encourages is not simply ascetic procedures, "but rather – and crucially – the view that existence itself is just one big procedure to be engaged in ascetically. As soon as one accepts this, the end to which the procedure is directed (…) is inevitable deferred elsewhere, outside of life, to another realm." That it is even possible to be persuaded to engage one's whole life as if it were one great ascetic procedure is explained precisely "by the fact that one's whole existence is characterised by suffering." That the priest understands this is the result of his "imaginative exploration of the advantages to be gained by encouraging the worst kind of bad conscience in those most consumed by *ressentiment.*" (Ridley, *Nietzsche's Conscience*, 60-61).

[32] GM, III, 18.

[33] BGE, V, 189

curative." These minimal curative pleasures concern the small personal happiness gained in the seemingly unselfish act of *giving* pleasure, namely the feeling of "slight superiority" involved in doing good, being useful and helpful. The medicament of petty pleasures, in allowing for the small amount of joy obtained through such self-satisfaction, is "the most effective means of consolation," exactly because it manages to activate the life-affirming drive of personal pleasure, while nevertheless only in "the most cautious dosage."[34]

The third innocent medicament, *Herd Organisation,* is "an essential step and victory in the battle with depression." It may be seen as making use of both the tools of distraction and unselfish pleasure of the preceding two. Herd organisation aims to release the individual from "the most personal element of his discontent," namely his self-contempt. The individual's displeasure in regards to himself is here sought to be "drowned out" by his pleasure in the prosperity of his community. Those who feel sullen and weakened long to shake of their dull malaise and the ascetic priest, Nietzsche states, intuits this and promotes it; wherever there is a herd it is "the cleverness of the priest that organised it."[35]

The overall characteristic of all three innocent medicaments or regimen is that they are exercises which aim at reduction. Reduction of pleasure, thinking, attention and of self-awareness. They encourage a general forgetfulness of oneself which amounts to what Nietzsche calls an overall lack of care of oneself ('*incuria sui*') brought on by an underlying aversion to oneself ('*despectio sui'*). The anaesthetic or narcotic means by which such medicaments attempt to dull the individual's weariness with life and discontent with himself, are in other words exercises in self-disregard and self-neglect and therefore what Nietzsche calls "a training for 'impersonality'." The result, in moral-psychological terms, is "selflessness" and "sanctification," and in physiological terms a "hypnotisation" or even

[34] GM, III, 18.
[35] Ibid.

hibernation. What is achieved, according to Nietzsche and in an echo of the ascetic techniques described earlier, is a general dampening or muting of the "feeling of life" through a reduction of metabolic activity to the lowest possible point, an avoidance of anything that may stir the blood: "No more wanting, wishing, everything that arouses the emotions and the blood must be avoided (…) if possible, no consorting with women."[36]

*Mechanical activity*, *petty pleasure* and *herd organisation* are however all 'innocent' medicaments. What are the less innocent, what Nietzsche calls the 'guilty' and more interesting ones?

**Guilty medicaments as intensification of feeling.**

Whereas the innocent medicaments operate with self-forgetting, numbing of awareness and an avoidance of intensities that may stir the blood, the guilty medicaments on the other hand involve what Nietzsche calls the production of an "orgy of feeling," a deliberate utilisation of the intensities and enthusiasm that lie in all strong affects.[37] As will be shown, the guilty form of medicament involves such a sophisticated set of skills – employed to intensify and direct powerful emotions to orgiastic proportions – that Nietzsche will eventually call the AP an 'artist' of guilt feeling.

The casting of man as guilty agent, as seen above, relies on the construction of a causal structure for suffering activated in a self-enforcing loop of resentment, blame and revenge internalised. As a consequence, when suffering is given form, aim and direction in this way, pain no longer has to be avoided or warded off as in the case of the 'innocent' medicaments. Having been given meaning and direction, a worthy aim, one "no longer protested against but thirsted for pain!" and a whole torture chamber of vengeful self-punishment techniques is eagerly set up, even the "invention of hell itself." This, according to Nietzsche, is what amounts to the '*chief trick*' of the AP, whose guilty medicaments are a cruelty "directed

[36] GM, III, 17.
[37] GM, III, 20.

backwards" – driven by the intensification of the affect of resentment and unleashed as righteous self-punishment. This is the art of guilt feelings: a "training in repentance and redemption" that brought with it "tremendous epileptic epidemics (…) death-seeking mass deliria." The 'guilty' medicaments prescribed by the AP, understood as the exploitation of affects towards painful, self-enforcing feelings, amounts to a true religious neurosis grown from an ideal that, Nietzsche says, may without exaggeration be called "*the genuine catastrophe* in the history of European health" – alcohol and syphilis being ranked in second and third place.[38]

This now leads to a possible assessment of the medical character of the AP. Although the AP has been proven to have some life-preserving force by managing, at a highly critical stage, to save humanity from epidemics of suicidal nihilism by means of his hermeneutic power tool, the AI, it is, as Nietzsche states, "hardly permissible to call him a physician."[39] The AP's medicaments are, Nietzsche admits, a "great treasure house of ingenious means of consolation" in the shape of a "collection of refreshments, palliatives and narcotics" but what is treated is, after all, no more than the discomfort of the sufferer and not the actual cause of his malady. Said in another way, the true source of the problem is not addressed as a problem. Instead the symptoms, in the shape of taking suffering to be a justified objection to life, a premise upon which life is resented and can be rejected, while they are consoled, are *affirmed* and enforced.

This is what Nietzsche calls his chief objection to medications as described above: that they amount to nothing more than affect medication which can never offer a real cure for sickness in what he calls the 'physiological' sense. The analysis of the AP as a failed physician, and indeed as nothing short of a worldwide health disaster, hinges on the AP's

[38] GM, III, 21. The ascetic ideal has, however, not only ruined health but also taste and "a third, fourth, fifth, sixth thing – I will refrain from saying what they all are (when would I finish!)". GM, III, 21.
[39] GM, III, 17.

lack of diagnostic skill, which is the result of what Nietzsche calls the AP's "naïveté in *physiologicus*." In contrast, Nietzsche presents his own superior knowledge in this area: "Speaking crudely," Nietzsche muses that perhaps the worldwide epidemic of *Weltschmertz* may be a symptom of physiological depression and exhaustion caused by "some disease of the *Nervus sympathicus*." Or perhaps by an "excessive secretion of bile or deficiency of potassium sulphate in the blood, in an obstruction in the abdomen impeding blood circulation (…) and the like." In short, If someone is tortured by "psychological pain," this is potentially not the fault of his psyche but of "his belly."[40]

Besides this 'crude' interpretation of *Weltschmertz*, which seemingly suggests a naturalist schema where psychological feelings of depression are but consequences, or interpretations, of physiological facts (organic dysfunctions), the above is also a description of the ascetic body state. Or rather, a diagnosis of the effects ascetic procedures and the attempt to make the body holy (in accordance with its true body ideal) have and have had upon the body. The highly strung ascetic with his orgies of feeling, as described by Nietzsche, can indeed be seen to suffer from a disturbed nervous system, and his attempted blocking of the metabolic processes would not only produce problems for the belly but an overall physiological fatigue, impeding blood circulation, obstruction in the abdomen 'and the like.' In this sense, the worldwide epidemic of existential discontent on the 'ascetic planet' is not only not treated by, but also enforced and even *caused* by, the ascetic regimen or so-called remedies. This shows why what

[40] GM, III, 15, 16. I have described in the preceding chapter how Nietzsche's materialistic vision of an all encompassing body structure suggests a playful interweaving of psycho-somatic states of health and illness, open for new inventions and interpretations. What is made very clear in this context is how this theme also takes on an explicitly antagonistic character in relation to the body work of asceticism. The traditional ascetic's intense attention to, if not obsession with, organic functions, and particularly those relating to his belly, means that Nietzsche's deliberately exaggerated reductionism in this context lends itself particularly well to a sardonic treatment of ascetics.

amounts to religious neurosis, for Nietzsche, is evidence not only of a failed therapy, but has itself become a health disaster, one that has ruined and is still ruining "psychological and physiological health everywhere."[41] The ascetic priest's balms and salves are not only ineffective, they are poisonous and they "infect the wound" they profess to treat.[42] This is (also) why the morality of self-renunciation, as stated at the beginning, is of dual nature. It is why, within the perspective of health, it must be seen both as a consequence and a cause.

What Nietzsche calls his main objection to the priestly medicaments is then really, I propose, a critique of the pretentions of ascetic prescriptions. What provokes Nietzsche's attack on the morality of self-renunciation, viewed in this context, is that it *deceives*.[43] The AP has gained his power by what, as seen earlier, Nietzsche calls a '*trick*,' by taking advantage of a bad situation and offering healing, when in fact he can offer nothing of the sort. It is the clever, even impressive, exploitation of a supposed need for healing which the AP has managed to turn to his own advantage, seeing in it a means for dominance. Nietzsche's main objection to the ascetic priest type is then not ultimately, as claimed above, that he fails as healer, but that he presents himself as a healer and true redeemer in the first place. The AP is in short, according to Nietzsche's analysis, essentially a fraud, but a very skilful one.

When we assess the AP as a physician, his failure is striking and his prescribed medicaments absolutely useless. On the other hand, if the AP is viewed as *what he is*, namely a clever and even deceitful exploiter, a frightful dominator and not least essentially an 'antagonist,' a discord that wants to be discord, then he may be evaluated in a different light and may in fact be admired for his refined artistry, his impressive skills of

[41] GM, III, 22.
[42] GM, III, 15.
[43] Not, importantly, that it lies, but that it does so in a dishonest manner. "All honour to the ascetic ideal *insofar as it is honest!* so long as it believes in itself and does not play tricks on us!" GM, III, 27.

interpretation, invention and exploitation that form the foundation for the development and sophistication of all the disciplined ascetic techniques of self-surveillance, dissection and violation. As such the AP may now be appreciated and praised not as a physician but rather as an *artist*.

Herein lies, I argue, the crucial perspective for viewing how Nietzsche, in spite of his critique, does not reject ascetics but, as will be shown in the following, appropriates it as an admirable artistic technique. As seen in thesis chapter one, Nietzsche recommended that, as "far as praxis is concerned" we should view ancient philosophy as "experimental laboratories" in which various recipes for the art of living have been developed, tested and lived through. And that the results of their experimentation "belong to us today as our legitimate property."[44] In what I propose should be taken as a further extension of this, in *The Genealogy of Morality* Nietzsche suggests that we similarly take ownership of ascetic procedures developed and refined over the course of millennia, and that these procedures should be added to, and not rejected from, the various recipes for arts of living that we have at our disposal.

"We moderns" Nietzsche states, "are the heirs of conscience-vivisection and self-torture of millennia" and since we have had such long practice and developed such "required and refined taste" in this area, it might be called not only the ascetic priest's but, as Nietzsche states, "*our* distinctive art." Since we are by now *already* masters in this tradition of ascetic artistry, for Nietzsche, the point is not to give up on but rather to make use of our existing, inherent expertise – to turn our existing knowhow to our own advantage – to seize the power of ascetic artistry and to subject our skill-set to experimentation, in order to divert their aims.

> We experiment with ourselves, cheerfully vivisecting our soul. Afterwards we cure ourselves: sickness is more instructive than

[44] KSA 9, 15 (59). As quoted in thesis chapter one.

> health – those who make sick seem more necessary than medicine men or "saviours." We violate ourselves, nut-crackers of the soul, endlessly questioning, as if life was cracking nuts; and thus we are bound to grow more questionable, worthier of asking questions; perhaps also worthier – of living?[45]

In the hands of the AP the ascetic art may have proved a disaster. Nevertheless we should not be ungrateful for this, since the unhealth caused by centuries of priestly medicaments may turn out to be advantageous for those who want to dissect and violate themselves in a different, 'cheerful' manner and *for other reasons* than hitherto – namely for the philosophers willing to question, to experiment, risk and test themselves in order to become worthier of posing questions. As such, the philosopher, willingly endangering himself, grows more *questionable* and, perhaps, also therefore more worthy of living.

Just as I proposed in chapter one that what Nietzsche is appropriating is the very notion, rather than the particular content, of ancient philosophical *askesis* as an experimental, embodied practice whereby we may develop real new abilities and capacities suited for *our* individually construed style of living, what Nietzsche is suggesting above is that we take ownership of the priestly art and make the ascetic procedures our own. The question is, what would this involve? Employing the ascetic artistry that legitimately belongs to us as 'our' art, but for what?[46]

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[45] GM, III, 9.

[46] In Hutter's reading, the appropriation of conscious vivisecting skills employed in the larger project of soul-composing involves first of all recognising that as modern subjects we already contain double and contradictory lines of self-destructive and self-creative impulses: "Any modern soul care and self-fashioning must begin from a recognition of the double-bind in which the modern spirit is caught; in the spirit a great longing is combined with a great contempt, and every effort of (self-) creation is also an effort of (self-) destruction." Only on this premise can we begin to understand the laborious work of an "unravelling of the nefarious personality structures of the modern self" and potentially (re)compose new regimes of the soul. (Hutter, *Shaping the Future*, 30-31). In the following I address the employment of ascetic procedures as techniques for a strategic

Nietzsche asks: since ascetic artistry until now has been directed against our "natural inclinations," practiced as an attack upon the body's needs and our general physiological vitality – upon the most fundamental conditions of life and hence as inimically against this-worldly living – would a so-called "reverse experiment" be possible? Would it be possible to redirect our millennia-long training in conscience-vivisection and self-torture towards different aims, and could our inherited ascetic skill set be taken up with a good conscience against what Nietzsche calls our "unnatural inclinations"? What would this mean? Unnatural inclinations for Nietzsche are inclinations toward what have been described above as ascetic ideals in the broad sense; ideals that attempt to not only create suspicion of the body and its senses but to 'slander' the world by inventing another; ideals that downgrade 'reality' by making up an alternative, other one. Unnatural inclinations are any aspirations toward a beyond, including those of a philosophical and metaphysical nature. Would it be possible to wed our inherited 'bad conscience' to such unnatural inclinations; to become, as Nietzsche puts it, "ashamed" not of our immorality but our (ascetic) morality? [47]

What is at stake in Nietzsche's suggested reverse experiment is then, not an overcoming or undoing of our ascetic heritage but on the contrary an acceptance, appreciation and strategic appropriation of it. It is an attempted

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counter-attack, rather than as techniques for destruction and creation within the structure of the modern self.

[47] For a proposed resolving of the seeming contradiction in wedding 'unnatural inclination' to what is effectively the source of judgments against natural inclinations, namely the 'bad conscience,' see Ridley, *Nietzsche's Conscience*, 134-36. As noted earlier, it is beyond the reaches of my discussion to attempt a comprehensive analysis of the concept and genealogy of the 'bad conscious' and of 'natural' versus 'unnatural' inclinations. In line with Ridley's conclusion – proposing what is at stake in the envisioning attempt to deploy the resources of the bad conscience *against* the 'unnatural inclinations' is a recipe for outdoing the priest on his own territory (Ridley, 136) – I am viewing this 'reverse experiment' only within the context of an antagonistic setup, where it is sought to subvert ascetic procedures against the source they spring from.

reinvention of the very concepts invented by the so-called artist of guilt feelings, and an exploitation of all the acetic procedures of self-torture and dissection that it has developed. Nietzsche proposes that all this may put to use in an experiment that would turn the power of ascetic practices against the world-denying, self-renouncing and meta-physical ideals they are borne of and which have thus far motivated and enforced them. Which is to say, to strategically turn the power of the ascetic ideal against itself.

This, I propose, is what Nietzsche's description of the 'philosopher's cheerful asceticism,' as will be presented in the following, is concerned with: a speculative inquiry into the possibility of an ascetic practice that would not be ascetic in aim, that is, would not entail any transcendental value hierarchy evoked by ascetically informed ideals. By presenting a version of asceticism that now springs from the philosopher type the possibility of such an experiment is tentatively explored in which the philosopher is shown both in opposition to, but also in a close relation to, the ascetic priest type. As will become apparent, Nietzsche's presentation of the philosopher's cheerful asceticism is, I suggest, a preliminary, playful and also (self-)ironic staging of such an experiment, with the figure of the philosopher as dramatic protagonist. Importantly however, it is *only* an experiment – one which ultimately, as will be seen, must fail.

In the following I will bring together a set of body-orientated regimen that may be said to belong to the philosopher's cheerful asceticism. I have construed these from various descriptions found in both the *Genealogy* and *Beyond Good and Evil* and compartmentalised them into three main groups that I have named as follows: *Solitude*, *Pragmatic Chastity* and *Active Digestion*. Again, these should not be taken as a presentation of what Nietzsche himself offers, but rather a construct I suggest as useful for assessing what Nietzsche's engagement with, and agonistic subversion of, ascetic procedures amounts to in practice.

**The Philosopher's Cheerful Asceticism.**

Affirming the close relation between philosophical and Christian *askesis* as highlighted in the beginning, Nietzsche notes that a historical examination shows a very close and strong bond between philosophy and ascetic ideals. In fact, the former "learned its first steps on the leading string of the latter."[48] This close connection is presented both in a negative and a positive light. Firstly, ascetic ideals represented a necessary condition for the philosopher in his early stages, in the sense that he had to use it as a mask. In order to survive, the philosopher had to remain in the cocoon of existing, contemplative types such as priests, soothsayers and sorcerers. At this early stage, where the philosopher had not yet become fully conscious of himself, of what he was, his generally withdrawn attitude, his tendency towards suspicion of the senses and hence to world-denial is in other words "the result of the emerging conditions under which philosophy arose and survived." It was his ascetic cloak and ascetic misunderstanding of himself that served as a precondition for the survival of the philosopher type: "The ascetic priest provided until most modern times the repulsive, gloomy caterpillar in which the philosopher could live and creep about." But the question is whether today the more mature philosopher spirit 'nesting inside' has really been able to shake off its ascetic cloak. "Is there," Nietzsche asks, "pride, daring, courage, self-confidence available today, sufficient will of the spirit, will to responsibility, freedom of will, for 'the philosopher' to be henceforth – possible on earth?"[49] As will be seen, this is the essential question and one that will eventually be answered, partially at least, in the negative.

