

PIPPIAN - chapter 2

CHAPTER TWO

What Is a Gay Science?

I.

Nietzsche tells us that he wants to be understood as a psychologist, and he gives us ample reason to believe that the French moralists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially Montaigne, Pascal, and La Rochefoucauld, are his models in this enterprise. Several implications follow from taking this suggestion seriously, the most important of which is the "Montaigne problem." That is, how one might combine an uncompromising, brutal honesty about human hypocrisy and bad faith—a realization of the very "low" origins of even the highest of aspirations—with an affirmative reconciliation of some sort with such a weak and corrupt human condition, and all this somehow be low, deeper than, the level of conscious belief or attitude. That is, how was it that Montaigne successfully fulfilled the task that Nietzsche attributes to him: "to make [himself] at home in the world" (*UM*, 135)? At least we know already that whatever makes possible such a basic

1. In Nietzsche's terms: how is something more than a devaluation possible now; how is a genuine reevaluation possible?

orientation (an "attunement" or *Stimmung* in Heidegger's sense), it is not and cannot be the result of a successful "demonstration" about why the world ought to matter in some way or other (unless the availability of such a demonstration itself somehow already matters most).

Although in many contemporary circles, such a psychological interpretation would be characterized as too vague or too literary a view of the main issues in Nietzsche, we have seen that such a psychology is supposed to be *primordial*, even a successor of sorts to "first philosophy." This is because of Nietzsche's claim about the primordially of issues of value and their psychological conditions.

This claim about primordially also reframes his relation to the French. That is, his elevation of the French moralists to this rank is already to go well beyond them and their point of view, to make much more of them than they made of themselves, and so, somewhat ironically, to ensure his failure in ever reoccupying their position. That they did not appeal to any deeper philosophical foundation to ground what they wanted to say is not the same as pointing out that there was no such deeper foundation and making something of this absence.² As we shall discuss in this chapter, the difference between Nietzsche and the *moralistes français* is largely due to the different historical circumstances under which he must raise the problem of "affirmation." We are burdened "now," Nietzsche believes, by what he calls a different and "heavier" "intellectual conscience," and this creates a "tension" between any possible commitments and passions and this sort of self-consciousness.³

II.

Nietzsche did not have available (and anyway would certainly not have used) contemporary language about the pragmatics of intentionality to make this point about "primordially," but that language is useful in

2. Consequently, there is not much to be gained by adopting the method of the few books and articles that treat Nietzsche's relation to the French, simply listing similar claims and speculating on influence throughout Nietzsche's development.

3. Noticing influences is of course, up to a point, helpful. Nietzsche's emphasis on passion here, and the threat posed to it by reflection, no doubt evinces the influence of Stendahl and especially Stendahl's contrast in *De l'homme* between "le naturel" and "la vanité."

stating the claims, especially since the primordially point is so important.⁴ I suggest that we think of his "primordially problem" this way.

To know what we ought to believe or are entitled to assert or ought to do, we need to understand the nature of practical commitments to some governing standard that we have accepted, one governing what ought to be believed or asserted or done. To assert that something is the case, I unavoidably undertake a set of many related commitments to those to whom I make the assertion, commitments about what else I must affirm to be true and what I must refrain from asserting, given what I claim. Some philosophers who hold that "meaning is use" see the meaning of the expression as simply consisting in these related implied commitments and inferred responsibilities. Some see this network of commitments as demonstrating that even the most basic form of intentionality requires the play of rational commitments. (Just to be conscious of X is potentially to claim or judge that X, and so to undertake these commitments and so to be prepared to justify them if challenged.) Nietzsche would not agree with these implications, but the point here is to note that the primordially issue in Nietzsche has to do with value, and in this case this means something like the basic authority of the constraints and requirements I undertake to accept, impose on myself, and hold to. To assert, or to pledge to do, or to claim to know, are thus *au fond* kinds of promises, and such promises are not explicable as merely natural events. The constraints we undertake are not the avoidance of or imposed by physical impossibilities. They require my futural commitments and my holding to them, sustaining them (under some understanding of, and commitment to, why I ought to), in order to be the promises—the assertions and expressions of intention—that they are. These sorts of commitments are thus basic or constitutive for the very possibility of thought, belief, action, all intentionality. And like many, Nietzsche would like to understand the source of this normative authority, why and in what sense we are bound as we are or at least as we seem to be.

4. I am aware that the introduction of the terminology of academic philosophy is a kind of distortion of Nietzsche, but we need some sort of less figurative language; pious repetitions of his claims will get us nowhere.

5. Immanuel Kant should get the lion's share of the credit for insisting that intentional awareness is not being in a certain sort of state but actively, even "spontaneously," constructing that something is the case. See Prauss 1971, Pippin 1981, and Brandom 1994.

As we have seen, even though he accepts the distinctness of such normative matters, he wants his account to involve and be consistent with what we know about nature. Thus, the famous passage from *On the Genealogy of Morals*: "That particular task of breeding an animal with the prerogative to promise includes . . . the immense amount of labor involved in what I have called the 'morality of custom,' the actual labor of man on himself during the longest epoch of the human race" (*GM*, II, §2, 36). A great deal of this labor involves brute physical violence and coercion, but commentators (especially Nietzschean "naturalists") often overlook the fact that such violence is always in the service of some ideal and that the labor does not merely happen but is undertaken, something we do to ourselves. Masters, too, have ideals, and a master "morality" is still in some sense a normative matter, a commitment, not the mere natural expression of a biological type.⁶ And to be sure, slavish ideals are "really" strategies of revenge and resistance, but that just means the slaves did not accept being slaves, they *revolted*, even if only "ideologically" and out of fear and resentment. Something *mattered* to them.⁷ As we shall see in the last chapter, it is an open question whether Nietzsche can reconcile his views on "self-overcoming"—some sort of negative relation to oneself that is not the traditional divided soul—with his criticisms of the "ascetic ideal," a value he sees still at work in many skeptics, atheists, and humanists.