The philosopher type is ambiguously presented in the *Genealogy*, in which he oscillates between being described as a truly free-spirited, admirable philosopher of the future, and as a 'decadent,' a 'self-deceiver' and a

[48] GM, III, 10.
[49] Ibid.

'tyrant.' This runs parallel to the dual evaluation of ascetics and its relation to philosophical activity. When the ascetic will is induced to philosophise it will immediately become suspicious. It will turn what Nietzsche calls its 'evil eye' towards "what is felt most certainly to be real and actual" and it will "downgrade physicality to illusion," deny reality, the senses and appearances – a tendency which, according to Nietzsche, continues to occupy the majority of philosophy even in its modern form (the Kantian concept of the 'intelligible character of things' serving as an example).[50] As mentioned earlier, so-called ascetic ideals are not just ideals that direct the life and desire of the devoted religious ascetic, but any meta-physically informed structures that 'downgrade" physicality, that explicitly or implicitly suggest an other, transcendent realm in contrast to, or opposed to, that what is 'felt' to be most real and actual. In short, all aspirations to a beyond that which appears and is experienced immediately and immanently, any impetus that in effect makes life in its immanent, mundane and aesthetic dimension 'less' true, even illusory. Any philosophy that does not affirm but instead expresses an inherent longing to get away from reality, the senses and appearances, is ascetic in aspiration – is philosophy *with* ascetic ideals. However, there is another kind which for Nietzsche marks the philosopher in a positive sense.[51]

If affection for ascetic ideals is lacking in the philosopher type, he is, Nietzsche says, only a so-called philosopher. This is because the philosopher instinctively sees in ascetic ideals an "optimum condition for

[50] GM, III, 12.
[51] For a schematic account of the origins and historical development of 'the philosopher' or '*La bête philosophe*' as presented in GM, see for example Ridley, *Nietzsche's Conscience*, 66-68. It is beyond the scope of my analysis to present a comprehensive account of the ambiguous and complex history of the emergence of 'the philosopher' as assessed by Nietzsche. As I am attempting a presentation of ascetic practices of the 'philosopher' figure that can be seen to directly and sardonically mimic those of traditional asceticism, I hope my simplified description may be sufficient.

his highest and boldest spirituality," just as he instinctively "abhors" all that would hinder or obstruct his path to these conditions. The philosopher of higher, that is free, spirit is described as bold, fruitful, inventive, strong and independent. The optimum circumstances for such a type, says Nietzsche, are the conditions most appropriate and natural for his "fairest fruitfulness."[52] Some of the conditions the philosopher cannot do without are: freedom from compulsion, freedom from duties, obedient intestines, no injured ambitions, good air, good company (and where it is not available, one's own company). The philosopher's ideal, his most appropriate and natural situation, is presented as one of overall independence; freedom from civil obligations and from emotional, social as well as climatic and digestive agitations. In other words, conditions which are seemingly identical to those sought out by the ascetic, but most importantly, for fundamentally different reasons and to radically different effect. Namely, conditions that serve the philosopher's own personal and self-concerned ends and thus have a self-affirming and hence life-affirming effect. This difference, as will be shown, is anchored in the binding of the philosopher's so-called higher spirituality to his 'instinct' – the latter described by Nietzsche as a personal inclination, which may here be understood as something like a sense for or "what is normally called 'taste.'" And what this instinct of the philosopher wills,

[52] The path to the optimum is not, Nietzsche emphasises, the path to 'happiness', but a "path to power, to deeds, to the mightiest activity and in most cases in fact a path to unhappiness." (GM, III, 7). In the context of an aligning and contrasting of the priest and the philosopher as opponents and as allies, it is relevant to note how the term 'spirituality' when used in relation to the philosopher (as a 'higher' and 'superior' form of spirituality) evocates *Geist.* As that which invigorates (in the sense of esprit or 'spirited'). As such the phrase 'the life of the spirit' refers to the general *vigour*, the inherent life *kraft* of a person, a time or a society, indicating the levels of intellectual and cultural sophistication and overall state of enlightenment and flourishing. As such it connects directly to what Nietzsche here calls 'fairest fruitfulness.'

according to Nietzsche, is the desert – which is to say it wills seclusion, it wants to "become lonely."[53]

*The Philosopher's Solitude.* The free spirited philosopher, being an inherently independent type, is "bound to rejoice at stories of men who said *No!* to servitude and went to the *desert*."[54] The philosopher's desert is described as a fortress where one may be delivered from the crowds, the many, the great majority.[55] But the philosopher's desert is not, Nietzsche makes clear, the desert of the ascetic, of saints or "other actors."[56] It is not "oriental" and it is not "dramatic." Rather, the philosopher's desert as described by Nietzsche turns out to be quite mundane. It is a withdrawal into voluntary obscurity, an everyday existence that *conceals* one and may, quite concretely, consist in taking "a room in a full, commonplace hotel" where one has a view to "mountains with eyes" (meaning mountains with lakes) and where one can go unrecognised. The desert of the philosopher, more so than a specific kind of location, refers to a situation, an 'untimely' mode of existence that can protect one not only from the great majority but from contemporary influences, be they in the shape of newspapers, "democratic chatter" and other "modern ideas." In general, all the "business

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[53] GM, III, 7.
[54] GM, III, 7.
[55] BGE, II, 26. However, the section continues: "But about him who 'constantly avoids' (…) stays quietly and proudly hidden in his fortress, then one thing is clear: he is not made for knowledge, not predestined for it. For if he were, he would one day have to say to himself: "To hell with my good taste! (…)" This 'letting go' of one's good taste and risking being compromised before an audience, before the many, will be discussed in the final chapter in connection with a problematisation of Nietzsche's persistent regimen of 'solitude.'
[56] This definition of saints as 'actors' links back to the earlier description of the ascetic priest type as a deceiver – as someone affectedly posing as a healer in order to exploit the supposed need for healing. The overall characterisation of ascetic figures as inherently insincere 'poseurs,' will be further addressed in the final chapter.

of 'today.'" If there is one thing the philosopher craves, above all else, it is to be delivered from his day.[57]

There are of course, Nietzsche admits, 'worthier' deserts, such as Heraclitus' desert for example, the temple of Artemis, with its colonnades and cool marble surfaces. But although we are seriously in need of them, unfortunately we do not have such deserts at our disposal today. Although, Nietzsche muses, perhaps we do: "I just recall my most beautiful study – the Piazza di San Marco, in spring of course, and morning also, the time between ten and twelve."[58]

These concrete descriptions of the 'desert' as a commonplace hotel with mountain views or a Venetian study at a precise time of year and time of day position Nietzsche himself and his precise temporal and spatial locations within a discussion which has hitherto been concerned with the 'philosopher' as a type. At this point, Nietzsche switches to the use of 'we' rather than 'they': "We philosophers (…) we revere (…) places where the soul does not have to 'defend itself,' or 'wrap itself up,' where it is possible to speak 'without speaking aloud."[59]

The desert, as a place in which the philosopher conceals himself from the "loud" crowds of his day and as such seeks his independence, is then

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[57] GM, III, 8. The multifaceted and well-treated theme of 'untimeliness' is present from the early to the latest stages of Nietzsche's writings. Within the context of ascetic procedures as presented here, I treat this theme in a narrow sense as relating to wilful seclusion or isolation, informed by a distaste or disdain for one's 'time' and 'the many,' in order to show the connection to traditional ascetic life styles and not least to the desert ascetic. For a rendering of untimeliness as a theme of futurity, see for example Duncan Large, 'On 'untimeliness': Temporal structures in Nietzsche or: "The day after tomorrow belongs to me",' *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 8 (1994), 33-53.

[58] GM, III, 8.

[59] Ibid. The ambiguous place of Nietzsche himself within his presentation of the philosopher, the shifts from 'they' to 'we,' from 'the philosopher' as type to 'I', can, I suggest, be left fluctuating. Residing without, in order to carry out critique from a perspective of observance, but also, at the most serious of times it would seem, residing within, carrying out a more or less implicit self-critique.

also a mode of existence which involves the effort of what Nietzsche calls 'great' and 'serious' solitude. The philosopher's desert involves having the energy to *choose* absolute solitude. In this sense, the desert is an effort and a test which is not without risk. "Being independent is a matter that concerns the fewest people. And whoever tries it (….) proves that he is probably not only strong but daring to the point of abandon,"[60] and again: "We must test ourselves to determine whether we are destined for independence (…) We should not sidestep our tests, even though they are probably the most dangerous game that can be played, and are ultimately tests witnessed only by ourselves and taken before no other judge."[61] Solitude understood as a test upon oneself is necessarily also a challenge the traditional ascetic takes part in; it forms part of his regimen of world-renunciation. The important difference is that Nietzsche here deliberately distinguishes the philosopher's self-testing from the ascetic's by describing it as something performed before "no judge" except oneself – quite unlike the ascetic, who performs his solitude under the watchful eye of God. When the philosopher goes to the desert he is, as Nietzsche states, "thinking about himself and not the saint!" Unlike the ascetic but also unlike all those people "without solitude, without their own solitude," Nietzsche's free spirits, thinking about themselves and their ultimate conditions only, are by nature inclined to solitude, but their very own, intimate form of solitude. They are the "born and sworn jealous friends of solitude, our own-most, deepest, most mid-nocturnal, most noon-diurnal solitude: – this is the kind of human being we are, we free spirits!"[62]

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[60] BGE, II, 29.
[61] BGE, II, 41.
[62] BGE, II, 44. As mentioned in the preceding chapter where the regimen of solitude was presented in light of its curative qualities, and as will be shown in the following chapter where involuntary solitude will be proposed as an overall problem for Nietzsche's ideal of philosophy lived, the theme of solitude is most essential to Nietzsche's *askesis*. This is affirmed in Horst Hutter's presentation which sets up Nietzsche's *Einsamkeitslehre* as the main exercise from which all of Nietzsche's other proposed ascetic

The philosopher's will to the desert, his search for independence and urge to "become lonely," is informed by a concern for his own self-preservation: "We must know how *to preserve ourselves*: the strongest test of independence."[63] The protection from today, from men of today and their ideas, is then also a necessary *hygienic* precaution, a sanitary mode of preservation, since in the so-called 'society' of today there is "unavoidable soiling. Community of any kind somehow, somewhere, some way makes us 'base.'"[64] This is why the virtue of solitude for the philosopher, which springs from his self-protective instinct, is for Nietzsche something like an "urge for cleanliness." Crucial to approaching Nietzsche's hygienic perspective is the fact that it deliberately, and sardonically, links to the ascetic type of the saint.

> The highest instinct of cleanliness places the one afflicted with it in the oddest and most dangerous isolation, like a saint: for that is exactly what saintliness is – the highest spiritualisation of said instinct. Some kind of shared knowledge of an indescribable fullness in the happiness of bathing.[65]

With this description, Nietzsche relegates the 'spirituality' of the saintly type to a tendency towards – and an instinctive pleasure in – keeping clean. Nietzsche strips cleanliness, of all its ritualistic symbolism as moral

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practices spring. Solitude is first and foremost a suitable practice for those interested in the art of self-creation, since such undertakings require "sufficiently long periods of solitude for their development." Further, "the principle in accordance with which solitude may function as the most important and initial technique of self-change is the ancient principle governing monastic retreats, as expressed in the formula: *solve et coagula.* Chosen solitude may provide the psychic agent for the dissolution and reassembling of ego structures" (Hutter, *Shaping the Future*, 47-67). In the context of this chapter, I am viewing solitude specifically as a subverted ascetic procedure: a withdrawal practice appropriated and posited against the transcendentally placed ideal of solitude as spiritual communion presented in traditional asceticism.

[63] BGE, II, 41.
[64] BGE, IX, 284.
[65] BGE, IX, 271.

purifier; in this new 'debased', moral-free and cheerful version of cleanliness or 'purity', the philosopher *is* like the saint, in the sense that he shares the saint's inherent sanitary taste, as instinct, for being clean, and even shares the 'indescribable fullness' of the happiness of bathing. [66]

*Solitude* as the philosopher's desert and as a form of cleanliness is the first regimen of the philosopher's cheerful asceticism. It is a mode of renunciation undertaken with the "best will" and belongs to the most favourable conditions of the philosopher's higher spirituality – and is also among its most natural consequences. The kind of independence sought in the philosopher's untimely desert, his renunciation of 'society,' of men and ideas of his time, is not, as with the traditional ascetic, a way of renouncing existence, but precisely the opposite; the philosopher hereby preserves and thus "affirms his and *only* his existence."[67]

*The philosopher's pragmatic chastity.* The philosopher's chastity is not, like the ascetic's, born out of any fear of the flesh or any scruple or hatred of the senses. It is rather a strategy for preserving and concentrating energy at crucial periods of labour, or what Nietzsche calls the philosopher's "great pregnancy."[68] Just as the athlete, the jockey and every artist know sexual intercourse to be harmful at certain times, according to Nietzsche the philosopher has no need to learn this from experience. His so-called maternal instinct guides him in these matters, impelling him to nurture what is "growing inside him." In contrast to the chastity prescribed in traditional

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[66] As Ridley states, 'purity,' the original priestly character trait, is rendered by Nietzsche as absolutely non-symbolical in meaning. "The 'pure one' is from the beginning merely a man who washes himself, who forbids himself certain foods that produce skin ailments, who does not sleep with dirty women of the lower strata, who has an aversion to blood – no more, hardly more!" (Ridley, *Nietzsche's Conscience*, 59 [GM, I, 6]). In contrast to the stripping of symbolic meaning suggested here, see Parkes who expands on the symbolic reaches of Nietzsche's 'water' imagery in *Composing the Soul*, 143-155.
[67] GM, III, 8, 9.
[68] GM, III, 8.

ascetic regimes, the philosopher's periodic celibacy, abstaining from sexual activity at crucial times of great labour, is a practical precaution, a bodily strategy which serves to preserve, concentrate and direct sources of energy and strength through the right channels at the right times. It is a careful economy of expenditure and retention, similar to those of the athlete and the artist, practiced at intense periods of engagement in or preparation for creativity or performance. For the philosopher any attempt to condemn the sexual act, to "throw dirt" on the "very beginning of life," as Nietzsche puts it, is absolutely absurd; nevertheless, procreation and the institution that frames it, that of marriage, do not belong among the most natural or fruitful conditions for the philosopher's existence, since the kind of spirit he is "obviously" has its fruitfulness elsewhere than progeny. For all free-spirited philosophers, marriage and children present an obstacle on the path to independence and hence they instinctively abhor it. This is proven to Nietzsche by the fact that all the great philosophers throughout history remained unmarried and without heirs or, as with Socrates, married ironically:

> What Great Philosophers so far have been married? Heraclitus, Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Schopenhauer – they were not; even more, we can not even imagine them as married. A married philosopher belongs in comedy, that is my proposition; and that exception Socrates, the malicious Socrates, it seems, married out of irony, just to demonstrate this proposition.[69]

[69] GM, III, 7. The passage continues: "Every philosopher would speak as Buddha once spoke when the birth of a son was announced to him: 'Râhula has been born to me, a fetter has been forged for me.'" With this proposition Nietzsche is in full accord with the general life style of the philosophers of antiquity and again echoes Diotima in Plato's *Symposium* who explains how the philosopher's pregnancy and progeny, to Nietzsche his 'fairest fruitfulness,' lies not in human offspring. For broader exploration of the theme of sexual procreation outside the context of existing ascetic procedures, but with reference to seeding, impregnations, labour and birth, see Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, 231 - 247.

The philosopher's digestion and active forgetfulness. "Blessed are the forgetful: for they 'get over' even their stupidities."[70] What Nietzsche calls active forgetfulness represents a force, "a form of robust health," and is both equated with the thousandfold bodily processes involved in digestion of physical nourishment, and described as an apparatus of repression without which there could be "no happiness, no cheerfulness, no hope, no pride, no present."[71] As with the unconscious process of digestion, forgetting is blessed as a virtue in the sense that it allows us to finish with things, to "get over" experiences, our own mistakes and stupidities included. It allows for things not to fester within but to pass through and eventually be purged from us. If this apparatus is malfunctioning in a person, if he does not possess the robust health which it is the expression of, the result is a man who cannot "have done" with anything, a man for whom experiences remain what Nietzsche calls open wounds that refuse to heal. A man in whom feelings, "bad feelings" continue to ruminate and hurt, or who, in Nietzsche's body language, is simply a dyspeptic.[72]

In this emphasis on the philosopher's digestion it is possible to see, firstly, a deliberate inversion of the ascetic procedure described earlier whereby intake is minimised in order to, as far as possible, halt intestinal activity and the production of bodily discharge. Secondly, Nietzsche's positive account of active forgetfulness may be seen as a direct attempt to counteract the 'guilty' medicament prescribed by the ascetic priest. The interpretation and exploitation of affects under the perspective of 'guilt feelings' rely, as mentioned, on a self-enforcing loop of constant reactivation of the past, in the sense that it positions man as the guilty cause from which suffering continuously springs forth and is directed back unto himself, originating in and continuously flaring up in him as the source of 'original sin,' feeding back into redemptive practices of forgiveness. This is

[70] BGE, XII, 217.
[71] GM, II, 1.
[72] GM, I, 10.

why Nietzsche finds mnemotechnics most "fearful and uncanny." In fact, the whole of asceticism, Nietzsche says, belongs in this sphere of the "art of memory aid." Ascetic procedures and forms of life are means of fixating ideas for the purpose of hypnotising the whole "nervous and intellectual system" – a violent strategy for making ideas unforgettable by "burning" them into the memory and by this act eliminating other, competing ideas, making no room for "new things" to enter consciousness.[73] Active forgetfulness may be seen as an antidote to such procedures. There is, as Nietzsche points out, no need for forgiveness – one is unable to forgive – if one has already forgotten.[74]

Taking the feeling of resentment as example, in its raw state, Nietzsche explains, such a feeling is not absent in strong, free spirits. But because they possess the robust health of active forgetting, it does not become a reactive force (become ressentiment), as with those in whom resentment festers. Rather, by virtue of an active, well functioning digestion, resentment "runs its course and exhausts itself." It does not, as with the dyspeptic, fester and poison but rather "appears and disappears" as a well-digested meal. In this sense active forgetfulness as digestion is itself a form of healing-power.