6. None of this should be taken to imply that such master types have "free will" and can simply resolve whether to engage in master conduct or not. That is as false an alternative as the biological destiny view. The locus classicus for that claim is *BGE*, §21, in which Nietzsche proposes not free or unfree wills but strong or weak wills. It is true that Nietzsche mocks the "slavish" notion that the strong can act otherwise than strongly, but that claim must be connected with his unusual account of agency in general. See the discussion in chapter 4.

7. Thus all the famous backhanded compliments to Christianity, as in the *Genealogy*: "Priests make everything more dangerous, not just medicaments and healing arts but pride, revenge, acumen, debauchery, love, lust for power, virtue, sickness;—in any case, with some justification one could add that man first became an interesting animal on the foundation of this essentially dangerous form of human existence, the priest, and that the human soul became deep in the higher sense and turned evil for the first time—and of course, these are the two basic forms of man's superiority, hitherto, over other animals!" (*GM*, I, §6, 18).

We can see more of what interests Nietzsche by noting that the commitments he is interested in are *dual*. The first we might call a thin or surface commitment of the sort involved when one agrees to play a game or participate in a social practice such as voting, and it consists in what obligations one is in fact undertaking from the point of view of any other player or participant.⁸ If you undertake to vote, you obligate yourself to vote in the proper precinct, not to vote twice, and so forth, whether you consciously acknowledge that or not; to play chess, not to move the rook diagonally, and so forth. Playing that game is just constituted by those implications and proprieties. You simply wouldn't be playing if you did not observe them.

But there is another feature of your commitment that is rather a "depth" commitment and, in this analogy, can be said to concern your commitment to the game itself, to its significance. This concerns the difference between voting in a bored and mechanical way just because everyone else is doing it, with little stake in the outcome (but observing the rules, your thin commitments), and voting "as if your life depended on it" with a full or deep (or one might even say "existential") commitment to the practice. (Getting married involves undertaking a set of commitments, but knowing what that set is tells us nothing about *how* one will act out that commitment. Professions of love, on the other hand, cannot be such professions if they only involve a legal pledge to fulfill future commitments.)⁹

With these distinctions in place, we can reformulate Nietzsche's problem and move on to *The Gay Science*. Certain events occur, certain practices are instituted and sustained, because human beings come to be committed to certain norms. These constraints and directives do not merely happen to people; the commitments must be undertaken as such, and they can be and often are abandoned.¹⁰ This undertaking can be somewhat legalistic and thin, but in all distinctly human forms

8. You are also not *playing* the game if you have only learned how to mimic the actions of others in ways that go undetected; you have not thereby *undertaken* to play the game.

9. I am relying heavily in this section on the compelling analysis offered by John Hangeland in his essay "Truth and Rule-Following," in Hangeland 2000.

10. They can be abandoned either because one comes to believe they ought to be or, much more likely, because few people any longer have a stake in the sustaining of the practice or enterprise. The commitment "dies out."

of life, we can also detect some basic, full-blooded or deep, "orienting" commitments.¹¹ It is usually by means of these latter that collective practices can be sustained over time, resist attack on them, and be resilient to some natural degeneration of intensity. Moreover, these depth commitments can be called basic, because in undertaking them, we are not fulfilling some *other* commitment, as if there could be a universal obligation to undertake some depth commitments. That would obviously start an infinite regress. There does, though, appear to be some hierarchical relation between thin and depth commitments. In speaking or acting, we commit ourselves to a variety of obligations that cannot all be fulfilled, and we need some orienting concern, some general sense of what is more or less important to us, if we are to resolve such conflicts. (As we shall see, it is, however, possible to get by with, let us say, a fairly "thin" depth commitment.)¹²

There is, though, no universal or neutral account of what justifies or warrants or even generally explains such depth commitments, although it already appears that such an orientation with regard to what matters or is of significance must be in some way prevolitional and prereflective (unless the basic commitment is *already* to volitional strength or to reflection). The most we can say is that the commitment is a kind of erotic attachment, as mysterious in its way as the appearance and disappearance of an inspiring eros. (*Depth* would then be another word for a passionate *identification* with a commitment.)¹³ As we discussed in the previous chapter, Nietzsche's invocation of eros is, like the Platonic Socrates', very broad and not limited at all to sexual desire. It is, however, important to him that such an aspiration be corporal. Something grips us, it is something we cannot help caring about; it would not be love if it were in the service of some instrumental strategy, and it involves far more than simply a felt desire. It involves a wholehearted, passionate commitment to and identification

11. As I note below, there may not be such deep, or what Harry Frankfurt calls "wholehearted," second-order evaluative attitudes toward first-order desires. See his essay "Identification and Wholeheartedness," in Frankfurt 1988 (164, 175-76).

12. Cf. the way Frankfurt, in another essay, "On Caring," discusses why caring should be understood as a "foundational activity" and as a "fundamentally constitutive feature of our lives" (1999, 162, 163).