> To be unable for any length of time to take his enemies, his accidents, misdeeds themselves seriously – that is a sign of strong, full natures in which there is an excess of formative, reconstructive healing powers that makes one forget…such a human is simply able to shake off with a single shrug a collection of worms that in others would dig itself in.[75]

Likewise:

> (…) A strong and well-constituted man digests his experiences (his deeds and misdeeds included) as he digests his meals, even when he has to swallow some tough morsels. If he cannot get over an

[73] GM, III, 3.
[74] GM, III, 10.
[75] Ibid.

> experience and have done with it, this kind of indigestion is as much physiological as it is the other – and often in fact merely a consequence of the other. [76]

The philosopher's digestion then, as an active form of forgetting, belongs to what was discussed in the preceding chapter as 'great health,' and relies on one of the conditions for the philosopher's higher spirituality mentioned at the beginning: 'obedient intestines.' It serves, both in a psychological and physiological sense, the healthy processing of nourishment and of violent affects such as resentment. In contrast to the purification of the traditional ascetic, the purging involved in what I propose as the third regimen of the philosopher's cheerful asceticism concerns ridding oneself of 'guilt feelings' and other hurtful affects that tend to fester and infect. This form of digestion, which as a concept concerns experiences, feelings, physical food and even tough morsels, as Nietzsche states, is one that may be used while remaining still, apparently, "the strictest opponent of all materialism."[77]

What Nietzsche's cheerful version, or inversion, of asceticism as presented above shows is what the procedures appropriated from ascetic artistry come to *mean* and express in the hands of the philosopher as compared to the ascetic. The philosopher, being an inherently free-spirited type, is according to Nietzsche *instinctively* drawn to the ascetic ideal, because he sees in it an affirmation of his and only his existence: it is in full accordance with *his* inclinations, his inherent taste and as such makes up the best conditions for his fairest fruitfulness and highest spirituality.

While those who lay claim to heightened spirituality are the ascetic types, priests and saints, according to Nietzsche's character profile presented earlier, they are in fact the opposite: base, excessively sensual types, driven by festering resentment and an insatiable instinct to dominate – an instinct which they turn upon themselves, finding rapturous pleasure in

[76] GM, III, 16.
[77] Ibid.

self-torture. Nietzsche's version of 'higher' spirituality is reserved for the philosopher, who is by nature a spiritual type, in the sense of someone inherently energetic, cultivated and productive, a noble free spirit. This is the Nietzschean, superior form of spirituality, higher than what self-professed spiritual types can ever dream of, because it is not opposed to but affirmed by the personal needs, wishes and inherent desires of the philosopher type. Spirituality simply *is* the philosopher's dominating instinct, his good taste, which means in turn that his instincts, inclinations and overall good taste are spiritual in the Nietzschean sense. This is why, for the philosopher, ascetic procedures of solitude, of chastity and of purification or purging are in fact non-ascetic in nature, since they do not involve any kind of renunciation or represent any conflict with oneself, but the very opposite. There is an obvious satirical mockery in this inverted presentation, whereby Nietzsche shows the superior nonchalance and ease with which the philosopher 'cheerfully' enacts his asceticism with the best will, compared to the painful struggle of the traditional ascetic who must constantly battle with himself and his organism with tremendous efforts of self-control, denial and perseverance. The philosopher ascetic denies nothing but affirms his and only his existence.

This is what is indicative of the whole project of Nietzsche's cheerful asceticism – an attempt not to oppose or dispute asceticism, but to wrestle from it its own valued constructions; higher spirituality does not belong to the priest, the saint or other ascetic types, but to the philosopher, just as ascetic procedures belong to him quite *naturally*. Knowing the power and skills of ascetic artistry, rather than fight such an impressive opponent the philosopher craftily seeks to employ it. Nietzsche is not then simply proposing the philosopher as counter-type. The philosopher is not opposed to but, as seen, 'like' the saint, and his regimen look like those of the ascetic. The philosopher, like the saint, enjoys cleanliness, chastity, solitude and the desert – but he seeks these out *for other reasons* than the saint. Likewise, the philosopher, like the saint, is extremely concerned with the

issue of digestion and the state and tempo of the metabolism – but *his* concern with himself, his inner organs and the activity of retention and purging is again for other reasons. This is, I argue, the dynamic that permeates all of Nietzsche's engagement with ascetics: a strategic appropriation, a taking ownership of and power over our ascetic heritage, making ascetic procedures serve 'our virtues,' our health and our values – the virtues of the philosopher that no longer serve ascetic ends of renunciation or self-denial. And since in order for something to be a virtue in the Nietzschean sense "it needs to be our *own* intention, our *own* most personal need and self-defence," [78] it means that ascetic procedures have now become an *expression* of, rather than something directed antagonistically against, the philosopher's particular instincts, his own tastes and preferences. That is, *ascetics without ascetic ideals.*

Nietzsche's cheerful asceticism for the philosopher can indeed be seen to 'make asceticism natural again' by wresting the concept from its appropriation by early Christians (such as Paul) and returning *askesis* to its original athletic context as a practice concerned with strengthening, rather than renouncing, the body and its natural constitution. However, as already noted, it cannot be seen simply as a suggested return to or reactivation of pre-Christian practices. These are not only out of reach for us moderns but irrelevant to us – irrelevant to our present, cultural and historical, which is to say ascetic, situation. They cannot respond to what we have become at this stage of our development as inhabitants of the ascetic planet, and as heirs to millennia-long training in self-mortification, and can even less offer sufficient strategies of resistance against dominating ascetic ideals.

As noted, what concerns Nietzsche in the *Genealogy* is the question of the power of the ascetic ideal, why it has managed to flourish for so long and why it has not been resisted. And furthermore, whether such a resistance is even possible, let alone desirable. As suggested earlier, what

[78] A, 2.

Nietzsche is considering is whether what he calls a 'reverse experiment' would be possible, one that turns ascetic training back upon ascetic ideals themselves. I have proposed that the philosopher's cheerful asceticism is a first attempt by Nietzsche at such an experiment which involves a taking ownership of the ascetic artistry to which we are the rightful heirs, and to exploit this artistry to serve radically different aims, liberated from the ascetic ideal. As such the regimen of the philosopher's asceticism is a proposed anti-ascetic training, an *askesis* directed against dominant and powerful ideals. But this now, I suggest, poses a problem.

The very meaning of *askesis*, athletic and Christian alike, as a strenuous training of and working on the body, is unfitting to the philosopher's version as it has been described so far. Since it is simply the consequence, affirmation and expression of his natural constitution and inclination, the philosopher's asceticism can no longer be defined as training, or even as effort in any way. It would seem that the philosopher, whose inherent taste guides him towards his most natural and favourable conditions, is not only different to the ascetic; the philosopher is not involved in any form of *askesis*, understood as exercise, an undertaking that requires effort, precisely because the aspirational component inherent to the concept of *askesis* is lost.[79] Furthermore, the idea of philosophy being an art of existence, the deliberate and considerate undertaking of life stylisation, is made redundant since the practice involved in acquiring know-how is no longer, it seems, necessary: the philosopher is quite naturally, instinctively, without effort or consideration, guided by his inherent constitution to his best conditions and thus is *already* living in the best way, under the most

[79] Nietzsche seemingly addresses this problem in BGE, I, 9. "You desire to LIVE 'according to Nature'? Oh, you noble Stoics, what fraud of words! (…) And granted that your imperative, 'living according to Nature,' means actually the same as 'living according to life' – how could you do DIFFERENTLY? Why should you make a principle out of what you yourselves are, and must be?"

appropriate conditions. In fact, he could not live otherwise than he already does because, following the inversion principle of Nietzsche's cheerful ascetics, the way of life he instinctively seeks out and hence is already living is affirmed and not directed by his asceticism. The ascetic procedures in this sense do not shape, form or direct his living, but are merely the affirmative expression of it. The philosopher is in other words not concerned with actively constructing for himself a *Lebensordnung* – and he does not need *askesis*.

If *askesis* understood as exercising or training requires an aim towards which is strives as a practice and activity, then Nietzsche's reverse experiment, that is an ascetics without ascetic ideals, seemingly suffers either implosion, in the sense that the very concept of *askesis* has been dismantled by the process of naturalisation, or from the lack of another goal, an alternative ideal. This problem is reflected in Nietzsche's (self-)critical conclusion.

Any *real* attempt to overcome the dominance of ascetic ideals would, Nietzsche states, necessitate an extensive system which would be able to challenge the power of ascetic ideals. Where, Nietzsche asks, "is a match for this closed system of will, goal and interpretation" that the ascetic ideal presents? Where is that *other* goal – where is that *other* ideal?[80] Besides briefly hinting that his own *Zarathustra* could in fact be such an ideal, Nietzsche ultimately concludes that no such ideals are presently available.[81]

[80] GM, III, 23.

[81] Many attempts have been made, on Nietzsche's behalf, to propose theories of plausible counter-ideals, in the shape for example of Nietzsche's concept of *Übermensch* or Eternal Recurrence and its related therapeutic dictum of *Amor Fati*. In the context of discussions of Nietzsche's ascetics, Hicks and Rosenberg ask: "But is a life-enhancing alternative ideal to the 'hitherto reigning ascetic ideal' to be found in Nietzsche's writings – one that, perhaps, he intentionally veiled or 'masked,' or did not fully recognize himself? Can we identify an 'opposing ideal' which is not based, like the ascetic ideal, upon lies, false causal notions, 'metaphysical comforts,' and transcendental devaluations of the natural world (…)?" As an answer they

However, what is perhaps more important is that not only does there not presently appear any viable alternative ideal, but the philosopher is not the enemy of and will not be capable of posing a serious threat to reigning ascetic ideals.

In fact, while the unbelieving philosophers may consider themselves opponents of the ascetic ideal, they are no more than the latest, most noble form of it: the "heroic" philosophers, in the shape of the free-spirited atheists, immoralists, sceptics and hectics, who "constitute the honour of our age" and in whom alone the "intellectual conscience (…) is incarnate today," in the end the ascetic ideal is their ideal too "*for they still have faith in the truth*."[82]

A comprehensive presentation of Nietzsche's concept and critique of truth will not be attempted here. What is relevant for the following is not the possibility of truth but more specifically the overestimation or overvaluation of truth which aligns the philosopher with the ascetic ideal and hence disqualifies his/her attempt to oppose it.

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suggest Nietzsche's transfigured, re-naturalised ascetic techniques combined with his call for an artistic etho-aesthetic self-fashioning "may point the way beyond the ascetic ideal towards a viable alternative – one more open-ended and non-dogmatic, which Nietzsche cannot therefore dogmatically commend to his readers, but which his readers must somehow discover for themselves." (Hicks and Rosenberg, 'Nietzsche and the Transfiguration of Asceticism: An Ethics of Self-Fashioning.' in *Reading Nietzsche at the Margins*, ed. Steven Hicks and Alan Rosenberg (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008). As I will discuss in the following, final chapter, while the issue of ideals, the overcoming of ascetic ones and the possible creation of new, alternative ones, is crucial to Nietzsche's *askesis*, I do not believe that creating ideals on Nietzsche's behalf – ones that he, as Hicks and Rosenberg suggest, was "not himself aware of" – is warranted. Nietzsche's critique of ideals is not limited to recognised ascetic ones but concerns a critique of the very attempt to raise ideals and of our belief in the need for them. This, as I will show in chapter three, is what is at stake in *Ecce Homo.*

[82] GM, III, 24.

Already in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche had described how "we [unbelieving philosophers, anti-metaphysicians and counter-idealists] too are still pious." What makes this group pious is the unflinching conviction that "*nothing* is needed *more* than truth, and in relation to it everything else has only second-rate value."[83]

As described earlier, ascetic ideals are ascetic in so far as they, whether directly or indirectly, posit a transcendentally determined value hierarchy, within which 'life' as it appears and is experienced in its mundane, aesthetic and immediate sense, is devalued or made into something *less* – less real, less true or less important. That is, ideals that do not originate immanently within life in its physiological form but are meta-physically posited in contrast to it – above, beyond or generally *elsewhere*.

The philosopher's conviction that truth stands not only above all else, but is *needed* above all else, by necessity suggests just such a hierarchy. If all else is deemed "second-rate" in comparison to the need for truth, it means that all else, including life and not least the best conditions for worldly living, may ultimately be degraded, damaged and even sacrificed for it. In this sense, the philosopher's belief in the unparalleled importance and absolute worth of truth is not a valuation construed from within or with a view to life, but one that springs from an elsewhere. The belief in truth as absolute value, in this way, springs from, indeed *it is* an ascetic ideal, relying on a *metaphysically* founded faith and it is, "if you believe me," faith in the ascetic ideal itself.

> (…) we men of knowledge of today, we godless men and anti-metaphysicians, we, too, still derive *our* flame from the fire ignited by a faith millennia old, the Christian faith, which was also Plato's, that God is truth, that truth is *divine*.[84]

[83] GS, 344
[84] GM, III, 24.

Atheists, anti-metaphysicians and counter-idealists who have devoted themselves to the denial of all metaphysical belief, and who nevertheless believe themselves opponents of the ascetic ideal, view themselves as living without faith and without ideals of any kind – "except for one." Their belief in truth, their one 'unconditional.'

The philosopher's uncompromising need for truth is what has led him to rigorously question established truths, such as those of Christianity, and to reveal them as unfounded and hence erroneous. And because of his drive for truth, he must now turn it towards his own estimation of truth. Since the unbelieving philosopher himself has done away with the propositional truth of religious doctrine, and hence with the god who sanctioned the "millennia old" faith that truth is divine and absolute – the philosopher's esteem and valuation of truth above all else is called into question. Having undone the only premise that can give absolute value to truth, the philosopher's own will to truth, which executed the undoing of its own foundation, now stands without basis and *requires justification*.

The fact that the atheist philosopher has, so far, abstained from such questioning, that he has adhered to the ban on an inquest into the worth and value of truth, shows that philosophy continues to be ruled by the ascetic ideal. The belief in truth as absolute value, as "highest court of appeal," which all else can be judged *with* and against, the source from which this valuation springs is the belief in truth as ascetically sanctified ideal. Nothing else could guarantee truth as value but the ascetic ideal – it is the product of this ideal. What it amounts to is "*faith in the ascetic ideal itself*, even if as an unconscious imperative – don't be deceived about that – it is faith in a *metaphysical* value, the absolute value of *truth*, sanctioned and guaranteed by this ideal alone (it stands and falls with this ideal)."[85]

The philosopher's final ascetic virtue is what will not allow him to pose the question "*what is the meaning of all will to truth?*" This is, as Nietzsche states, "our" problem "my unknown friends (for as yet I *know* of no friend):

[85] Ibid.

what meaning would *our* whole being possess if it were not this, that in us the will to truth becomes conscious of itself as a *problem?*"[86]

It now becomes clear that the task undertaken by Nietzsche to bring the whole morality of self-renunciation to account, through what he had called a "physiological investigation and examination," is not enough. And neither is the reverse experiment suggested by the philosopher's cheerful asceticism. Ultimately, it is the *overestimation* as to the value of truth and hence the philosopher's very own will to truth that "requires critique." This is what Nietzsche now calls our own task; "to once and for all *experimentally* call the value of truth into question." The will to truth gaining self-consciousness, becoming conscious of itself as a problem: this great spectacle will be reserved for the next two centuries in Europe.

However, *besides* this great future task, one small window is left open for more manageable and available means of attacking the dominance of the ascetic ideal.

Nietzsche's rendering as impotent those who currently present themselves as antagonists of ascetic ideals is directed not only at philosophers, but equally scientists and historians.

"They tell me", Nietzsche says, that "modern science as a philosophy truly of reality has conquered the ascetic ideal." Such talk, Nietzsche states, "does not impress me": "Do not come to me with science (atheism) when I am looking for the natural antagonist to the ascetic ideal. Both science and the ascetic ideal overestimate truth and this makes both allies."[87]

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[86] Ibid. As mentioned, the place of Nietzsche himself within this devastating critique of 'philosophers' is ambiguous. However, the explicit implication of himself as a philosopher facing a most serious and perhaps unsolvable problem here becomes clearer.

[87] GM, III, 25. As Hatab describes, modern science, for Nietzsche, cannot deliver, for (at least) two reasons: first, science in the main "is not driven by *any* ideal (and the ascetic ideal can only be opposed by a counter-*ideal*)" and second, where science *can* achieve a level of an ideal, "it is simply the

In regards to the modern, "voluptuous" armchair historians, who Nietzsche describes as cowardly contemplative types, they are nothing but hedonists "who flirt both with life and with the ascetic ideal." In the same category belong "these ambitious artists who like to pose as ascetics and priests but who are at bottom only tragic buffoons." What they amount to, as Nietzsche describes them, are "forgery in ideals", tasteless "sham idealism" and "*comedians* of the Christian-moral ideal."