13. See Frankfurt 1988, 174-76.

with a desired end. Finally, the commitment question and its psychological conditions are basic because any account of what it is to claim knowledge or recommend action presumes some such always already prior commitments. (So that even "being *generally* indifferent" to the priority or importance of desire satisfaction can count as basic in this way, although that picture can be quite odd, as odd as Bartleby's profound indifference in Herman Melville's story.)¹⁴

It would thus be correct to say that Nietzsche believes that the normative authority of any goal or object or practice is a result of a certain "projection" of value or self-imposition of authority. He is no realist about value. But this would also be a misleading characterization. No one faces a world of neutral objects and possibilities and "decides" with what sort of importance to invest some any more than one faces an array of persons and decides whom to invest with love. The question of the possibility and the nature of this investment of value that is not really an active projection is what I think Nietzsche means by his primordial psychology.¹⁵

We can also now say that Nietzsche believes, and is attempting to present evidence for, the claim that the depth of the most important shared commitments in the Christian-humanist form of life is "thinning out rapidly," and the urgent question of "what is possible now" must take some account of historical constraints that cannot be willed away but must somehow be acknowledged; must take account of the absence of any hope for a universal account of "what ought to be valued" and of what now threatens or enhances the possibility of any such ground commitment or erotic attachment.

These reformulated Nietzschean claims raise many questions. Why should we believe there are such commitments? Why can't we treat them as always subject to reflective, rational deliberation? Why are they so primordial that they cannot be directly addressed? That is, why

14. I am leaving out here a huge issue: the relevant way to account for these normative/psychological issues in becoming a competent speaker of a natural language. That involves a host of complicated issues, and at this point I am only tracking the core issue in Nietzsche's account, which is much more clearly psychological in its focus.

15. This would be a point of difference with Frankfurt, who makes a good deal out of the *making up* one's mind and the "*deciding*" language of identification.

can't we treat such attitudes as beliefs about what ought to be done, held for reasons that I or anyone can challenge? Is Nietzsche saying that no possibly action-guiding commitment *could* be a result of the exercise of deliberative reason, or is he just saying that, in the cases he is interested in, the empirical evidence is such that that is very unlikely? This would presumably mean that while it might be possible to explain an individual's commitment to, for example, moral equality by saying he became convinced that it was true, in the historical case at issue, given the conditions of slavish life and the ultimate content of the belief, such a rational explanation would be implausible.

Nietzsche addresses these issues in a number of different and sometimes very unusual ways. For one thing, he clearly admits that it is quite possible to lead a life without much depth commitment to anything, perhaps because the skeptical climate of late modernity has made such commitments seem impossible to sustain. As we shall see in the next chapter, one of the greatest difficulties in Nietzsche's account of such types—whom he calls the "last men," or "pale atheists"—is that their constant irony, reflexive sophistication, skepticism, and atheism would seem to qualify them as Nietzschean heroes. They certainly are not, but it is not at all easy to say just *what* they might have "gotten wrong" from Nietzsche's point of view. And Nietzsche is certainly not merely encouraging them to be *more* passionate in their skepticism or atheism.

Or, there are some who do not feel the call of any "intellectual conscience" with respect to what they find themselves caring a great deal about. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche laments the fact that "*no the great majority* it is not contemptible to believe this or that and to live accordingly *without* first becoming aware of the final and most certain reasons pro and con, and without even troubling themselves about such reasons afterwards" (GS, §2, 30). As indicated in the quotation, his "response" to this is just to characterize it as "contemptible [*verächtlich*]." But in general, Nietzsche's response is much like what we have already seen. For example, believing that I should refrain from acting on some possibility that I find in some experiential way compelling until I can assure myself that such an action would be in principle equally available to all, or until I can be assured that it produces the greatest good for the greatest number—to submit myself to this sort of regulation by considerations of others—cannot be shown to be an

unavoidable or some always already presupposed commitment.¹⁶ In fact, just as minimally described, such a self-constraint is, from the point of view Nietzsche is establishing, *prima facie*, bizarre.¹⁷

III.

The historical aspect of Nietzsche's primordial question needs to be stressed because the main difference between Nietzschean psychology on the one hand and both Greek and French psychology on the other stems from his insistence on the necessity of a historical dimension to any logos of any psyche, his assumption that psychic functioning is always a second nature, a kind of historical result or product. All this is so even though he never abandons the claim of the second *Untimely Meditation* that such historical self-consciousness is also extremely dangerous and can produce if not handled properly an enervating and immobilizing self-consciousness. He argues there that the "historical sense" (the objective knowledge of the contingent factors that shape a form of life) should never reign "without restraint [*ungehindert*]." That would be, while "just" in itself in some sense, also unjust to life and its demands, especially too "violent" and deflationary for the "mood of pious illusion" necessary for life, especially because "*it is only in love*, only when shaded by the illusion produced by love, that is to say in the unconditional faith in right and perfection, that man is creative" (UM, §95). Indeed, even the *prehistory* of mores involves a long process of training, acculturation, or even "breeding." Accordingly, any account of the soul and the soul's possibilities now must be folded into some sort of historical story.

So Nietzsche's books are not, as they could easily have been, called simply *essays*, *maxims*, or *pensées*. Many of them announce instead an *epochal* historical consciousness: *The Birth of Tragedy* (a book also,

16. I mean something like Kant's "fact of reason" argument, that the claims of reason, the insistent call of the demand for normative justification among subjects, is in some practical sense unavoidable in order to be free actors at all.

17. If he knew of the famous remark widely attributed to Jonathan Swift, he would cite it: "You do not reason a man out of something he was not reasoned into."

perhaps mostly, about the death of tragedy); *Daybreak; Beyond Good and Evil; The Twilight of the Idols (Götzen-Dämmerung)*. His major work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, announces the advent of the "last man" and seems to hold out hope for an "overman," a new future species apparently. And of course, anyone who has heard anything at all about Nietzsche has no doubt heard that he announced "the death of God" (GS, §125, 119-20). So our first task is to understand what Nietzsche means by adding this historical dimension to his notion of psychology.