However, it would seem that Nietzsche's rants about contemplative cowards and artistic poseurs leads to an idea: "With this overproduction there is obviously a new opening for *trade* here; (…) a 'business' to be made out of little ideal-idols and the 'idealists' who go with them; don't let this opportunity slip! Who has the courage for it? (…)" This remark is sardonic; nevertheless, in the very next section Nietzsche states that everything he has been concerned with in the preceding sections "is this (…) the ascetic ideal has at present only *one* kind of real enemy capable of *harming* it: comedians of this ideal – for they arouse mistrust in it." There is, Nietzsche says, nowhere else where the will to truth is not at work.[88]

To propose oneself as a real antagonist of the ascetic ideal would necessitate that one did not to share a foundation with this ideal, which, as seen, excludes the philosophers and the scientists. The only figure who

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most current manifestations *of* the ascetic ideal" (Hatab, 'How does the Ascetic Ideal Function in Nietzsche's *Genealogy*,' 111). Hatab does however suggest the outlook is not as bleak as it might seem. The problem with ascetic ideals is not the drive for truth, but more specifically for "*secured*" truths. Hence, it is in its character as a compulsive, *unconditional* will, that the will to truth indicates metaphysical value – "insofar as Nietzsche defines metaphysics as 'faith in opposite values,'" that is, "formulations that *exclude* each other" so that concepts can be secured from "infection of otherness." (Hatab, 113). It is beyond my discussion to consider how faith in oppositional values may possibly be overcome by future scientists. My focus in the following will be on the one instance Nietzsche himself mentions as a capable opponent of ascetic ideals, suggesting not the positing of a counter-ideal but rather a dismantling of the existing one from within.

[88] GM, III, 27.

would be successful is, in other words, someone not driven by an uncompromising need for truth, who does not overestimate the value of truth. In short, comedians of ascetic ideals – who, unlike those mentioned above that "like to pose as ascetics and priests but who are at bottom only tragic buffoons," are instead self-conscious comedians who deceptively pose as ascetics, but are really strategic buffoons. [89]

In this chapter I have considered Nietzsche's *askesis* within the context of the body-orientated practices of ancient Greek athletic and early Christian traditions. I have proposed that Nietzsche's critique of ascetics does not amount to a dismissal of ascetic procedures, nor does it, in any straightforward manner, indicate a call for a return to a pre-Christian, athletic version. Rather, I have shown how Nietzsche can be seen to appreciate and strategically appropriate the impressive ascetic artistry in an effort to carry out a reverse experiment, in which an attempt is made to turn ascetic procedures back upon themselves. I have proposed that this experiment is what is tentatively attempted in Nietzsche's invention of the philosopher's cheerful asceticism, and can be seen to suggest an affirmative ascetic practice without ascetic ideals of renunciation. In the end however, this reverse experiment fails on two accounts; first, the very concept of *askesis* implodes since the philosopher's naturalised version can no longer be seen as 'exercise' or 'training' because the aspirational nature posited at the heart of *askesis* as practice is lost. Second, and more damning, the philosopher, due to his unconditional belief in truth, rather than posing a serious threat to ascetic ideals, proves instead to be part and parcel of it.

[89] In this sense, becoming a comedian may be seen in relation to an artistic endeavour, in the sense of being an art in which "*lying* sanctifies itself and the *will to deception* has good conscience on its side." This makes it fundamentally opposed to the ascetic ideal, or at least, "much more" so than science is. (GM, III, 25). The 'will to deception' operating in the act of becoming a comedian is what will be discussed in the following chapter.

The issue with both these failures concerns then the inability to break free of the confining structures of domination, the powerful "closed system" set up by the ascetic ideal. While Nietzsche suggests that this problem is caused by the absence of an alternative, competing ideal, he does, as seen, hint at a possible way of harming, possibly unhinging, the ascetic ideal from *within*, namely in the form of becoming a comedian of it – since this is the only place where the will to truth is not at work. He does not, however, offer any further details or commentary as to what this would mean in practice. This is the ambivalent situation Nietzsche leaves us with: a centuries-long project of truth critique and, on the other hand, what seems to be a more immediately manageable, possibly effective but nevertheless unspecified, comic strategy – a performative mode of attack which may turn out to be yet another experiment.

What I propose can be carried forward from Nietzsche's engagement with ancient athletic and Christian practices is an appropriation of the agonistic nature and potential that, as seen, essentially drives both these body-orientated versions or traditions of *askesis*. The problem of ideals considered within the context of philosophy as *Lebensordnung* and the possibilities of *askesis* as *agon* suggested by the figure of the comedian will be addressed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE. Perfect Fool: Nietzsche's final *askesis* in *Ecce Homo*.

*Ecce Homo* is hard to categorise. Should it be read as a work of serious philosophy, a self-review, an inspirational memoir or, as Nietzsche himself calls it, simply an essay? The ambiguity of its genre has made it difficult to approach and assess the book within the context of academia. Many commentators have dismissed it as philosophically irrelevant, as an embarrassing work of megalomania and/or proof of Nietzsche's looming mental breakdown. Others claim *Ecce Homo* is nothing less than Nietzsche's auto-poetic realisation of himself as a literary character comparable to Plato's Socrates, or that it is the final testament to Nietzsche's achieved life-affirmation rendered through the therapeutic dictum of *Amor Fati*. Of Nietzsche's later works, Kaufmann states, "none have proven harder to understand."[1]

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[1] Kaufmann, 'Editors Introduction,' in *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and RJ Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1989), 202. For an interpretation of *Ecce Homo* as an exemplary case of literary self-creation, see Alexander Nehamas, *Life as Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985). For an illuminating account of the ambiguous status of Nietzsche's concept of *Amor Fati*, see Beatrice Han-Pile, 'Nietzsche and Amor Fati,' *European Journal of Philosophy*, no. 19 (2009), 224-261. I emphasise the text's perceived difficulty when approached within the context of academia. Here the confusion, as Rebecca Bamford affirms, seems to rest on (at least) two issues; that it is "not clear" 1. how Nietzsche's styles of address to his readers are to be explained, and 2. what kind of philosophical work is being done in *Ecce Homo* – if it is a text of philosophy at all. (Bamford, '*Ecce Homo*: Philosophical Autobiography in the flesh', in *Nietzsche's 'Ecce Homo'*, eds. Duncan Large and Nicholas Martin (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011)). Nietzsche's "unembarrassed proclamations" of his many, not least, writerly, virtues have, as Duncan Large describes it, proved "nothing but embarrassing for a great many critics, signally discomforted by the self-assuredness of such heights of affirmation." (Large, 'Double Whaam! Sarah Kofman on *Ecce Homo*', *German Life and Letters*, no 48:4 (1995), 443). However, outside the context and decorum of academic critique and philosophical discourse, many contemporary readers would, I believe, not necessarily find the book overwhelmingly difficult or discomforting.

*Ecce Homo: Wie man wird was man ist*, although Nietzsche's final original book, was not intended as such. Shortly before writing it, Nietzsche had learned of the influential cultural critic, George Brandes' plans for a lecture series dedicated to his philosophy. For this occasion Nietzsche writes a vitae for Brandes, his first ever official attempt at a professional self-description. This prospect must have influenced the writing of *Ecce Homo* and potentially reawakened the hope in Nietzsche that he was soon to be introduced to a large audience, and hence gain the readers, future friends even, that he had for so long been longing for.[2] The book's preface begins: "Seeing that before long I must confront humanity with the most difficult demand ever made of it, it seems indispensable to me to say *who I am.*"[3] But *Ecce Homo* (hereafter EH) is by no means an attempt to say 'who I am' in any straightforward manner. Nor is it, by any conventional meaning of the term, an autobiography.

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[2] Nicholas D. Moore, *Nietzsche's Last Laugh: 'Ecce Homo' as Satire*, 23-4. An exchange of letters between Brandes and Nietzsche starts in 1887 and continues until Nietzsche's breakdown in 1889. Nietzsche is aware of the Copenhagen lectures commencing in 1888 and he proudly mentions in other correspondences how the lecture halls, he is told, were more than full with over 300 attendants. As described in Ole Morsing 'I think – and thank Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Brandes', *Baggrund*, April 2013. http://baggrund.com/jeg-taenker-og-takker-kierkegaard-nietzsche-og-brandes/.Accessed July 15, 2018. However, *Ecce Homo* was, as Daniel W. Conway points out, produced immediately after Nietzsche had given up on what he thought were to be the works capable of securing his future legacy as a philosopher. In 1888 Nietzsche abandons *The Will to Power* and realises that his planned 'The Revaluation of All Values' project would not be realised beyond the first book (*The Antichrist*). *Ecce Homo* was conceived "in an atmosphere of undeniable failure; Nietzsche had conceded that he would never produce the philosophical *Hauptwerk* that would elevate him to a position alongside Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer." Conway, 'Nietzsche's *Doppelgänger*: Affirmation and resentment in *Ecce Homo*,' in *The Fate of the New Nietzsche*, ed. Ansell-Pearson (New York: Avery Publishing, 1993), 58.

[3] EH, Preface, 1.

The panegyric style and self-laudatory tone of EH, indicated immediately by the book's outrageous chapter headings, 'Why I Am So Clever,' 'Why I Am So Wise,' 'Why I Write Such Good Books,' and 'Why I Am a Destiny,' must be taken as a sardonic reference to the traditional form of literary self-presentation and the Christian tradition from which it springs. From accounts of the lives of saints such as Antony, which served as a model for the development of monasticism, to the more or less contrived humility of 'confessions' – *The Confessions* of Rousseau, or those of Augustine, often cited as the first example of autobiographical writing – to Wagner's *My Life*, or Goethe's pompous, four-volume work *From My Life: Poetry and Truth*, which describes in at times embarrassing detail the minutiae of the writer's early life.[4] When EH absurdly poses as something like an auto-hagiography, in which Nietzsche shamelessly boasts of his superior wisdom, it positions him not only as the opposite of the humble and virtuous subject which the confessional format traditionally demands, but also, of course, as the blasphemous transgressor of the fundamental rule of hagiography – that it cannot be written in the first-person; a saint cannot be self-ordained, much less presume himself to be a 'destiny.' The book is similarly subversive when viewed within the tradition of modern, secular autobiography, where propriety is expected and self-indulgence allowed only on the condition, and encouraged by the fact, that the author is recognised and venerated, even idolised, by his contemporaries as a figure of superior achievement and influence – like, for example, Goethe. Again Nietzsche is, or was at the time of writing, the very opposite – unknown, unappreciated – yet his self-description is carried out *as if* he were (very well known and much appreciated). As if Nietzsche already had an admiring audience, one that was interested in hearing him answer his own

[4] See Peter Brown, 'Dialogue With God', Review of Augustine's *Confessions*, *The New York Review of Books*, October 26, 2017. https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2017/10/26/sarah-ruden-augustine-dialogue-god/. Accessed July 15, 2018.

question: "Why do I know a few things *more*? Why am I, all together, so clever?"

But in spite of the book's irreverent and amusing style, Nietzsche's attempt to say who he is is a serious matter. There can be no doubt that Nietzsche believed himself to be, or in any case desperately wanted to believe himself to be, a (future) world event that would "break history in two," hence the need to leave himself with a testament.

> I know my fate. One day my name will be associated with the memory of something tremendous – a crisis without equal on earth, the most profound collision of conscience, a decision that was conjured up *against* everything that had been believed, demanded, hallowed so far. I am no man, I am dynamite.[5]

It is the apparent ambiguity (at the same time grave and deliberately ridiculous) of Nietzsche's self-image as he tells himself to his future readers, along with the text's overall genre bending nature, which makes Nietzsche's last and most provocative book particularly relevant for the present thesis. EH acts as a climax – of Nietzsche's professional life (preparing for the imminent recognition the Brandes lectures will bring) and of our, Nietzsche's posthumous audience, view of his biographical life (being a last work undertaken before his collapse)[6] – but also, most

[5] EH, IV, 1. The image of Nietzsche as an explosive is a theme for Sarah Kofman's treatment of EH in her *Explosion* books. Kofman's extensive commentary proposes that what, according to Kofman, has been considered by far the "maddest" text in all of philosophy, is not very mad at all. Or rather, that the perceived 'madness' of EH is "the very condition of [its] possibility" (Large, 'Double Whaam! Sarah Kofman on *Ecce Homo*', 443). It is beyond the scope of my treatment to consider EH within the context of a potential relation between madness and (autobiographical) writing. But Kofman's defence of EH as being not mad and not an autobiography, but rather and essentially a parodic and performative text, is the implicit starting point from which my much more limited engagement with EH begins. I return to the text's proposed performative function in the second half of this chapter.

[6] Considering Conway's description quoted in footnote 5 above, this must nevertheless also be considered in an anti-climactic sense.

importantly, as the culmination and coming together of Nietzsche's *askesis* as I have presented it so far. More than any other of Nietzsche's works, EH is an explicit address and performative display of the underlying subject of the inquiry of this thesis, namely the relation – and, as will be seen, in Nietzsche's case failed correlation – between philosophy and *bios* (understood as a 'way of life' and as 'biography') – and not least the form and function of *askesis* within it.[7]

The meaning of the book's title *Ecce Homo: Wie man wird was man ist* is at least twofold. In the first, most obvious instance it refers to the announcement made by Pontius Pilate upon presenting the body of Jesus as it sacrifice itself for the truth that it holds, for the sake of humanity's

[7] As seen in the introductory chapter, Sellars provisionally suggests that if philosophy is to be understood as expressed in a way of life, biographical writings, for example those of Diogenes Laertius, should perhaps as be upgraded to philosophical texts proper. Nietzsche, in seeming agreement with this, praised Laertius' philosophically unsophisticated writing as possessing more 'philosophy' than most of the books traditionally taken to belong to the category: "At least the spirit of ancient philosophy is alive in [Laertius]." (SE, 8). Importantly, I do not consider the suggested correlation between philosophy and *bios* to concern how philosophical ideas or propositions may be viewed as intertwined with or having grown out of the individual circumstances of a life – but inversely, and practically, the way in which philosophy may be deliberately and aesthetically expressed *through* a considered lifestyle. It is therefore not my intention to engage in a broader discussion of the far reaching consequences of the relation between philosophy and biography, or with what is now termed 'philosophical autobiography.' The aspect brought out by Sellars' provisional suggestion is relevant because it highlights the following dilemma: *If* philosophy is to be expressed exclusively or at least predominantly in a style of life, the transmission has only two modes of outlet: Being performed before a live audience, or being recorded in an audience's testimonial account. In this sense, in its very nature of being a first person description, EH would seem to contradict such a set-up; the *autos* appears as an obstacle. Hence the reason, as I will show in the following, I propose Nietzsche's self-writing as a partial failure – rather than, as Nehamas and others have suggested, an unambiguously successful accomplishment.

redemption: 'Behold the man.'[8] The reference to the Gospels may seem the most obvious, considering not only its immediate reference to the presentation of the ultimate bodily idol of ascetic ideal but also that Nietzsche's works leading up to EH carry similarly confrontational titles such as *The Antichrist* and *Twilight of the Idols*, and not least the final line and combative war cry of EH – "*Dionysus versus the Crucified*." However, for Nietzsche 'Ecce Homo' also refers to another, different meaning as the words supposedly exclaimed by Napoleon upon meeting Goethe, '*Voilà un homme!*' An expression of unconditioned admiration directed at the unique embodiment, a prime example of a man, 'Behold, what a man!'[9]

What characterises both these references is the activation of a certain visuality. The words are exclaimed, and make sense only in the presence of the singular, aesthetic body referred to and the presence of an audience that beholds it. 'Ecce homo' evokes the appearance, or the live presentation, of a visible, living body in the flesh standing before us, its life held up for our consideration, adulation or accusation.

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[8] Not least the open-ended questioning of truth brought out by Pilates, following Jesus' exclamation that everyone "who is of the truth" hears his voice. See Nietzsche, A, 46.

[9] See SE, 3 and BGE, VI, 209. As Gregory Moore shows, Nietzsche wrote the words 'Ecce Homo!' several times in the margins of his copies of Ralph Waldo Emerson's works. (Moore, *Nietzsche's Last Laugh*, 40). Nietzsche's admiration for Emerson as a philosopher of the non-scholarly caste is particularly clear in 'Schopenhauer as Educator.' After having stated that philosophy "ought to be is something fearsome" Nietzsche continues, quoting, Emerson, "'Beware (…) when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk. It is as when a conflagration has broken out in a great city, and no man knows what is safe, or where it will end' (…) Now, if such thinkers are dangerous, it is of course clear why our academic thinkers are not dangerous" (SE, 8). In addition to the two mentioned references indicated by the phrase 'Ecce Homo' see also TI, 5: "Let us consider finally what naïveté it is to say 'Man *ought* to be thus and thus!'" According to Nietzsche, this is precisely what the moralist, that "bigoted wretch", does when he claims that "'No! Man ought to be different!' (…) He even knows how man ought to be (…) he paints himself on the wall and says 'Ecce Homo'!"

The book's subtitle, 'How One Becomes What One Is' (or: 'How To Become What You Are'), expands on the title's dual references. Its instructive nature, mimicking that of a practical guide or self-realisation manual, seems perhaps best suited to the context of a positive presentation of an admirable figure: an accomplished man who has managed to become what he is – something great – and may show you, by example, how to become what you are. Yet the subtitle also leads back to the figure of Jesus of the Gospels, who is of course the most famous example of a man whose manner of being and way of life became an emblem of the exemplary, ascetic life, an ethical magnet acting as principle for moral guidance and future imitation. [10]

In other words '*Ecce Homo*: How To Become What You Are' is an ambiguous announcement with which Nietzsche puts himself forward as an exemplary ideal and instructive figure worthy of imitation, while simultaneously mocking the very idea of such an act by aligning himself with the most iconic figure, who by example *succeeded* in morally instructing the many for close to two thousand years, and hence made them what they are under the reign of the ascetic ideal.