We are familiar enough with the metaphor that runs through most of these claims. We might now say that in the Western world, psychoanalysis or even talk therapy itself is "dying out," or that any hope for communism has surely died, or that the epic or tragedies or romances have all died out, or that ordinary language philosophy or semiotics have all but died out, and so on. (The image turns up in authors such as Giorgio Vasari and Johann Joachim Winckelmann, too; it is not unique to Nietzsche.) But it is not at all clear what we mean when we say this, since we usually do not mean that some decisive refutation or new discovery has emerged, that what was once believed true is now known to be false, like the cases of astrology or alchemy (if this is even the right account of these events). Successful polemics and discoveries and changing "material conditions" may play their parts but not always the decisive roles, especially when the death and birth issues concern values and norms.

IV.

Looking at the primordially of psychology in terms of the primordially of orienting, normative, depth commitments and framing the question about our commitments historically, in terms of their life and now imminent death, brings us to a new sort of assessment and prophecy, a more self-conscious and comprehensive treatment of these "life and death" issues, with the 1882 publication of *The Gay Science*. This is the book that suddenly presents all the images and formulations so famously identified with Nietzsche's name, many for the very first time: nihilism (GS, §346), "overman" (GS, §143), and in paragraph 125, we hear the first famous announcement by the "crazy man [der tolle Mensch]" that God has died and that we have killed him. And we learn

for the first time of the strange image that appears to embody figuratively Nietzsche's best hope for some sort of reorientation, some recovery or convalescence from the illness caused by such a death and such a failure of desire, a reorientation and an attitude supposedly provoked by the thought experiment about "the eternal return of the same" (GS, §341, 194-95).

If we are to understand Nietzsche's claims in this transitional work of 1882¹⁸ about what has now ended or died and what might possibly begin, what is no longer possible, and what is now, uniquely in human time, possible,¹⁹ we must be able to understand his claim for a radical break with all the authoritative normal "sciences" of the day. This is already apparent in that most unusual title. For what sort of science could support the predicate *gay* or *joyous* (*fröhliche Wissenschaft*)?²⁰

The title of the book has a number of resonances. There is, first of all, Emerson, whom Nietzsche always talked about as if he were a

18. The publication of the book also marks a personal epoch for Nietzsche. Or so he says himself. The back cover of the 1882 edition proclaims that "with this book a series of Friedrich Nietzsche's writings comes to a close, the collective aim of which has been to set up a new picture and ideal of the free spirit." The books he cites as belonging to that period (this tumultuous period from 1876 to 1882) are *Human, All Too Human*; *The Wanderer and His Shadow* (later published as part of *Human, All Too Human*); *Daybreak: Thoughts about the Prejudices of Morality*; and *The Gay Science*. His themes after this period become broader, the conditions relevant to becoming a free spirit more comprehensive, as he begins to write the three books most responsible for his reputation, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *The Genealogy of Morals*.

19. Nietzsche clearly did not think these epochal moments happened very often. The most obvious forerunner in this respect was Socrates. And there is little doubt that Nietzsche thought he could be the Socrates for his own Alexandrine age, the legislator of new value. Unlike Socrates, Nietzsche took himself to be aware that this could not happen as a result of rational reflection but was essentially a rhetorical achievement and in that sense an aesthetic as well as a political task.

20. I am discussing here what I have also discussed in a more extensive way in Pippin 1999b and Pippin 2000b. The controversial claim at the core of this discussion is that the melancholy of the "madman" who announces "the death of God" in GS is treated by Nietzsche as a symptom for which we need the right diagnosis, not as a fate that we are all (including Nietzsche himself) condemned to bear. Appreciating this point and all its implications is the beginning of any successful attempt to understand in what sense a *Wissenschaft* can be *fröhlich*. I summarize that "death of God" interpretation in chapter 3.

seventeenth-century Frenchman. A line from Emerson's essay "History" was used as an epigraph to the first edition of *The Gay Science*, and it raises again what I have called the Montaigne problem: "To the poet, to the philosopher, to the saint, all things are friendly and sacred, all events profitable, all days holy, all men divine."²¹ While it is not possible that Nietzsche knew that Emerson had in his journals also called himself a "Professor of the Joyous Science," Emerson did use the same expression in a lecture in 1842, and Nietzsche could have known that.²²

Another likely source is Thomas Carlyle, who in an 1849 article explicitly contrasted a "gay science" with the "dismal sciences," by which he meant a science that "finds the secret of this universe in 'supply and demand,' and reduces the duty of human governors to that of letting men alone," and so "a dreary, desolate and, indeed, quite abject and distressing" science; "what we might call, by way of eminence, the dismal science."²³

When such sciences are called "dismal" in this way, the point is not usually to claim that the results of such an investigation make us gloomy or depressed. The point is broader: that such an assessment of human conduct and of value itself already reflects a somewhat low-minded orientation, even a skeptical reduction of noneconomic value to market or exchange value. Likewise, a gay or joyous science is not one the results of which are supposed to make us feel better, happier, and it cannot possibly be a matter just of a more cheerful focus, as if a Nietzschean "look on the bright side of things" were being proposed. Apparently, a different sort of claim to knowledge itself, perhaps even a claim on our attention so different that it won't have even a family resemblance to traditional claims to knowledge, is announced. The problem Nietzsche wants to pose, and so the task for these new scientists—how to *remain* "brave, proud, and magnanimous animals" even in the face of what they discover about motivation and meaning—is what I have called his Montaigne aspirations: to "*know* how to control their own pleasure and pain" (*GM*, I, §1, 12). How does

21. Emerson 1970, 8.

22. Emerson 1972, 367ff. See also Kaufmann 1974, 7-10.

23. Carlyle 1849, 530-31.

one do that? What sort of knowledge is that?²⁴ How do we free ourselves from the grip of a picture of reflection and "doing justice" that seems enervating in its results?

This is all connected to the clearest historical resonance of the title of *The Gay Science* rather than to a new social science or new metaphysics, and it again recalls a French "psychological" influence, this time more archaic: the recollection of *la gaya scienza* and so of twelfth-century Provençal lyric poetry, the earliest poetry extant in a modern European language, and of the troubadours' art of the fourteenth century (*Leys d'amors*). Given this reference, what, then, does *such* a free spirit know in mastering *la gaya scienza*? Perhaps, as Nietzsche explains, something like what one would have to know to write such lyrics, or "love as passion (our European specialty)" (echoes here very clearly from Stendahl), "invented in the knightly poetry of Provence, by those magnificent, inventive human beings of the 'gai saber.' Europe is indebted to these men for so many things, almost for itself" (*BGE*, §260, 156). The gay science is, then, a knowledge of erotics; not so much a knowledge of what love is as how to love and so live well, and this not technically or strategically but in some way that "does justice" to the requirements of love and life.

But whatever the original troubadours knew, and so whatever Nietzsche is trying to rediscover, it comes now with what he calls intellectual and moral "tension," the burden of our "intellectual conscience" or intensely critical self-consciousness, a burden fully and often acknowledged by Nietzsche. And yet when we look for what would satisfy this condition, what would give us what Nietzsche says in *Daybreak* is utterly lacking in our education, "those brave and

24. There are mostly indirect, brief allusions to the issue that the book's title announces. A typical paragraph is *GS*, §327, where the assumption of an inherent *seriousness* in all knowledge (what is later and often figuratively discussed as "the spirit of gravity") is a "prejudice." Not much is said about what overcoming such a prejudice would amount to, and the issue is complicated by Nietzsche's use of the same image when he introduces the Eternal Return notion as, possibly, "the greatest weight" (*GS*, §341, 194). Its *not* being so experienced is what turns out to be most important in the thought experiment. There is a very suggestive discussion of this and other similar issues in an article by Marco Brusotti (1997b). His book on the topic (1997a) is also invaluable.

rigorous attempts to *live* in this or that morality" (D, 116, T), we find yet again a cascade of endless, elusive, and highly figurative formulations.

Such a condition for transvaluation suggests a complicated combination of what he calls a *lightheartedness or cheerfulness* (*Heiterheit*; GS, §343) combined—somehow—with a certain sort of "heaviness" or *gravitas* (GS, §341). Such paradoxical formulations start early in Nietzsche's writing and continue late. What is needed was first thought of as a "tragic pessimism" that would also be an "aesthetic justification of existence," a pessimism but of strength; or a "musical Socrates"; or the ability to "dream" without first having to "sleep" (GS, §59, 70). The later preface to *The Gay Science* announces Zarathustra (itself an "awesomely aweless" book) in such a typically dual way: "*incipit tragoedia*," but then "Beware! Something utterly wicked and mischievous is announced here: *incipit parodia*, no doubt!" (GS, preface, 4).²⁵

In many of these images, the same theme is announced, the same "tension" manifested. As Nietzsche would recognize from his reading of Plato (especially *The Republic*), there remains a deep tension between all forms of eros and its satisfactions—often private, incommensurable with others', always only one's own—and *justice*, the older word for an intellectual conscience, wanting what is fit or mete or fair to want, not what one simply happens to desire passionately. How to measure and assess this counterclaim of "intellectual conscience," in the right way, and how to effect its realization, is what Nietzsche meant by "know[ing] how to control [one's] own pleasure and pain" (GM, I, §1, 11) and poses again the larger question of how to "address" possible commitments that cannot be addressed. "Dreaming" without having to "sleep," loving an ideal without having simply to ignore the demands of reflective adequacy, the possible claims of other ideals, is his figurative statement of the problem. The "tension" formulations certainly indicate that the growth of our intellectual conscience means that our deepest (or "depth") commitments are not immune to the claims of reflection and justification, as if one could be simply strong enough to legislate in defiance of the claims of reflection. (Again, satisfying these claims of conscience is not treated as transcendently necessary or anything like that. They have simply taken root; we would *now* be ashamed to go

on without them.)²⁶ Indeed, without that tension, there can finally be no dissatisfaction and therefore no "self-overcoming"; only the easily satisfied "last men" "who have invented happiness" and "who blink."²⁷ There are other such formulations. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, the nature of Aeschylus's Prometheus is "at the same time Apollonian and Dionysian," and that "can be expressed in a conceptual formula" that recalls the theme just introduced: "*All that exists is just and unjust and is equally justified in both*" (BT, 51). The promise, in the history essay of the *Untimely Meditations*, to be able to employ history "for life," is also stated explicitly and carefully in the language of justice, as it must be lest this appeal to "history only for the sake of life" turns out to be a call merely for the ideological use of history, even for wishful thinking.²⁸

26. This set of issues is similar to what Bernard Williams discussed in his 1985 book as the relation between reflection (intellectual conscience here) and ethical knowledge (robust commitments here, knowing what is most important) and as the danger that reflection can "destroy" such knowledge. He argues, like Nietzsche, that this is based on several false premises, especially that ethical knowledge is of the propositional sort that could be destroyed by reflection. The contrasting picture he paints of a kind of ethical "confidence" is quite in the spirit of Nietzsche on the health proposed by a gay science (as the mention of Nietzsche on p. 171 indicates). See Bernard Williams 1985, 148, 168–71.