In this chapter, I will focus on the second section of EH, 'Why I Am So Clever,' and later also on parts of the preface and fourth section, 'Why I am a Destiny', in order to address both the perspectives immediately activated by the book's title as mentioned above. These can, I argue, be seen to correspond directly to the respective discussions of Nietzsche's *askesis* as presented in the two preceding chapters and as such connect the curative and agonistic perspectives: 1. As the affirmative construction of a skilful

[10] "Be yourself!" Nietzsche had already advised in SE, 1, and the encouragement to become what one is, is repeated in GS, III, 270, GS IV, 335, and in Z, IV, 1. The phrase also alludes to the Archaic Greek poet Pindar and is, as Large notes, cited by Nietzsche in a letter from twenty years earlier (Large, 'Explanatory notes' in *Ecce Homo*, 97) – a no doubt relevant connection which it is beyond the scope of my treatment to explore further here.

stylisation of the minutia of everyday living 2. As an attempted attack on ascetic ideals or, as Nietzsche calls it in EH, 'idols.' The first half of the chapter will focus on Nietzsche's positive presentation of himself as an example – an example of someone who by undertaking the body work of *askesis* has attained the experiential knowhow that was called for, but never finalised, in the middle works (as discussed in chapter one). The second half of the chapter will focus on the agonistic function of Nietzsche's self-presentation in EH viewed as a realisation of the strategy abstractly suggested in the *Genealogy* – becoming a comedian of ascetic ideals in order to undermine trust in them (as discussed in chapter two).

**Part 1: 'Behold the exemplary man.'**

In his foreword to EH, Kaufmann briefly notes what he calls the book's "strange emphasis" on little things ("material factors generally thought beneath the notice of philosophers and sages") which dominates the first two chapters.[11] But *Ecce Homo*'s emphasis on 'the little things' is not so strange as Kaufmann suggests. On the contrary, the theme is far from new to Nietzsche and must be read in direct connection with – and, I propose, as the finalisation of – succinct considerations originating in earlier works.

As shown in thesis chapter one, in *The Wanderer* Nietzsche had complained that "most people see the *closest things of all* very badly and very rarely pay heed to them" and warned that being unknowledgeable in, and failing to keep an eye on, the mundane issues of day to day living is the chief cause for most of our earthly maladies.[12] Instructed not only by priests but teachers, metaphysicians and idealists of 'all kinds', according to Nietzsche, we have been taught an arrogant neglect and disrespect for the tangible things closest to us, in favour of those furthest away and most intangible. As seen, what Nietzsche is advocating in *The Wanderer* is a change of attitude that involves a revaluation from the bottom up: an

[11] Kaufmann, Editor's Introduction to *Ecce Homo*, 207.
[12] WS, 6.

*unlearning* of the ignorance bred into us through an inversion of the hierarchy of what is and what is not commonly given value and held as worthy of serious, intellectual and not least philosophical attention. Although *The Wanderer* indicates that in order to overcome our inbred ignorance we must make the most basic, mundane aspects, of life itself not just the object of reflection but also of artistic reform, the text offers no concrete suggestions as to what this would amount to in practice. What I propose is that the 'Why I Am So Clever' chapter of *Ecce Homo,* written eight years later, does exactly that – by example. 'Why I Am So Clever' not only confirms that it is in the area of the smallest things that we must begin to evaluate anew but more importantly it shows how this is concretely to be done.

In EH, Nietzsche not only emphasises the importance of paying attention to the small things as he had done in *The Wanderer* but overtly claims that the smallest things are in fact "inconceivably more important than anything one has taken to be important so far. Precisely here one must begin to *relearn*." All the problems, Nietzsche continues, of politics, social organisation and education have been "falsified" precisely because one learned "to despise 'little' things, which means the basic concerns of life itself."[13] Similarly, the loose definitions presented in *The Wanderer* as to what these small things are exactly – clothing, weather, vegetation, abode, sleeping etc – are in EH clearly drawn up and arranged into three main categories: *Nutrition and Place*, *Climate* and *Recreation*.[14]

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[13] EH, II, 10. Or in Duncan Large's translation of the text: "(…) the 'petty' things, by which I mean the fundamental matters of life itself" (*Ecce Homo*, trans. Duncan Large (Oxford: Oxford University Press (2007)).

[14] For a wider discussions of nutrition, place, climate and recreation, beyond the realm of the mundane dimension I treat here in order to keep the connection to *askesis* as concrete procedures, I refer to the works by Graham Parkes and David Farell Krell referenced in chapter one. In addition to these, see also Gary Shapiro's geophilosophical approach to the theme of climate and place. Shapiro emphasises that what is of relevance is *not* Nietzsche's personal accounts and experiences; his likes and dislikes, and his metabolic responses to various microclimates. We must, Shapiro

It is within this framework that I suggest to view Nietzsche's detailed account of his own carefully configured *Lebensordnung*, what Nietzsche calls his 'casuistry of selfishness' concerned with the three material categories, or regimen, listed.[15] While 'casuistry' is often used as a derisive term for unsound or even deceptive moral reasoning, Nietzsche's use of the term usually, as Brian Domino shows, denotes a method for dealing with ethical issues on a case-by-base basis, as indicated by the term's

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urges, insist on constructing "the metaphorical or poetic usage" of Nietzsche's engagement with these themes, since Nietzsche "does not endorse a geographical reductionism" or determinism, based on actual physical climates (Shapiro, 'Nietzsche on Geophilosophy and Geoaesthetics,' in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Ansell-Pearson, 477-497). I will not engage further with the geophilosophical perspective (initially set up and linked to Nietzsche by Deleuze and Guattari). But I note that my treatment takes as a starting point the 'microclimates' and 'personal weather reports' that Shapiro dismisses as reductive – that is, the concrete places and physical climates Nietzsche refers to. For a treatment of Nietzsche's topology contrasted to Shapiro's, see for example Jess Malpas article '"We Hyperboreans": Toward a Nietzschean Topography.' Malpas proposes that Shapiro's reading places importance not on the topographic as such, but on the topographic as played out in sets of metaphors or tropes. Malpas further points to this tendency as problematic in the sense that it places philosophy within the imaginary as a metaphorical exchange. In contrast, Malpas suggests that it is *not* as metaphor that place or landscape figures in a topographic mode of philosophizing but precisely as *place* in which thinking is grounded. ('"We Hyperboreans": Toward a Nietzschean Topography', in *Individual and Community in Nietzsche's Philosophy*, ed. Julian Young, 195-213).

[15] In his article 'The Casuistry of the Little Things,' Brian Domino refers to what I here call regimen as "psycho-physiological registers" and argues they represent an order of therapy intended to "ameliorate the damages caused by decadence by undoing its damage to out internal dynamometers." Domino argues that with 'Why I Am So Clever' Nietzsche presents an *order* to follow, from the physical body to the psyche, and a *method*, a casuistry, "which he both illustrates and hopes his readers will apply to themselves." Domino, 'The Casuistry of Little Things,' *Journal of Nietzsche Studies,* no. 23 (Spring 2003), 52-53. In the following I am proposing an alternative assessment of Nietzsche casuistry that reaches beyond the therapeutic perspective suggested by Domino.

etymological root in *casus*.[16] In this perspective, and in affirmation of the autonomous rather than rule-based nature of Nietzsche's *askesis* as defined in the two preceding chapters, what Nietzsche's casuistry amounts to is not general or normative *prescriptions* for how to live, but rather *descriptions* of how to live best if one is Nietzsche. Keeping this in mind, a brief summary of the particular details of Nietzsche's suggested selfish casuistry can now be given.

Regarding the question of nutrition, *for Nietzsche* the German diet of boiled meats and beer is bad; Northern Italian cuisine is best. Furthermore, there should be absolutely no eating between meals, no tobacco or coffee – since "coffee spreads darkness" – and no alcohol. Truth, as Nietzsche states, lies not in wine – *In vino veritas* – rather, water is quite sufficient.[17] Tea is wholesome only in the morning and only in a small, strong dosage. In climates that are *agaçant*, tea should be substituted with a cup of thick, oil-less cocoa. But everybody, as Nietzsche states, has their very own measures in this area and must carefully learn their own most delicate limits.[18] Nietzsche now offers "a few more hints from my morality: A hearty meal is easier to digest than one that is too small." Echoing the emphasis upon frisk processing of nourishment as presented in the preceding thesis chapter, the importance of good digestion cannot be overemphasised, and the precondition of good digestion is that the stomach is "active," set in motion. Thus Nietzsche's warning against sedentary life: "*Sit* as little as possible;

[16] Domino refers to D, 436 where Nietzsche illustrates the casuist's approach (Ibid.) In the second half of this chapter I will discuss other, more explicitly ascetic, connotations of Nietzsche's use of casuistry further.
[17] A single glass of alcohol in the course of a day is, as Nietzsche states, quite enough to make "my life into a 'vale of tears'" (EH, II, 1). This links to Nietzsche's earlier proposal in *The Wanderer*; that not paying attention to the little things is what, for so many, makes their lives into a 'vale of tears' (WS, 6, as quoted in thesis chapter one). This time explicitly highlighting how the 'smallest' and 'closest' things are presented as an inverse of the 'first and last' things of theological inquiry.
[18] EH, II, 1, 2.

give no credence to any thought that was not born outdoors while one moved about freely – in which the muscles are not celebrating a feast, too." Movement of thought, of the muscles and of the inner organs are not only related but metabolically interwoven. "All prejudices come from the intestines" and hence the slightest sluggishness of the intestines, which can quickly become a "bad habit," is enough to turn even a genius into something mediocre, "something 'German.'"[19]

The question of climate is intimately related to that of nutrition, since the former affects the metabolism, its retardation and acceleration, to the extent that the wrong climate can result in the inability not just to carry out one's task, but to even see it. If a person's overall *vigour* is decreased it is, Nietzsche suggests, impossible to gain the freedom that "overflows into the most spiritual regions." Strong, "inherently heroic" intestines are a precondition for the *tempo* of the metabolism and this tempo corresponds directly to the mobility or "lameness" of the spirit's feet; "the spirit itself is after all merely an aspect of this metabolism."[20] In practice, and in a further extension of the notion of medical geography preliminary suggested within the regimen of *Climate and Occupation* presented in thesis chapter one, for Nietzsche this means that places of high humidity – such as Venice, Leipzig and Basel – are disastrous. On the other hand, places with dry air and clear skies like Provence, Florence, Jerusalem and Athens, are superior places where intelligence and genius flourish (Nietzsche argues this has been proven by the fact that all men of so-called rich spirit, those for whom "happiness went together with malicious wit and subtlety," have lived here). Overall "nobody," Nietzsche cautions "is free to live everywhere; and whoever has to solve great problems that challenge all his strength actually has a very restricted choice."[21]

[19] EH, II, 1.
[20] EH, II, 2.
[21] Ibid.

This now leads to some self-reflective considerations. Nietzsche describes the calamity of his own former ignorance *in physiologicis*, and, continuing the criticism formulated in *Dawn*, blames his ignorance on the "totally superfluous and stupid" idealism of his German education.[22] During his time in Basel, Nietzsche states, his whole spiritual diet, "including the way I divided up my day," was utterly senseless. Had he not started to reflect on this "fundamental unreason," the idealism, of his life, it could have ended badly, with Nietzsche becoming what he calls a peevish specialist, some kind of myopic scholar. However, it was, as Nietzsche describes, his sickness that brought him to his senses, that taught him once and for all to see "reason in reality."[23]

In an affirmation of what has been discussed in chapter one, namely that it was at his lowest point of vitality (at the time when work on WS commenced) that Nietzsche began to pay – was forced to pay – attention to the importance of the material factors that constitute the bodily style of everyday life, in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche speaks as someone who has now finally come to know his own constitution and what affects it from long *experience*. He has at this stage come to know it so well that he is, as he says, capable of taking 'readings' from himself, as from a "a very subtle and reliable instrument." The effect of a single glass of wine or beer for example shows up immediately, and makes life unbearable for the whole day. And when travelling: "Even during a short journey, say, from Turin to Milan," Nietzsche explains that his "system registers the change in humidity" like a sensitive device, capable of accurately reporting what and where is forbidden.[24]

"The choice of nutrition; the choice of climate and place: the third point at which one must not commit a blunder at any price is the choice of *one's*

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[22] As seen in the preceding chapter, ignorance in *physiologicis* was assigned to the ascetic priest. It was what Nietzsche proposed the priest's overall failure as a healer rested on.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.

*own kind of recreation.*" Here, again, the measures are delicate and the limits narrow for what is profitable and permissible for each individual. In Nietzsche's case, reading is a most beneficial recreation, acting as a liberation from himself, from his own seriousness. This is why, at times of strenuous work, "you will not find me surrounded by books." At times of great labour, of 'spiritual pregnancy,' one must take precaution and protect oneself from outside, alien thought – which is what reading is. Following such periods comes the need for recreation: "come to me, pleasant, brilliant, clever books!" The books in which to seek refuge are not, Nietzsche emphasises, German books, but a small number of French ones – "books *proved* to *me*" – that can be revisited again and again. Nietzsche not only reads but '*loves*' Pascal, intimately relates to Montaigne's 'sportiveness,' and admires the 'genuine Latin' Guy de Maupassant. He goes on to describe the lyrical talents and divine malice of Heinrich Heine, who "cannot conceive the god apart from the satyr," and Shakespeare: "what must a man have suffered to have such a need of being a buffoon!"[25] And finally, Nietzsche warns against reading books at the wrong time of day: "early in the morning, when day breaks, when all is fresh, in the dawn of one's strength – to read a book at such a time is simply depraved!"[26]

'Why I Am So Clever,' with its ranting about cuisine, climate and recreational methods may, as Domino describes, appear something like a

[25] EH, II, 3, 4. See also a passage from an earlier template of 'Why I Am So Clever': "Of *all* books, one of my strongest impressions is that exuberant Provencal, Petronius, who composed the last *Satura Menippea*. Such sovereign freedom from 'morality', from 'seriousness', from his own sublime taste; such subtlety in his mixture of vulgar and 'educated' Latin; such indomitable good spirits that leap with grace and malice over all anomalies of the ancient 'soul'– I could not name any book that makes an equally liberating impression on me: the effect is Dionysian". (Kaufman, Appendix, 1, EH). This deleted passage serves as one impetus to read EH as a work of what Nietzsche calls 'sublime taste'; a playful Menippean satire free of morality and seriousness. One possible function of the satirical nature of EH will be addressed in the second half of this chapter.

[26] EH, II, 8.

"neurasthenic's guide to Europe."[27] But the above does not amount to the strange or eccentric remarks of a neurotic, potentially unhinged philosopher, but, I suggest, a concrete demonstration of an accomplishment. Nietzsche holds himself up as an example of someone who has redirected his attention and care unto the smallest things and thereby unlearned the taught ignorance of what is beneficial and harmful in the institution of our everyday life. What is presented under the headline of a 'casuistry of selfishness' is the *result* of a comprehensive case-study based on a significant period of experiential trial and error, by which Nietzsche has gained the necessary knowhow to construct his own, most appropriate style of life. It may then be suggested that Nietzsche, through long and hard won experience, has been able to locate and refine the precise coordinates for what constitutes *his* optimum conditions and 'moraline-free' virtues and hence construct a *Lebensordnung* that affirms his and *only his* existence. This would suggest that at the time of *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche has not only successfully undertaken the reformative project of revaluation that was provisionally called for eight years earlier in *The Wanderer* but also constructed a personalised adaptation of the philosopher's 'cheerful asceticism' outlined in the *Genealogy* – one that does not imply an implosion of the very concept of *askesis*, as was the case with the naturalised version of ascetic procedures as discussed in chapter two, precisely because what has made this achievement possible is *askesis* understood as a practice of rigorous self-testing and extended experimental effort, involving serious and disciplined body work. What Nietzsche presents to his readers with his casuistry of selfishness is the successful *outcome* of his *askesis*, of his having learned from experience and from long practice at it. His achieved style of life demonstratively proves this, it *shows* it. And this is why, as the title of the chapter says, he is, or rather has become, 'so clever,' why he knows 'a few things *more*.'[28]

[27] Domino, 'The Casuistry of Little Things,' 51.
[28] EH, II, 1.