27. Again, the interpretive direction is suggested by an image, this time a Homeric one, a "bow" that must have as much "tension" as possible in order to shoot well, achieve the "target." (We can be said to have "lost" this tension in the late modern age. The image will reappear in chapter 3.) See also my discussion in Pippin 2000a. Nietzsche's appeal to this image means that what would traditionally be categorized as his "political philosophy" starts with a premise that concerns the prepolitical conditions of politics, where politics is understood either as the attempt to determine a legitimate use of publicly controlled coercive force or as a common deliberative attempt to determine the common good. That is, this prepolitical, "psychological" condition cannot be addressed, at least not directly and immediately, by "political" action; it is its presupposition. (Addressing them at all seems to require the highly problematic, dangerous images of "breeding" that we discussed before.) This is a problem of "political psychology" that is as old as Plato's *Republic* but that has been eclipsed by the intense focus that modern political thought devotes to the question of rational legitimacy. I discuss the status of political psychology further in a forthcoming book.

28. Cf. Nietzsche's reminder in *Twilight of the Idols*: "A yearning for strong faith is not a proof of a strong faith, but rather its opposite" (TI, 198). In GS, §324, 181, Nietzsche mentions the most sweeping category in all his accounts of this "tension" problem and announces that what is distinct about his position is that "life" will now serve for him as a "means of knowledge," and this is what will make possible a "gay"

25. Cf. Brusotti 1997b on the tension or oscillation (the "*Pendelbewegung*") between *Redlichkeit* ("forthrightness") and *Kunst* ("art") in Nietzsche (Brusotti 1997b, 219).

In particular, in an earlier passage from *Daybreak*, Nietzsche had noted that "our passion," "the drive to knowledge," "has become too strong for us to be able to want happiness without knowledge or the happiness of a strong, firmly rooted delusion; even to imagine such a state of things is painful to us! Restless discovering and divining has such an attraction for us and has grown as indispensable to us as is to the lover his unrequited love, which he would at no price relinquish for a state of indifference—perhaps, indeed, we too are *unrequited lovers!*" (D, 184). There is no better image of philosophical eros than such an "unrequited love," since it more or less explicitly dominates philosophy's self-image from Socrates on, rendering it useless and even comical in the eyes of nonphilosophers. Its greatest modern proponent was Kant, who claimed not only that human beings are fated to ask questions that they cannot answer but that even the finality of the results of *The Critique of Pure Reason* in setting the limits of knowledge would not put an end to such longing. Indeed, even the resolutely prosaic Kant was inspired to use a variation of the image: "We shall always return to metaphysics as to a beloved one with whom we have had a quarrel."²⁹ This in effect defines Nietzsche's answer to the question of the philosophical type: it is someone who can sustain an entire lifetime of unrequited love, something that, Nietzsche knew better than anyone, makes the philosophical life a natural subject for comedy.

V.

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche finds a way of posing his basic question that allows him to do more than repeat what looks like an interminable aporia. The goal of doing some justice to "love's illusions" (and so an injustice) as well as to our intellectual conscience or to justice is again suggested, but again elliptically and elusively. What is needed now, he says several times, is not some ability to believe whatever will

life. This must be coupled with GS, §123, 118, where knowledge itself will no longer be a "mere means," not a means to salvation or power or virtue but itself a great "passion [*Leidenschaft*]." Cf. Brusotti's 1997b discussion again.

29. I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Alan Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), A850/B878.

make us strong, or any such fantasy, but a way to "incorporate" or "embody" knowledge (*das Wissen sich einverleiben*) and to make it "instinctive" (GS, §11, 37). Or we (and I think he means here "we moderns," we heirs of the Socratic enlightenment) have gambled on finding the answer to a difficult question: "To what extent can truth stand to be incorporated [*Einverleibung*?]—that is the question; that is the experiment" (GS, §110, 112).³⁰

So, following out our "What makes the 'life' of values possible?" question has led us, by attention to the question of what such a "knowledge" would be, or how a science could be joyous, even if also "in bounds" and "just," to an even more unusual question: "To what extent can truth stand to be incorporated?" (GS, §110, 112). That is, we know that we are dealing with something more than being persuaded by a convincing argument, more than some acknowledgment that a commitment to act would be reasonable. And we know also that being incapable of such incorporation is a frequent characterization of what we now cannot do with what we take to be true. The reason for this incapacity has to do somehow with a failure of desire and so with Nietzschean claims about contemporary conditions for and the current nature of human desire. Here is a typical (because typically metaphorical) general statement of the theme from the second of the *Untimely Meditations*: "In the end, modern man drags around with him a huge quantity of indigestible stones of knowledge, which then, as in the fairy tale, can sometimes be heard rumbling about inside him. And in this rumbling there is betrayed the most characteristic quality of modern man: the remarkable antithesis between an interior which fails to correspond to any exterior and an exterior which fails to correspond to any interior—an antithesis unknown to people of earlier times" (UM, 78).

This all is said to mean that "we moderns" do not have a culture; our culture is not a living thing, it is just the ingestion without digestion of our own past. We are "walking encyclopedias," not participants in a cultural enterprise; the "whole of modern culture" looks like a book titled "Handbook of subjective culture for outward barbarians" (UM, 79).

30. Cf. Pascal's version of how to achieve such incorporation, in Pascal 1963, §816, §821. On custom and habit, see §81.

This notion of incorporation, of some normative attitude's becoming wholly incorporated, part of us, here evoked by images of digestion, is not a question or an experiment wholly foreign to us. We all have heard someone say, "Yes, I knew that; but I guess I really didn't *know* it." And the problem of judgment lies quite close to this issue, too, as in knowing the difference between homicide and manslaughter (or knowing anything "in theory" or by definition) but not really knowing it in the sense of knowing how to apply the distinction successfully to difficult cases. (Pascal's famous distinction between "l'esprit géométrique" and "l'esprit de finesse" is also relevant.) The distinction between know-how knowledge and knowing-that also seems relevant; propositional knowledge about what to do, such as how to shoot a basketball, only counts as knowledge if embodied, when a part of genuine and largely unreflective know-how. And there is the familiar psychoanalytic case in which the analyst cannot simply tell an analysand the meaning of his neurotic symptoms. Even though the propositions would be true and would be correctly (literally) understood, they would not "really" be understood. A long therapeutic process must have gone on, especially a process of transference and countertransference, before that sort of analytic truth can be fully known, or "digested." Something of all of these uses is being invoked by Nietzsche, especially the last sort of case, but it is difficult to sort out what he is claiming.

VI.

As we have also seen, the conditions under which this could happen are quite complex. Such a revolutionary experiment cannot be arbitrary or wishful thinking, an appeal merely to imagination; "justice" must be done to what has developed as our "intellectual conscience." And that means that the sort of contempt that Nietzsche wants to inspire in us about our present state must account for that state properly; must presume an adequate genealogy, rest on a credible account of psychological meaning. However, as we have also seen, there is no particular reason to think that such an account of real psychological meaning is of any use "from the perspective of life." Such a truth (say, about the slavish origins of Christian and later liberal-democratic value) cannot without further ado be "incorporated," made "instinctual," amount to

a *new* sort of depth commitment, as that notion was laid out earlier in this chapter. Sometimes Nietzsche seems to think we will be able to take a kind of pride, retrieve a kind of dignity, from what amounts to our courage, our willingness to face the groundlessness of these commitments in ways no other age has. Again, the early Heidegger is relevant here, since for him, too, death serves as this new god, its utter nothingness at least the occasion of resoluteness and authenticity, and so a kind of nobility.³¹ And again there is a similar difficulty. It is hard to see that any course of action or new project is suggested by such a pride. Such a satisfaction in our honesty on its own inspires no course of action or resistance or civilizational project. As Nietzsche puts it in *The Gay Science*, the question remains "whether science is able to furnish goals of action after having proved that it can take such goals away and annihilate them" (GS, §7, 35).³² If that truth is *all* that we now stand by, it reduces us to the perspective of that "animal" Nietzsche often mentions when he wants to remind us of how low-minded and practically dangerous such a view, and even his own genealogies, can be: frogs.

What we need of course is *la gaya scienza*, and so far we seem condemned to perpetual introductory circles, careful about what it is not, wary of hastily defining it. But we have come far enough to know what it might mean; that it is a kind of poetry, a love poetry meant to call to mind an extremely idealized love and engaged in not for purely aesthetic reasons but for the sake of some conversion, or seduction, and the attachments and commitments it inspires are a "condition of life." Not surprisingly, there are suggestions, or rather hints, about Nietzsche's response to these concerns, but again, they are implied by a dense and dramatically erotic image. In more traditional philosophical terms, Nietzsche often suggests that we start going wrong when we think of ourselves as having exposed such true groundlessness "underneath" the deceptive appearances, that *this* is what the claim of intellectual conscience has fared for us. And Nietzsche clearly wants to discard as misleading that simple distinction between appearance and

31. See the valuable discussion by Heinrich Meier, "Der Tod als Gott: Eine Anmerkung zu Martin Heidegger [Death as God: A Remark on Martin Heidegger]," in Meier 2003.

32. This is of course the question that Max Weber answers so firmly in the negative in his "Science as Vocation."

reality. He is well known for claiming, in his own miniversion of the self-education of the human spirit in *The Twilight of the Idols*, that "the true world is gone; which world is left? The illusory one perhaps? . . . But not *we got rid of the illusory world along with the true one!*" (TI, 171).

Such a theme introduces far too many issues to allow an adequate treatment here. But since this issue comes up so frequently in *The Gay Science* and is so essential in everything discussed thus far, a brief final discussion of it might at least indicate the direction Nietzsche is suggesting if not a detailed road map showing how to get there.

The image that sums all this up is mentioned at the end of the second-edition preface of *The Gay Science*:

And as for our future, one will hardly find us again on the paths of those Egyptian youths who make temples unsafe at night, embrace statues, and want by all means to unveil, uncover, and put into a bright light whatever is kept concealed for good reasons. No, we have grown sick of this bad taste, this will to truth, to "truth at any price," this youthful madness in the love of truth: we are too experienced, too serious, too jovial, too burned, too deep for that. . . . We no longer believe that truth remains truth when one pulls off the veil: we have lived too much to believe this. Today we consider it a matter of decency not to wish to see everything naked, to be present everywhere, to understand and "know" everything. (GS, preface, 8)

He then anticipates the beginning image of *Beyond Good and Evil*, but now more graphically. "Perhaps truth is a woman who has grounds for not showing her grounds. Perhaps her name is—to speak Greek—Baubo" (ibid.). Baubo is a renowned, clowning, ribald goddess of female sexuality, famous for having made Demeter laugh when that goddess was withholding fertility from the world.³³ She is often portrayed simply as the lower half of the female body, a face on a pregnant belly, a large hat covering the top, and as the bearer of the suggestion that the well-being of the world depends on the satisfaction of female sexuality, something itself lighthearted and joyous. (She