But besides describing his own exemplary success in this area there is, I propose, something else at stake in Nietzsche's attempt to describe in such detail his refined *Lebensordnung* to us, his future readers. Returning to Nietzsche's definition of philosophy understood as a lived practice:

> I attach importance to a philosopher only to the extent that he is capable of setting an example (…) The philosopher must supply this example in his *visible life*, and not merely in his books; that is, it must be presented in the way the philosophers of Greece taught, through facial expressions, demeanour, clothing, food, and custom more than through what they said, let alone what they wrote.[29]

Here Nietzsche demands that philosophy be communicated through the visible markers of a chosen style of life, which in turn serves as an example – understood here in the sense of a visible demonstration. It is in this way that philosophy assumes bodily form, not just because it orientates itself towards the corporeal dimension, but that it expresses itself demonstratively through the body in the form of gestures, clothing, dietary habits and so on. But in order for the philosopher's 'visible life' to appear as such, it needs to be visible to someone, it requires an audience of sorts. The problem for Nietzsche is that he – unlike his Greek predecessors mentioned above – did not have such an audience, either in the form of disciples, students, admiring friends or an outraged public. No one, Nietzsche states at the beginning of *Ecce Homo*, has either "heard nor seen me." He continues, "I only need to speak with one of the 'educated' who come to the Upper Engadine [where Nietzsche was lodging at the time] for the summer, and I am convinced that I do not live."[30]

It is precisely because of these circumstances, because he is not seen or heard, let alone understood, that Nietzsche feels compelled (against himself) to write *Ecce Homo,* to "say who I am." Not only the lack of fame and

[29] SE, 3.
[30] EH, Preface, 1.

recognition, but Nietzsche's solitude, his lack of close friends and companions, means that his life, as it is, is invisible to anyone but himself and would likely remain so unless Nietzsche takes it upon himself to describe it, to put his mode of life on display for a future audience hopefully to come. And so, as Nietzsche puts it in the book's epigraph, "I tell my life to myself."[31]

It is now possible to see that what has so far been described as Nietzsche's successful attempt at life-stylisation reveals a paradox. According to Nietzsche's own standards, if a philosopher is to be of any importance he must be able to communicate his philosophy through aesthetic means; through what may be called the body language of a *Lebensordnung*. How, considering his isolated situation, is Nietzsche to live up to this ideal himself? One way would be to give an exhaustive description, a detailed account of his choices of foods, weather, climates and so on – which is in effect what 'Why I Am So Clever' is. The lack of audience forces Nietzsche to account for himself as an example, as the living proof of his life-styling skills – in writing. Had he been famous, or infamous, during his lifetime he

[31] The melancholy tone that accompanies *Ecce Homo*'s panegyric hyperbole reveals the earlier mentioned ambivalent situation in which the book was written – a situation of promise offered by the Brandes lectures (as suggested by Moore) and a situation of failure due to the abandoned *Hauptwerk* (as suggested by Conway). The epigraph to *Ecce Homo*, in which Nietzsche claims to be boundlessly "grateful to his whole life," was written on his birthday. That day Nietzsche writes a letter to Peter Gast, thanking him for the birthday letter received the same morning and also mentions that it was the only one he received. (As described in Conway, 'Nietzsche's *Doppelgänger*,' footnote 20). Kofman claims that "if Nietzsche thinks he needs to present himself and pre-emptively defend himself (…) it is because he knows very well that no one else can give a picture of him which might do him justice" (Kofman, *Explosion I: Of Nietzsche's Ecce Homo,* trans. Duncan Large, *Diacritics*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1994), 53). Nevertheless, it may be added that Nietzsche did not have a choice in the matter. It is not only a case of no one being capable of portraying Nietzsche in a suitable manner, but also the fact of there being no one, no friend, protégé or disciple, around to even attempt such a portrait.

could have counted on someone else to draw an image of his life, his accomplished style of life, for future generations to behold. But as the situation is, with no witnesses, Nietzsche is forced to produce such a testimony himself. In the end we have no other proof of Nietzsche's accomplished style of living than his own written description as it appears in EH. This is not the direct, unmediated mode of expression that Nietzsche admired in the Greek philosophers, but rather the *indirect* self-representation of a philosopher who, such was the isolation and invisibility of his life, did not have the option of demonstrating, of showing himself and his *Lebensordnung* to anyone in real life. *Ecce Homo* can in this way be seen as Nietzsche's paradoxical attempt to give his life visibility, to put himself vividly before an audience – but doing so by 'telling himself to himself' in written form.[32]

[32] Alexander Nehamas has suggested it is precisely in writing that Nietzsche succeeds in realising his art of living. Namely, by fashioning himself as a literary character: "What, then, if the work [of Nietzsche as an artist] itself, in its totality, results in the construction of a character whose 'biography' it turns out to be?" In that case, "only the 'biography' that emerges through Nietzsche's works, and not the 'life' out of which they grow, is of any importance." In Nietzsche's eyes, Nehamas states, "it is only such a character who can influence history and thought and who, like the Socrates who emerges out of Plato's dialogues, can manifest the will to power in fashioning values and modes of life." The final consequence of Nehamas interpretation is that it is not only Nietzsche's model that is literary. "In a serious sense his product is literary as well." For Nietzsche, his books are "life itself," and as he thought Goethe had done, Nietzsche too "created a character out of himself." Or, from another angle, "Nietzsche is, and wanted to be, the Plato of his own Socrates" (Nehamas, *Life as Literature*, 199-233). My definition of Nietzsche's concept of philosophy lived differs to Nehamas' as I refer specifically to what Nietzsche calls the 'courageous visibility' of the philosophical life as expressed through a *Lebensordnung*. It is on this condition – and not on the condition that life *is* literature or that books are 'life itself' – that I propose Nietzsche fails. Hutter's analysis also pays attention to this failure, noting how Nietzsche in a letter from 1885 defines the wretchedness of his situation as a "human being who is born for the deepest and most comprehensive effectiveness, should have to spend his best years in such an infertile desert; that a thinker like me, who *can never place his best into books* [my emphasis] should be reduced to make 'literature' with his half-blind and aching eyes – it is all so crazy; so hard"

The second section of EH may then be described as follows: 1. As the record or testament of a *successful* undertaking of life-stylisation. 2. But as a *self-written* record or testament, by definition a *failure* to live up to Nietzsche's own definition of a lived philosophy that would be capable of showing rather than telling itself.[33]

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(Letter to Overbeck as quoted in Hutter, *Shaping the Future*, 39-40). Hence Nietzsche "always remained loyal to his vision of philosophy as an activity" and thus his vision of the philosopher as "shaped by his studies of the ancients" (Hutter, 39). As a philosopher who is alone, and as a philosopher whose definition of a philosopher is someone who does not primarily communicate through books, Nietzsche is faced with a paradox. He cannot transmit his way of living as he has no one around to record it in persuasive writing. For Hutter, Nietzsche's failure in this respect concerns his inability to "found a philosophical school" in his lifetime. A school in which his art of living could be taught, transmitted and as such fulfilled. A school which would at the same time have allowed Nietzsche to fulfil "his wish to replace moral legislative figures of the past such as Socrates and Jesus." Nietzsche's career as a philosophical author, according to Hutter, expresses "his ambition to become the authority of a new spiritual and political dispensation." Nietzsche wished to "found new houses of being (…) within which future philosophical legislators will create the codes of conduct for new political regimes of both soul and the city" (Hutter, 124-25). That Nietzsche wished, above all, to become a future legislator like Plato and like Jesus (a conviction that Hutter shares with Nehamas) is, I will propose, more ambiguous. This particularly considering the parodic aspect and function of Nietzsche's *askesis* that I will consider in the following, an aspect which Hutter's and Nehamas' treatments do not take into account.

[33] The irony is, of course, that the most persistent regimen belonging to Nietzsche's *askesis* as described so far is what has rendered Nietzsche's life invisible, namely that of solitude. What in *Dawn* was described as the necessary teaching of the 'endurance of solitude' and in the *Genealogy* as 'great' and 'serious' solitude essential to the philosophical life, at the same time takes away the audience that philosophy as *Lebensordnung* demands. If, as I will argue in the following, Nietzsche succeeds in overcoming the problem of invisibility by performative means, this also indicates that another overcoming has taken place – the giving up of the philosopher's 'good taste', his self-protective solitude or so-called 'desert' which ensures that he can go unrecognised by the 'many' and as such protects him from appearing before, being visible before, an audience. As Nietzsche himself describes it "Under these circumstances I have a duty against which my habits, even more the pride of my instincts, revolt at bottom – namely, to say: *Hear me! For I am such and such a person. Above all, do not mistake me for someone else!*". Nietzsche's self-presentation in EH, concerned with

**Part 2: 'Why I am the ideal anti-idol.'**

In the mode of self-presentation discussed so far, Nietzsche puts himself forward as an exemplar to show an (as yet) non-existent audience why he is so wise and altogether clever. This is, it would seem, contradictory. Throughout *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche insists time and again that he is *not* an example, that he does not want followers, imitators or disciples. "No new ideals are erected by me," Nietzsche insists, "the last thing *I* should promise would be to 'improve' mankind." In fact, to be posthumously made into an idealised, exemplary figure is one of Nietzsche's biggest worries: "I have a terrible fear that one day I will be pronounced *holy*: you will guess why I publish this book *beforehand*; it should prevent people from doing mischief with me."[34] How are we to understand Nietzsche's bombastic glorification of himself as someone to admire and behold (*Voilà un Homme!*) and his simultaneous denial of himself as an exemplary figure as anything but a self-contradiction? Or perhaps, as some commentators have suggested, as a sign of Nietzsche's deteriorating mental state, and proof of an increasingly unhinged, schizophrenic self-conception?

In the following, I will propose that this may be seen, rather than contradictory or pathological, as a part of the performative strategy that Nietzsche abstractly introduced in the *Genealogy*. Here Nietzsche concluded that since truth seeking philosophers are not opposed to but rather are the consequence of the ascetic ideal, they are incapable of posing

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not being mistaken, , involves, precisely, a dramatised *show*, of what he is not.

[34] EH, IV, 1. Nietzsche, correctly as history has proven, anticipated that he would posthumously become one of the most revered figures in Western thought and suspected, again to some degree accurately, his future idealisation or even sanctification. As we know now, *Ecce Homo* did not prevent people from doing mischief with Nietzsche, and neither did Nietzsche's clear rejection of followers or 'believers', considering the vast amount of exegetic scholarship and 'Nietzsche studies' conducted in his name. This issue will be addressed further in the conclusion.

any real threat to it. Following this recognition, for philosophers only a centuries-long future project of truth-questioning, and hence self-questioning, will be able to address and perhaps overcome the ascetic lacuna posited within the philosophical endeavour itself. However, in the meantime there is another figure that may manage to harm the closed power structure of ascetic ideals – not from an oppositional stance and not by positing an opposing ideal, but strategically from within. "In the end, the ascetic ideal has at present only *one* real enemy capable of harming it: comedians of this ideal – for they arouse mistrust of it."[35]

I propose that this agonistic employment of the comic suggested, but never discussed further, in the *Genealogy* – not a grand-scale philosophical project of truth revaluation, but rather a more immediately manageable and aesthetically informed gesture of creating mistrust in ascetic ideals through a parodic mimicry of them – sits at the heart of Nietzsche's self-presentation in *Ecce Homo*. In other words, it is an attempt to appropriate what Nietzsche, as described at the end of the preceding chapter, had called 'sham idealism,' ideal 'forgery' and presenting oneself as 'little ideal-idols' of the Christian-moral ideal. Only from this position may an attack commence, since it is currently the only place where the will to truth is not at work.

Importantly, this does not necessarily mean that the positive presentation of an accomplished project of life stylistics, as discussed in the first half of this chapter, must be seen as redundant. Rather, as the following will propose, the deliberate invocation of a (mock) ascetic dimension adds a further, performative layer and agonistic function to it.

In his article 'The Comic Nature of *Ecce Homo*, Matthew Meyer argues for an understanding of EH (and all of Nietzsche's 1888 texts) as Dionysian

[35] GM, III, 27.

comedies with formal elements parallel to Aristophanes' works.[36] Nicholas D. Moore's *Nietzsche's Last Laugh: Ecce Homo as Satire* more extensively suggests that Nietzsche's final book should be read as satire, and as such has implications for all of Nietzsche's earlier work – expanding on Daniel Conway's earlier essay 'Nietzsche's *Doppelgänger*: Affirmation and Resentment in *Ecce Homo*,' which insists on the profoundly ironic nature of EH and suggests we take this irony to be ultimately self-referential.[37] Sarah Kofman, like Conway and Moore, dismisses the notion of EH as the product of a (soon to be) 'madman,' and approaches EH as a *satyr* text. Her two volume treatment presents a personal, and at times psychoanalytic, reading of Nietzsche that, as Duncan Large describes, performs a radical subversion of the autobiographical 'subject,' indeed problematises the very notion of autobiography itself.[38]

In the following I will not consider whether the comic nature of EH relates formally to ancient Greek comedy. Neither will I attempt to demonstrate how or why EH is satirical – a proposition which, in my opinion, is self-evident. Nobody who has read EH, or any of Nietzsche's other texts for that matter, could fail to appreciate his taste and talent for satire, and self-satire. More relevant to the present inquiry is to explore how Nietzsche's particular use of the comic – in the sense of *becoming a comedian* (proposed in GM) – affects and makes use of the particular context it appears within, and further, and most importantly, what the strategic intentions and implications, what consequence this has for the exemplary mode of self-

[36] Matthew Meyer, 'The Comic Nature of Ecce Homo,' *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* Vol. 43, No. 1 (Spring 2012): 32-43

[37] Moore, *Nietzsche's Last Laugh: Ecce Homo as Satire,* 2014. Conway, 'Nietzsche's *Döppelganger*: Affirmation and Resentment in *Ecce Homo*.'

[38] Duncan Large, ¨Double Whaam! Sarah Kofman on *Ecce Homo*,' 450-452. It is beyond the scope of my discussion to engage with Kofman's deconstructive reading of EH and the potential unravelling of autobiography that it suggests. My focus is, more modestly, on the result of the double indexing of Nietzsche in EH, viewed specifically in relation to the comic strategy suggested in GM and as such within the context of ascetics.

presentation, as presented so far.[39] While my reading takes the self-ironic dimension of EH for granted, my aim is to show how this concretely functions as an agonistic strategy for an attack that does not contradict, but works by virtue of, Nietzsche's deliberately idolatrous self-presentation, and as such sits within the context of Nietzsche's concept of *askesis* as I understand it; as an agonistically informed endeavour.[40]

That Nietzsche's self-presentation in *Ecce Homo* at once suggests an exemplary ideal in a positive sense, *Voilà un Homme*, while also satirising recognised ascetic figures and practices, is indicated not only by the title's reference to the embodiment of the ascetic ideal par excellence, Jesus of the Gospels, but also necessarily by Nietzsche's proposed 'casuistry' which must also be understood within this double register.

As already suggested, the term casuistry suggests several, disparate meanings. The positive (for Nietzsche) rendering of casuistry as a case-by-case, as opposed to rule-based, moral methodology is, as seen, aligned with the perspective discussed in the first half of this chapter. But the negative connotations of casuistry as a mode of unfounded moral reasoning or even

[39] While the boundaries are blurry, distinctions can certainly be made between 'comedy', 'satire', 'irony' and 'buffoonery.' But an exploration of what I refer to overall as the agonistic potential of the 'comic' in the autobiographical context of EH does not depend on a concise historical, conceptual or formal differentiation between these categories or traditions. My discussion is linked directly to the vocabulary used in the *Genealogy* (being a 'comedian') and in *Ecce Homo* (being a 'satyr' and a 'buffoon').

[40] It is relevant to point out that when *Ecce Homo* is viewed within a context of philosophy as a way of life, the text is generally seen as the final affirmation of Nietzsche's commitment to therapeutics. Here Nietzsche suggests how the dictum of *Amor Fati* may enable a healing of the painful elements of existence – in a way similar to the aim of spiritual exercises as described by Hadot, Ansell-Pearson, Ure et.al. This view, represented by for example Nehamas and also Aaron Ridley, would – as both Nicholas Moore and Daniel Conway note in the above mentioned works – seem in contrast to the proposition of *Ecce Homo* as an essentially ironic book. This apparent conflict may however be overcome when the concept of philosophy lived is viewed beyond the confines of an exclusively therapeutic perspective.

deceptive ethical sophistry connects directly to the ascetic dimension addressed here. Within the context of Catholicism, the concept of casuistry is, as Brian Domino describes, an invention "born of the need to assist priests in dealing with the novel situation brought to them in the confessional." The casuist approach is a practical approach to moral dilemmas which, although it springs from the need to deal with individual, 'novel' cases, does so by means of referring to earlier paradigmatic cases "whose ethical status [is] settled" and as such means that claims regarding the particular case in question do not require individual moral assessment but can be referred to an already established example.[41] Although it may be seen to reject an absolutist ethics, priestly casuistry requires "at least one paradigm, whose moral status is largely settled, from which to begin thinking about the particular case."[42] Which is to say, it requires one unconditional, morally sanctioned principle, an unchallenged maxim or first order principle from which the casuist methodology can proceed.

Viewed from this perspective, it is impossible not to read Nietzsche's casuistry in relation to ascetics. Firstly and most obviously, it explicitly mimics and reverts the first principle of ascetic morality – *selflessness* – which Jesus' body stands for and is supposed to prove. Secondly, Nietzsche's strict disciplinarily and inflexible regimen for living – with so many places, foods and books forbidden, so many things deemed dangerous for the constitution and therefore denied – is necessarily a case of severe asceticism. It is a self-imposed renunciation that in effect makes the exemplary life-stylist more rigidly bound than the most devout ascetic monk. As such Nietzsche's casuistry, directed by selfishness as *the* unconditional moral principle, and hence pseudo-ascetic ideal, is necessarily ascetic, and deliberately so.

[41] Domino, 'The Casuistry of Little Things,' 52-3.
[42] Ibid, 53.

That Nietzsche's self-presentation must be understood within the context of *agon* is affirmed in the preface to EH, where Nietzsche describes himself as "essentially a warrior" for whom attack is "instinctive". After stating that "no new ideals are erected by me" Nietzsche goes on to explain how "*overthrowing idols* (my word for 'ideals') – that comes closer to being part of my craft."[43] In EH 'idols' take on the personified form of 'saints,' 'holy men' and generally 'men believed to be virtuous' – and not least, as will be seen, the form of Nietzsche himself.

The shift in terminology, suggesting that what is under attack is now called idols rather than 'ascetic ideals,' is important. While idols are not necessarily ascetic, viewed in the context of Nietzsche's particular mode of self-presentation, and within the visible and aesthetic dimension that I have proposed it raises, it is possible to understand 'idols' here as referring to recognised embodied examples, established emblems, given their value and hallowed by ascetic ideals: men made holy, saintly, virtuous and truthful under the rule of the ascetic ideal – regardless of what they in fact were.

Substituting ideals for idols in this sense brings a relevant issue into play. First, the term evokes the idea of potentially excessive adulation or worship on behalf of those who idolise – the 'making holy' of another based on potentially unfounded belief in and overestimation of the object of idolisation. Second, it raises the possibility of deception relating to that which poses, or falsely appears, as idol. The connotations of the word idols, in terms of wilful posthumous sanctification and deceptive appearances, links ascetics to theatricality – a connection that was already pointed to in the *Genealogy* where Nietzsche, as seen in the preceding chapter, referred to ascetic types as saints and 'other actors.'[44] In short, the notion of idols as Nietzsche's 'word' for ideals, immediately suggests the hollowness of the ideal under attack – the hollowness of idols that reveal their own ascetic valuation and the belief that sanctions and supports them as groundless.