33. Nietzsche concludes the "Epilogue" to *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* with the same sort of reference to Baubo and uses virtually the same words as the GS passage. See *NW*, 282.

is occasionally presented as the personification of female genitalia,³⁴ and this also jokingly. In fact, a good pictorial summary of her image might be René Magritte's *Le Viol*.³⁵ That is, she is another avatar of *Heiterkeit* and a *fröhliche Wissenschaft* and suggests a faith in the "eternal return" of life, an affirmation even in the face of the tragic loss of Persephone.³⁶ It is also another suggestion that the self-image philosophers have of themselves as courageously trying to see what lies hidden is better understood as an obscene attempt to look up a woman's dress. It is more inappropriate and grotesque than impossible (in Kant's sense of impossible, say), as misguided and crude as trying to find what lies "behind" our basic commitments. (In other words, the way Nietzsche himself is often read, as if a brute desire for power motivates religion, philosophy, poetry, etc.) And one should note immediately, in the grave-robber image, Nietzsche is not denying that there *are* hidden treasures, as well as preserved corpses, of course, inside the pyramids. He appears to be objecting to some kind of abstract separation between inside and outside, denying that either element of the image can be understood without the other, denying that one should be reduced to the other, denying that what should be claimed about the outside or surface is simply the inside or depth.

This suggests one last echo from the original meaning of *la gaya scienza*. In *The Gay Science* (§59), Nietzsche recalls the simple fact that the poetic language of love cannot survive (without loss of meaning) any radical literalization. It is impossible and quite wrongheaded to understand such figurative or poetical expressions as appearances or distortions plastered onto some sober secular truth. Here especially "the truth" does not remain *truth* when the veils are pulled aside, as if the idealizations and appeals to imagination would "mean the same" when "honestly" expressed as some adaptation in an evolutionary game; or if

34. This is particularly stressed in Georges Devereux's valuable book (1983), which, besides being an exhaustive account of the details of Baubo in mythology and a summary of many different interpretations, also contains a good catalog of illustrations. (I am grateful to Klaus Reichert for steering me to Devereux's book.) It may sometimes seem that Nietzsche's many erotic images are fairly abstract or divorced from genital sexuality, but the Baubo references indicate that he was well aware of the corporeal dimensions of the metaphors and similes.

35. See Walker 1988, 235–36.

36. See the discussion in Kofman 1986 (254–59).

expressed in Oedipal, psychoanalytic terms; or if translated into some naturalistic interest in power or satisfaction.³⁷ It is possible to say that there is some sort of biological drive behind our efforts at reproduction, for example, and even behind the creation of social rules for that process, but it is not possible to imagine such a language of need and drive *employed in an address to another*, as a practical proposal to another, within what Nietzsche has called the context of "life." And yet all of this does not mean that we require some sort of idealized *distortion* of such a nature in order to be able to bear each other's claims on one another. Here the language of appearance and reality breaks down in a way that Nietzsche clearly signals as a model for what he means by, hopes for, in a *gayza scienza*, where that breakdown is taken to heart. We need, he seems to be suggesting, a philosophical language like this erotic language, not a flowery embellishment of a literal truth but one that has overcome thinking of the matter in those alternatives. This would be the "perspective of life" and would be a language capable of appealing and amusing Demeter, the language of Baubo.

And this way of putting the point makes it clear that Nietzsche also imagines that the experiment in so addressing one another might easily and contingently fail and fail catastrophically; it may just be the case that a sustainable attachment to life and to one another requires the kind of more standard, prosaic "illusion" (a lie) that we have now also rendered impossible. But like all desire, Nietzsche's is, as he says, "unjust" and does not measure itself by the rationally probable. Hence Nietzsche's unusual rhetoric: at once an attempt to shame and to inspire, all by merely manifesting his own aspiration, by offering an image of a life in which what are now taken to be all the possible reflective means of sustaining desire have been lost but that rejects any idea of a merely apparent life's having been revealed. If so, then the most sweeping expression for what is now needed will turn out to be as difficult as it sounds: to sustain the intellectual conscience constitutive of a *philosophical life*, but now without what had been traditionally understood as *philosophy*, the exposure of the reality behind, hidden beneath, the appearances.

37. It is a ironic that a large number of interpretations of Nietzsche, especially the so-called naturalist ones, do precisely what he is here forbidding.

CHAPTER THREE

Modernity as a Psychological Problem

I.

Nietzsche's best-known attempt to break the hold that a philosophical or moral picture might have over us is genealogy. At least, genealogy can be liberating in this way if such a genealogy can show us that practices and norms could have been very much otherwise, that some assumption or norm we take for granted as inevitable and unavoidable in fact has a contingent, quite avoidable origin, and an origin considerably more complicated than any notion of "rational commitments" or "reflective endorsement" or "faith in revelation" or the like would allow.

However, I have been trying to suggest that sometimes Nietzsche speculates figuratively on unappreciated, ignored psychological elements of the "picture" itself. Wittgenstein's famous notion of a picture's having a hold on us is largely metaphorical, but Nietzsche explores the picture as a picture or an image and plays with the figurative details of the picture itself as a way of defamiliarizing it, changing the way we imagine it, depriving it of its "aura," we might say. He does this with a picture of the value of truth and with a picture of the ends or values of science. This amounts to a kind of rhetorical argument by analogy,