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[43] EH, Preface, 2.
[44] GM, III, 8.

Becoming a comedian of idols in order to undermine the belief in them is by necessity a precarious strategy. Posing as the enemy in order to raise suspicion of its truth authority involves wearing multiple masks, a role play that increases the risk of being mistaken for the very opposite of what one is. Which is perhaps why in the preface to *Ecce Homo*, before going on to explain why he is so clever and wise, Nietzsche goes to great lengths to state what he is *not*: "I am, for example, by no means a bogey, or a moralistic monster—I am actually the very opposite of the type of man who so far has been revered as virtuous." The paragraph continues: "I should prefer to be even a satyr to being a saint. But one should really read this essay. Perhaps I have succeeded; perhaps this essay had no other meaning than to give expression to this contrast in a cheerful and philanthropic manner."[45]

By saying *Ecce Homo* has perhaps no meaning other than to demonstrate the contrast between saint and satyr, Nietzsche deliberately downplays an issue that amounts to much more than is suggested by his off-hand remark. As has already been shown in the preceding chapters, whenever Nietzsche professes that something is treated in a 'cheerful manner' it is by definition a complex and weighty issue.[46] Considering that what Nietzsche most fears is to be posthumously declared a hallowed idol, and that the aim of EH is to make sure such 'mischief' will not happen, the supposedly simple contrast between saint and satyr which Nietzsche

[45] EH, Preface, 2.

[46] As Nietzsche states in BGE: "There are 'cheerful people' who use cheerfulness because on its account they are misunderstood – they want to be misunderstood (…) There are free impudent spirits who would like to conceal and deny that they are shattered, proud, endurable hearts; and sometime foolishness itself is the mask for an ill-fated, all-too-certain knowledge. – From which it follows that part of a more refined humanity is having respect 'for the mask'" (BGE, 270). This is affirmed by the overall effect of Nietzsche's self-presentation in EH and more specifically in EH, II, 10: "I do not know of any other way of associating with great tasks than *play* (…)".

proposes unveils what I suggest is the performative tension at stake in Nietzsche's self-presentation. It marks the self-dramatic duality involved in the creation of *mistrust* in ascetically sanctioned idols by means of comic and hence agonistic mimicry.

"Perhaps I have succeeded," Nietzsche muses. But his anxiety over having possibly failed, having being mistaken for what he is the opposite of – a moralistic monster in the shape of a virtuous type, a sanctified ideal – may explain why Nietzsche inserts the sentence "Have I been understood?" several times throughout EH's last chapter, not least in the book's final line, where the question is followed by the war cry: "Dionysus versus the Crucified. –"[47]

Nietzsche's assertion that he would rather be a satyr than a saint, and that the whole point of EH is to present the contrast between the two, continues in another oppositional pairing: that of the holy man and the *Hanswurst*, translated as 'fool' or 'buffoon.' When Nietzsche expresses his fear of one day being made holy he continues: "I do not want to be a holy man, sooner rather a *Hanswurst*. – Perhaps I am a *Hanswurst*. –"[48]

The notion of *Hanswurst* is particularly pertinent because of its direct connection to the use of deceptive and excessively idolatrous modes of self-representation, in this case as a theatrical strategy for blasphemously identifying with and as such iconoclastically degrading ascetically sanctioned idols. Not least because what is achieved is a destabilising of the credibility not only of idols but also of the subject who mimics idols and hence deceptively identifies as one.

The figure of the *Hanswurst* was originally a character of 16th century Viennese folk theatre. Described by art historian Christine Battersby as a

[47] EH, IV, 7, 8 and finally, 9: "Have I been understood? – *Dionysus versus the Crucified.* –"
[48] EH, IV, 1.

"crude, burlesque-style rascal" appearing in the tradition of semi-improvised, German-language comedy in which obscenity was both celebrated and valued, the *Hanswurst* is a boastful simpleton, a licensed fool who speaks "ironically and openly about contemporary affairs."[49] As such, in the theatrical or carnivalesque context the German *Hanswurst*, like the English 'fool,' serves a serious and even profound function. The buffoonery of the *Hanswurst* disrupts the gravity of the drama he appears within in real time, and his vulgarity and ignorance become a dramatic device that allows him to reveal the hypocrisies and pretensions beneath the moral façade of decent society. In order to assess what the relevance of Nietzsche's identification with the *Hanswurst* may be for the nature of his self-presentation in EH, one particular, later offspring of the *Hanswurst* tradition is of relevance.

In the early 20th century, not long after Nietzsche's death, the antagonistic potential of the *Hanswurst* was moved beyond the confinement of the theatrical stage and into a real-life drama. As Battersby shows in the article quoted above, 'Behold the Buffoon: Dada, Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* and the Sublime,' the disruptive function of the *Hanswurst* was appropriated at an event, or rather an intervention, that marked the inception of the Dada movement in Berlin in 1918 and, according to Battersby, was unmistakably Nietzschean in nature.[50] During a church service Johannes Baader (1875-1955), a writer and artist at the heart of the Berlin Dada movement, as part of a series of outrageous, messianic public performances, interrupted the sermon with the exclamation: "Was ist Euch Jesus Christus. Er ist Euch *Wurst*!" ("What is Jesus Christ to you? To you he's *Wurst*!" – 'Wurst' literally translated as 'sausage,' referring to nonsense or rubbish,

[49] Christine Battersby, '"Behold the Buffoon": Dada, Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* and the Sublime,' *Tate Papers*, issue 13 (Spring 2010). https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/13/behold-the-buffoon-dada-nietzsche-ecce-homo-and-the-sublime. Accessed July 15, 2018.
[50] Ibid.

something meaningless and valueless; with the same meaning as in Hans-*Wurst*, 'Sausage-Hans'). Baader's intervention, or so-called 'Christ performance,' not surprisingly, caused a scandal and resulted in his arrest on counts of blasphemy.[51]

While it may be, as Battersby states, a "well-known fact" within art-historical scholarship that Nietzsche and EH in particular were an important inspiration for the early Dada movement, in discussions of EH in philosophical and literary contexts this is, to my knowledge, rarely mentioned. The Dada strategy of *Hanswurst*-style interventionist critique, directed as a vicious attack upon German bourgeois morality, is very possibly a (wild) extension of Nietzsche's talent in this area – perhaps especially so in relation to the outrageous and panegyric style of EH that I have discussed. The strategic use of theatrically informed, highly provocative modes of iconoclast-megalomaniac self-presentation is characteristic of the Dadaist style of moral critique and schizophrenic unravelling of the artist persona as the agent of such critique. Not least in the case of Baader, who one year before the mentioned Christ performance had founded Christus GmbH (Christ Ltd) and later, after the abdication of the Kaiser, had business cards made declaring himself 'President of the Earth and Universe.' The link to Nietzsche is by no means arbitrary. As Battersby shows, besides Baader, the 'Dada philosopher' Raoul Hausman, and the 'father' of the movement Hugo Ball, knew Nietzsche's works very well and referenced them directly.[52]

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[51] It could be possible draw up a whole history of an iconoclastic 'Christ performance' tradition, starting, perhaps, with Nietzsche and concluding with Klaus Kinski's amazingly psychotic 1971 'Jesus' tour – recorded in Peter Geyer's film *Jesus Christus Erlöser* (2008) – as its latest addition.

[52] As Battersby shows, Ball wrote an unpublished doctoral dissertation on Nietzsche and refers to him extensively in his other works. Hausman's partner Hannah Höch also refers directly to Nietzsche, including a quotation from *Ecce Homo* in one of her own works. Other notable connections is George Grosz' series of works from the early 20th century entitled 'Ecce Homo', depicting in graphic detail a vicious attack on the Germans that

That the German Dada movement's employment of the *Hanswurst* is relevant for a reading of EH in the present context is, I suggest, not so much because the former was inspired by Nietzsche, but more importantly because the Dada movement's employment of Nietzsche in the early 20th century shows us, for the first time, the effect of Nietzsche's invention of a new, hybrid genre – what I propose is *Ecce Homo*'s unprecedented merging of fiction and self-telling. Before EH there did not, to my knowledge, exist any text, and certainly not within philosophy, that shared its (deliberate) merging of fiction, satire and self-telling. No more than 20 years after Nietzsche's death, such works appear. In a text accompanying Baader's installation from 1920 (*Great Plato-Dio-Dada-Drama*) the exhibit is interwoven with Baader's fictional autobiography, *The Fantastic Life Story of the Oberdada*.

Viewed in this way, I propose that EH is the first example of, or is the forerunner to, a 20th century genre which only after Nietzsche's death, through the Dadaists, came to be known as 'fantastical autobiography' and only much later, in the 1970s, became popularised and theorised as a (post)modern literary genre under the name of auto-fiction. Today, under various subcategories, the genre continues to occupy a prominent place within contemporary literature and cross-disciplinary forms of artistic invention.[53]

The formally inventive, even unprecedented nature of EH is not only a question of style. Rather, it is the genre-bending mergence of seemingly

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brought Grosz to trial for obscenity, also mentioned by Kaufmann in his introduction to *Ecce Homo.*

[53]Autofiction as a term used in literary criticism refers to forms of fictionalised autobiography coined in the late 1970s by Serge Doubrovsky. It continues to be one of the most dominant genre trends in contemporary literature (see for example Karl Ove Knausgaard's (to be) six-volume bestseller *Min Kamp* [*My Struggle*]). Within the context of contemporary art and theory, the genre develops under names such as 'self-writing' and 'life-writing', developing further on the (post)structuralist notion of the subject as a sporadic, auto-poetic text, the 'I' as a linguistic performance.

inconsistent forms of fictional and autobiographical narratives, precisely the hybrid nature of EH as form, that enables the strategic attack upon ascetic ideals by performative means. It is perhaps, as Domino has remarked, "not difficult to understand why nearly a century of commentators have viewed *Ecce Homo* as the product of Nietzsche's incipient dementia: the book is profoundly schizophrenic."[54] However, the book's schizophrenic nature performs an important conceptual function. It is what makes it possible for Nietzsche to wear several masks at the same time and appear as an ascetic idol in order to *become* a comedian and hence effective antagonist.

Nietzsche could have attempted a comedic degrading of idols in a more traditional, literary context; he could have written a work in which a fictional, recognisably ascetic character acts as device for undermining trust, belief in them. Instead, he chooses to use the supposedly non-fictional form and the implicit expectations of truth in autobiography, and as such the supposedly authentic *real-life* figure of himself as an exemplary philosopher, to do so.[55] This has the following consequences. Far from a simple contrasting – between comic figures such as satyrs and buffoons, and ascetically hallowed idols such as saints and holy men – what is involved is a mode of deceptive self-dramatisation that must ambiguously embody and entangle both these registers, the ascetic and the comic, at the same time. In order to effectively create mistrust in idols, it is not sufficient simply to take an oppositional stance. Rather, as a strategy proceeding from within, in order to be a comedian of, and hence a creator of mistrust in, idols, one must become, or believably appear as, an idol in the first place. Hence why Nietzsche, as a condition for the strategy of comic *agon*, must appear before

[54] Domino, 'The Casuistry of Little Things,' 51.
[55] That Nietzsche values philosophers with talent for self-dramatisation is confirmed for example in BGE, I, 4: "How malicious philosophers can be! Epicurus' joke, calling Plato and Platonists (…) actors; he was annoyed at the self-dramatising that Plato and his disciples were so good at – that Epicurus was not good at! he, the old school master from Samos, who sat holed up in his little garden in Athens and wrote three hundred books, who knows? maybe out of rage and ambition against Plato?"

his audience as an embodied exemplar, presenting in auto-hagiographic form his ascetic casuistry and himself as an object of adulation. Only on the premise of successfully appearing as an idol will it be possible to harm the very construct of idols, the ascetic foundation of idols, by revealing oneself as a resonantly hollow one. This is the only way to effectively become a successful antagonist, the only way in which 'mistrust' may properly be created – a mistrust which also in effect concerns Nietzsche himself as a truthful subject and philosopher of the future.

It is relevant that EH is full of praise for, and contains long quotations from, Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, a work that enacts a similar dynamic and walks the fine line of employing dramatic – and parodic – means to ambiguously present itself as that which it attacks.[56] While Nietzsche proposes *Zarathustra* as a so-called 'fifth testament', the book, according to its author, is free of preaching, free of demands, free of faith and of anything like a "prophet."[57] Nietzsche's preface to EH ends with the following quote from *Zarathustra*.

> Now I go alone, my disciples. You, too, go now, alone.
> Thus I want it.
> Go away from me and resist Zarathustra! And even better: be ashamed of him! Perhaps he deceived you.
> The man of knowledge must not only love his enemies, he must also be able to hate his friends.
> One repays a teacher badly if one always remains nothing but a pupil. And why do you not want to pluck at my wreath?
> You revere me; but what if your reverence *tumbles* one day? Beware lest a statue slay you.
> You say that you believe in Zarathustra? But what matters

[56] "*Incipit tragoedia*" – the tragedy begins – is the title of GS, 342 which 'Zarathustra's Prologue' is a repetition of. In the Preface to the Second edition of GS, Nietzsche cautions us to "Beware! Something downright wicked and malicious is announced here: *incipit parodia*, no doubt!"

[57] "Here no "prophet" is speaking, none of those gruesome hybrids of sickness and will to power whom people call founders of religions." EH, preface, 4.

> Zarathustra? You are my believers—but what matter all believers? You had not yet sought yourselves; and you found me. Thus do all believers; therefore all faith amounts to so little.
> Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only *when you have all denied me* will I return to you.[58]

According to Nietzsche, a man who speaks thus, says "precisely the opposite of everything that any 'sage,' 'saint,' 'world-redeemer,' or any other decadent would say in such a case – Not only does he [Zarathustra] speak differently, he also *is* different. – "[59]

That Nietzsche introduces his telling of himself in EH with this quote underlines the strategy suggested above. By staging Zarathustra, stylistically and formally, *as* prophet, he *shows* that Zarathustra not only speaks differently, but that he *is* profoundly different to a prophet. But the difference, as Nietzsche knows, may be difficult to spot, if one does not have ears for it, if one does not "*hear* aright the tone."[60] For how is it that Zarathustra's talk is "precisely the opposite" of a prophet's? It is by virtue of its successful imitation of, by it being recognised as, that to which it claims to be the opposite. In other words, it is *only* by appearing as a believable extension in the line of prophets, presenting the latest addition to the Gospels, that will effectively make Zarathustra, the figure and the text, capable of effectively challenging the ascetic truth value of and hence belief in prophets. Zarathustra cannot be 'different to' recognised ascetic 'prophets' and founders of religion if he does not himself appear as, is not recognised aesthetically as 'the same as' them.

In the same way, Nietzsche cannot be precisely the opposite of those who have hitherto been believed in as virtuous, as holy and as saints. He cannot become a comedian and hence effective underminer of those ascetically sanctioned idols if he does not appear before an audience as one

[58] EH, preface, 4 [*Z,* I, 22.]
[59] EH, preface, 4.
[60] Ibid.

of them himself. The difference is a question of the nuances of appearance, of hearing aright the 'tone.'

As such Nietzsche's presention of his own ascetic casuistry and deliberate encouragement of an idolatrous readership is the condition for the strategy of comic *agon* whereby mistrust in ascetic ideals is hoped to be created. Nietzsche's attempted attack on ascetic ideals is in this sense not opposed to the exemplary mode of self-presentation presented in the first part of this chapter. Rather, it is by virtue of the ascetic dimension of the latter that Nietzsche carries out such a critique, beyond the discursive realm of the static page, and enacts it in a performative manner – turning himself and his life into the stage for doing so. In light of this, what was described in the first half of this chapter as Nietzsche's failure to live up to his own definition of a philosophy that shows rather than tells itself, may now be retracted.

It may then be true, after all, that the real meaning of EH is precisely to *show*, rather than *tell*, the difference between a satyr and saint, the holy man and the *Hanswurst* – in a 'cheerful and philanthropic manner' ('difference' resting on the condition that one appears, deceptively, 'the same as'). Cheerful because it playfully reduces a highly complex relation to a seemingly simple distinction, thereby rendering what is a serious and problematic issue into a light-hearted one. Philanthropic because Nietzsche, in order to do so, offers himself and his life as the dramatic stage for playing out this issue – running the risk of being misunderstood, being heard by wrong ears and taken for what he is not and in effect being made holy as a truthful and hence ascetic philosophical idol. This is the risk that Nietzsche takes – with *Zarathustra* but more so with *Ecce Homo*, since in the latter case he has given up the fictional persona of Zarathustra in favour of his own name: "Have I been understood? – I have not said one word here that I

did not say five years ago through the mouth of Zarathustra."[61] However, it is a risk that Nietzsche, far from trying to lessen, rather encourages.

"The truth speaks out of me" is Nietzsche's disorientating proclamation, inevitably leading us to question the 'truth' and the 'me' it speaks out of. "Every one who is of the truth hears my voice" – thus spoke a truly ascetic ideal in the shape of Jesus of the Gospels as he is presented by Pontius Pilate under the banner 'Ecce Homo.'[62] But the Nietzsche of *Ecce Homo* is different and speaks differently – not of the 'truth' but from the hollow origin of a theatrical, 'false' idol, a ventriloquist device that speaks 'the truth' on the condition that that which speaks is essentially a deceptive construct. It is only in his role as buffoon, a fool – belonging to a realm where the will to truth is not at play – that truth 'speaks out of' Nietzsche. Nietzsche the fool, and not Nietzsche the philosopher, can *show* this by claiming to speak the truth. That is, self-consciously illusory truth-telling is the means by which truth-telling can be undermined *as* illusory. Or said in another way; Nietzsche's truth is that all that has hithertho been considered as truths are *lies.*

This is, I suggest, what the strategy of comic *agon*, the becoming a comedian of ascetic ideals in order to create mistrust in their ascetic truth authority, results in when carried out successfully. It is what Nietzsche had described derisively in the Genealogy as 'forgery in ideals,' 'sham idealism,' 'little ideal-idol' and not least '*comedians* of the Christians-moral ideal' – in reference to hedonistic historians and phoney artist buffoons. But in Nietzsche's own deliberate version of *becoming* a comedian, of buffoonery, *his* sham idealism and his counterfeiting the Christian-moral ideal, is a self-conscious, deliberate strategy – the only one capable of harming ascetic ideals not driven by a truth impetus.

[61] EH, IV, 8.
[62] John 18.37.

"To attack" is, as Nietzsche states, "instinctive with me," affirming that Nietzsche's ascetic casuistry does not erect new ideals but is an attempt to overthrow existing ones.[63] But the strategic mode of his attack employing as its material *bios* – in the sense of a biographical account of a life lived and a way of life – greatly increases the chance of misperception, more so than any of Nietzsche's other works and far more, of course, than more traditional philosophical formats. This is the condition of a philosopher *becoming* a comedian and hence effective antagonist of ascetic ideals – and it may very well have damning consequences. As Nietzsche states at the end of the presentation of his casuistry of selfishness; many will perhaps ask "why on earth" he has been rambling on about seemingly insignificant, trivial matters such as nutrition, climate and so on – in short, why on earth a seemingly serious philosopher is presenting a detailed ascetic casuistry – since doing so will only harm himself, in the sense that it may harm his future legacy as a philosopher of great tasks.[64] However, as Nietzsche's description of his agonistic nature describes it: "I have never publicly taken a single step which did not compromise me: that is my criterion of the proper mode of action."[65] Here it becomes clear that being misunderstood, being taken for what one is not, is not only a risk but a *necessary condition* for what may be called Nietzsche's *ethos* of *agon*: potential compromise before the eye of the public is a *criterion* and hence characteristic of efficient, correctly carried out attack. This affirms that insofar as EH can be seen as a successfully carried out attack on ascetic ideals, it follows as a consequence that Nietzsche's self-presentation will, and must, undermine him, must comprise him before the eye of the general public. The price of attack is being heard by the wrong ears, being misunderstood by the many and, potentially, being made holy; to be taken for a saint rather than a skilful comedian, a hallowed rather than hollow idol.

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[63] EH, I, 7.
[64] EH, II, 10.
[65] Ibid.

Returning once again to the quote from 'Schopenhauer as Educator' where Nietzsche introduces his idea of philosophy as *Lebensordnung*, what he describes as the 'courageous visibility' of the philosophical life also concerns this close connection between antagonism and buffoonery – or more specifically appearing as a fool and a threat.

> It seems more and more to me that the philosopher as *necessarily* a human of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow has always found himself to be in contradiction to his today and *must* be: his enemy has always been the ideal of today. So far all these extraordinary promoters of humanity who are called philosophers, and who rarely felt themselves to be friends of wisdom so much as disagreeable fools and dangerous question marks – have found their task (…) in being *the bad conscience of their time*.[66]

If Nietzsche's idea of philosophy as *Lebensordnung* and the role of *askesis* within it finds an example in the Greek philosophers, this is because these 'so-called' philosophers felt themselves not as serious, ascetic truth seekers but as 'disagreeable fools' and threatening 'question marks' – in short the bad conscience of *their* time, courageously showing themselves as sworn antagonists of its ideals.

In this chapter I have suggested that EH can be seen as the culmination of Nietzsche's *askesis* as presented in the preceding two chapters – as the finalisation of the revaluation of 'the smallest things' called for in the middle works (as discussed in chapter one) and as the realisation of the strategy of comic *agon* as put forward in GM (as discussed in chapter two). In line with this, I have offered two interpretations of Nietzsche's self-telling in EH: one in accordance with the title's positive reference to Nietzsche as an exemplary figure worthy of admiration, and one in accordance with the title's antagonistic second reference to an attempted

[66] BGE, VI, 212.

degradation of ascetic ideals carried out through self-dramatic means of becoming a comedian. I have further proposed how the two interpretations are not contradictory but complimentary; that the latter necessarily relies on the former and in turn imbues the exemplary mode of self-presentation laid out in Nietzsche's ascetic casuistry with an agonistic function. Following from this, I have suggested that whereas the first interpretation must conclude that Nietzsche's *askesis* fails to live up to his own prescribed standards for a lived mode of philosophy, one capable of showing rather than telling itself, the second concludes that Nietzsche's *askesis* succeeds in its agonistic aspiration in the sense of carrying out an attack on ascetic ideals through performative, rather than discursive means.

While Nietzsche's pseudo-autobiography, or auto-hagiogrpahy, is perhaps the most ambiguous of Nietzsche's books, it nevertheless stands as the culmination of Nietzsche's *askesis* such as I understand it. It shows not only that Nietzsche's *askesis* concerns an aesthetic and outwardly visible dimension, but that this dimension is what connects *askesis* to *agon*. As such Nietzsche's *askesis* cannot be seen as in contrast to, or as marking a tranquil hiatus from, his more well known antagonistic project – rather, it is complicit in it.

## CONCLUSION. "To make the individual *uncomfortable*, that is my task."

Throughout this thesis my aim has been to construe Nietzsche's *askesis* as an aesthetically and corporeally orientated practice. And further, to show how the aesthetic and corporeal dimension of Nietzsche's *askesis* is the means by which it can appear, and effectively function, as an essentially agonistic undertaking.

In this way, I have attempted to offer an alternative to the therapeutic perspective that is predominant in contemporary treatments of Nietzsche within the context of philosophy understood as a way of life. While I do not dispute the partial validity of this perspective, I propose that therapeutics is an aspect and not the overall aim of Nietzsche's *askesis*, and that the apparent curative quality of the latter must therefore be positioned and considered within a wider context.

Nietzsche's *askesis* and his engagement with the possibility of philosophy as a lived practice can be understood within the eudemonistic concerns of philosophy as it appears in late antiquity, as described by Hadot et al. However, it also reaches beyond this tradition.

As I have shown in the preceding chapters, Nietzsche's concept of *askesis* is formed as a direct response to, and appropriation of, philosophical *and* athletic and later religious practices of *askesis* – and not least the respective ideals by which these are directed.

By widening the framework in this way, I have sought to emphasise and retain the concrete, body-orientated focus and inherently agonistic character that informs the athletic and religious versions or historical stages of *askesis* – but which seems opposed to the philosophical-therapeutic one.

While I am aware that to position Nietzsche within the realm of therapeutics is, often, motivated by an attempt to emphasise a contrasting, non-antagonistic and perhaps often overlooked dimension of Nietzsche, I suggest that it is possible to appreciate this latter dimension while not losing

sight of the other. It may even be suggested that failure to do so could have problematic consequences.

Recent scholarship on the 'therapeutic' Nietzsche can be seen as an extension of what Daniel Conway has described as the emergence of a "kinder, gentler" Nietzsche – an image of Nietzsche that in itself marks the culmination of, or even appears as the idol of, a "protracted campaign to take Nietzsche seriously as a philosopher."[1]

In the therapeutic Nietzsche we find a *sauber*, non-violent and even serene Nietzsche: a philanthropic philosopher seemingly committed to the greater good, and the flourishing and happiness of humanity (rid of any offensive implications as to what Nietzsche may have thought 'good' for humanity). This therapeutic rendering of Nietzsche is epitomised in Thomas Steinbuch's reading of *Ecce Homo*, which claims that "Nietzsche's philosophy is remarkable and unique in offering us the chance to develop ourselves into more fully alive beings. An extraordinary gift and, contrary to Christ's Eternal Life, one that truly is salvific!"[2] In a similar vein, in the only existing work committed to the concept of Nietzsche's *askesis*, Horst Hutter asks, "How can writing myself by reading Nietzsche help me to shape my future and free my present from bad repetitions of the past? Where in my life do I need to look to find guidance?"[3]

To present Nietzsche as something akin to an altruistic life coach is problematic on several levels. Not only because what enables it is the suppression of, or as Wilfred van der Will had described it, the blotting out of the "more violent, militantly elitist and plainly anti-democratic strands"

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[1] Conway, 'Nietzsche's *Döppelganger*: Affirmation and resentment in *Ecce Homo*,' in *The Fate of the New Nietzsche*, ed. Ansell-Pearson (New York: Avery Publishing, 1993), 55.
[2] Steinbuch, *A commentary on Nietzsche's* Ecce Homo*,* 24.
[3] Hutter, *Shaping the Future: Nietzsche New Regime of the Soul and its Ascetic Practices*, 133.

of Nietzsche's philosophy,[4] but also because it fails to address Nietzsche's own critique of idealisation and his (albeit ambiguous) rejection of the role of idol as I have discussed in the preceding chapter.

While the attempt to purify Nietzsche of his less kind, less gentle and generally less liberal tendencies finds its climax in explicitly therapeutic readings of Nietzsche, it also appears on a lesser scale in readings that posit Nietzsche as an exemplary figure within the context of philosophy lived.

"Having lived it himself," Deleuze states on the first page of *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, "Nietzsche understood (…) what constitutes the mystery of the philosopher's life." The 'mystery' of the philosophical life as lived and understood by Nietzsche, Deleuze explains, is the "philosopher's solitude," his inability to integrate into "any milieu" except as "a shadow, a traveller or boarding house lodger." But while the philosopher is essentially unsuited to any existing societal organisation, Deleuze continues, "doubtless it is in democratic and liberal milieus that he finds the best living conditions." In fact "it is certain that the philosopher finds the most favourable conditions in the democratic state and in liberal circles."[5]

Deleuze's definition of the philosopher's optimum condition is an inversion of Nietzsche's definition – as far away from liberal circles and democratic ideals as possible, as described in chapter two. Similarly, Nehamas in *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* concludes the book's preface with a dismissal of another of Nietzsche's concrete descriptions of the best conditions for the philosophical life. Nehamas states that "Nietzsche's quip, 'A married philosopher belongs to comedy,'" is not simply wrong but a "comically shallow and ignorant joke."

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[4] This remark is made in relation to what van der Will sees as a disingenuous celebration of Nietzsche among so-called deconstructivists or poststructuralists. Wilfired van der Will quoted in Ansell-Pearson, 'Towards the Comedy of Existence: On Nietzsche's New Justice,' in *The Fate of the New Nietzsche,* eds. Ansell-Pearson and Caygill (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1993), 266.

[5] Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights, 1988), 3.

A family, Nehamas goes on, makes "a philosophical life much more complex and difficult than it might otherwise be. But that complexity is worth accepting and integrating with the rest of one's life and work."[6] Nehamas explains that it is his own personal experience of attempting to combine family and work life that has "proved" to him that Nietzsche's comment is shallow and ignorant. Thus, like Deleuze, inverting Nietzsche's own claim that the bachelor lives of Heraclitus, Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Schopenhauer and all the other unmarried philosophers of history has proven to *him* that the best philosophers are unmarried ones.

All interpretation necessarily involves gestures of erasure and strategic selection and the two examples mentioned might seem insignificant, even banal, compared to the (mis)interpretations most famously connected to Nietzsche. But what the above shows in a very straightforward way is how *in order* for Nietzsche to appear as an admirable example of philosophy as a lived practice, Nietzsche must have his anti-democratic tastes muted and his anti-family values dismissed as ignorant. This is the 'blotting out' of what is taken to be problematic or simply ridiculous about Nietzsche's views and values.

The tendency to blot out or repress aspects of Nietzsche may be seen as concurrent with, and even necessary for, the raising of Nietzsche unto a serious philosophical level; in order for Deleuze, Nehamas and many other respected Nietzsche scholars to take Nietzsche seriously as a philosopher, it appears to be necessary to edit out what should *not* be taken seriously. In order for Nietzsche's name to hold, as Ansell-Pearson describes it, "more currency than that of any other modern European philosopher" and in order for the posthumous Nietzsche to have become one of the most venerated and academically treated figures of Western philosophy,[7] what must be carried out, what has been carried out, is a process not only of academic

[6] Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Socrates to Foucault* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), xi.
[7] Ansell-Pearson, 'Towards the Comedy of Existence,' 265.

validation but sanitisation and ultimately sanctification. To erase, downplay or dismiss as no more than ignorant jokes those aspects of Nietzsche that *we* may consider disagreeable, outrageous or even dangerous, is precisely what idolatry, in effect, amounts to –religious or secular.

Without doubt it is insufficient to read Nietzsche without a sympathetic ear for what is gentle, generous and subtle. But it is equally insufficient if, in order to counteract a superficial misunderstanding of Nietzsche as nothing more than brute aggressor, Nietzsche's potential to trouble and disturb is extinguished. This leaves us not only with a more gentle and agreeable Nietzsche but a thoroughly inoffensive one, seemingly harmless to us, his future readers. In other words, it leaves us with a version of Nietzsche that belongs to the scholarly caste of philosophers whom Nietzsche had defined and vehemently dismissed precisely on the grounds that they were incapable of causing harm and thus 'disturbed no one.

As Conway suggests, "if we are to take Nietzsche seriously as a philosopher, then we must embrace the self-referential implications of his critique [and] resist the temptation to idolise him."[8] This, I think, necessitates that we reject the willful notion of Nietzsche as a 'truly salvific' therapeutic life guide, and more difficultly, that we refrain from making Nietzsche more agreeable, less offensive and not least less perplexing.

If, for Nietzsche, philosophy understood as a lived practice is defined, valued and encouraged for its ability to upset, and if, as Nietzsche states, "to make the individual *uncomfortable*, that is my task,"[9] then Nietzsche's potentially serious legacy as a philosopher also relies on this ability to disturb and make uncomfortable, rather than an attempt to overcome it.

[8] Conway, 'Nietzsche's *Döppelganger*,' 56.
[9] Unpublished note from 1875, quoted in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Kaufmann (Penguin, 1994), 50.

This is the tension, or irony perhaps, of attempting to define Nietzsche's *askesis*. It involves a deliberate posthumous erecting of Nietzsche as an admirable examplar of successful life-stylistics, an idol even, and a simultaneous recognition of the self-contradictory gesture of doing so.

While there are many important questions that I have not been able to address, or only implicitly so, due to the inquiry's mundane focus and my own aesthetically informed approach, it is my hope that Nietzsche's *askesis* as I have presented it does address this particular and important tension – although not resolve it – and as such allow for the ambiguous double role that Nietzsche himself adopts in *Ecce Homo*, a text which I have proposed can be seen as the culmination of Nietzsche's *askesis*: a saint and a buffoon – a self-ordained destroyer of ideals, including that of himself as a truthful ideal for philosophers of the future.

It is by way of the practice-based format of the research project that this tension, ambiguity or irony can be played out in what I take to be an indispensible, self-reflective and performative dimension. The audio-visual element not only facilitates a mode of inquiry beyond the discursive one afforded by the written thesis but is, I believe, the only way that the ambiguous issue of Nietzsche as ideal can be sufficiently, visibly and affectively explored.

As the first chapter of the video essay suggests, an attempt to imbue the detached, contemplative nature of 'theory' with a landscape and a body, it may be fruitful to consider the etymological root of the word 'theory.' *Theoria* originally referred to the cultural practice of pilgrimage, and *theoroi*, the original 'theorist,' was the name for individuals who, as representatives of their community, travelled to, witnessed and participated in the various spectacles taking place at ancient Greek festivals.[10] As such

[10] Troels Myrup Christensen, 'The Archaeology of Theōria: Landscape, Movement and Materiality in Ancient Greek Pilgrimage,' Lecture at The Danish Institute at Athens, November 13, 2014.

the activity of 'theory' is originally positioned within, rather than in contrast to, the immersive field of practice.[11]

When the Greek philosophers appropriated the word *theoria* and construed the meaning of theory and theorising as an essentially contemplative activity, they transported the word from its original, physical context to a meta-physical one. However, the connection to movement, and more specifically to journeying, was kept in the metaphorical sense, as for example in Plato's 'Cave Analogy.' But the notion of travelling in order to see – witnessing or contemplating – that the word *theoria* indicates is also present much earlier, in what Hadot has suggested is perhaps the first mention of philosophy as an activity, i.e. 'doing philosophy,' found in Herodotus' *Histories* from the 5th century BC.

> My Athenian guests, the rumour of your wisdom [*sophiés*] and your travels has reached us. We hear that since you have taste for wisdom [*philosopheon*], you have visited many lands because of your desire to see.[12]

The second and third chapters of the video essay follow the notion of the physical, geographical journeying of the *theoroi* – as contrasted to the meta-physical one of philosophical theorists – and, more particularly, a journeying directed by, following in the footsteps of, Nietzsche.

As such, the video essay is the record of a pilgrimage. Thus, it not only references the original, experiential nature of 'theory,' but imitates Nietzsche's own peripatetic lifestyle and positions Nietzsche himself as a posthumous idol whose various abodes, in Turin, Sils-Maria and Naumburg, become sites for what in a contemporary context, as stated in the introduction, may be called a Nietzsche tourist trail. The video essay in effect makes the dead Nietzsche 'holy.' It provides a visual representation, a

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[11] See Andrea Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy:* Theoria *in its Cultural Context* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[12] Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 15-16.

retracing of a deliberately idolatrous rendering – and hence is itself a blasphemous enactment – of what I have suggested is key to any attempt to discuss and propose 'Nietzsche's *askesis*.' Namely, his simultaneous posturing as and rejection of the role of idol. It is my hope that the style and tone of the video essay enable it to communicate and reflect self-referentially on this issue in a manner both ambiguous and, hopefully, appropriate to Nietzsche's own sense of humour. As Nietzsche remarks in a letter from 1887:

> The house in which two of my books were created was so shaken and damaged that it must be demolished. This has the advantage for posterity that people will have to make one pilgrimage fewer.[13]

[13] Letter to Emily Flynn, 4th March, 1887. KSB, 8, 812.

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* A complementary filmography can be found at the end of the accompanying video essay.