Keith Ansell-Pearson

NIETZSCHE, THE SUBLIME, AND THE SUBLIMITIES OF PHILOSOPHY: AN INTERPRETATION OF *DAWN*[1]

Abstract: This essay is an exploration of how the concept of the sublime is deployed by Nietzsche in *Dawn* (1881). This text represents a high point in' Nietzsche's thinking on the sublime. Nietzsche, I show, wants us to purify ourselves of the origins and sources of our desire for the sublime because the higher feelings associated with it are bound up with humanity's investment in an imaginary world. However, he does not propose that we simply jettison the sublime but, rather, seek new experiences of it and these will centre on knowledge and our right to self-experimentation. I suggest that Nietzsche is in effect opening up new "spaces" and "times" for thinking. My interpretation aims to show in what way Nietzsche commits himself to fashioning new sublimities of philosophy, including expanding our appreciation of the beautiful. By focusing on the topic of the sublime I hope to reveal in what way *Dawn* represents an important moment in the evolution of Nietzsche's conception of the role and tasks of philosophy.

Keywords: The Sublime, Fear, Dread, the Beautiful, the Ugly, Knowledge, Consolations and Sublimities of Philosophy, Dawn.

Zusammenfassung: Der Aufsatz untersucht, wie der Begriff des Erhabenen von Nietzsche in *Morgenröthe* (1881) verwendet wird, wo er einen Höhepunkt in Nietzsches Denken des Erhabenen bildet. Nietzsche will, so zeige ich, dass wir uns selbst von den Ursprüngen und Quellen unseres Strebens nach dem Erhabenen reinigen, weil die es begleitenden höheren Gefühle mit menschlichen Investitionen in eine imaginäre Welt verbunden sind. Er will jedoch nicht, dass wir das Erhabene einfach über Bord werfen, sondern vielmehr nach neuen Erfahrungen des Erhabenen suchen, wobei das Wissen und unser Recht auf Selbstversuche dabei im Zentrum stehen. Ich meine, dass Nietzsche dadurch neue ‚Räume' und ‚Zeiten' für das Denken öffnet. Meine Interpretation soll zeigen, auf welche Weise Nietzsche sich damit auf die Gestaltung neuer Sublimitäten der Philosophie festlegt, einschließlich der Erweiterung unseres Gefallens am Schönen. Durch die Fokussierung auf das Erhabene hoffe ich zeigen zu können, inwiefern *Morgenröthe* einen bedeutenden Moment in der Evolution von Nietzsches Auffassung über Rolle und Aufgaben der Philosophie darstellt.

Schlagwörter: Das Erhabene, Furcht, Angst, das Schöne, das Hässliche, Wissen, Tröstungen und Sublimitäten der Philosophie, Morgenröte.

[1] This is a substantially revised version of an essay that first appeared in *The Agonist*. For helpful comments on earlier versions of the essay I am grateful to Christa Davis Acampora, Rainer Hanshe, and Paul S. Loeb.

> We philosophers and "free spirits" feel … as if a new dawn shone upon us; our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, premonitions, expectation … the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an "open sea." (GS 343, KSA 3.574)[2]

Introduction

The concept of the sublime – as well as a concern with the sublimities of philosophy – occupies a significant role in Nietzsche's thinking. It is surprising, therefore, that the topic has received scant treatment in the literature.[3] In this essay I explore how the sublime is employed in one particular text, namely, *Dawn* (1881).[4] My contention is that this text is especially revealing for understanding how at this point in his intellectual development Nietzsche is in search of new possibilities for the sublime as a concept and an experience. After an opening section on Nietzsche and the sublime I situate Nietzsche's thinking in the wider context of the concerns of the book as a whole. In particular, I show how for him it's a matter of purifying ourselves of the origins and sources of our feelings and desire for the sublime because the higher feelings associated with it are bound up with humanity's investment in an imaginary world: An "exalted humanity" is full of self-loathing and this needs to be conquered. In the third section I attend to book five of the text and show that for Nietzsche new experiences of the sublime centre on knowledge and our right to self-experimentation. Through knowledge a purified humanity can conquer the fear and anxiety that

---

[2] The Gay Science, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York 1974.

[3] With the exception, of course, of the tragic sublime in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nuno Nabais devotes one chapter to the topic of the sublime and in the context of a treatment of Nietzsche's place in the "aesthetics of postmodernity", The Metaphysics of the Tragic, London 2006, pp. 1–37. In her book The Sublime, Terror, and Human Difference, London 2007, Christine Battersby devotes two chapters to it, one on BT and one on developments after BT (chapters 8 and 9), with three pages devoted to D. Although she provides a number of important insights, her analysis provides no treatment of the 'Untimelies' and there are several errors in her appreciation; for example, her claim that in the late writings the language of the 'sublim' has taken over that of 'erhaben' cannot be sustained. Nietzsche uses the 'sublim' in HH 137, KSA 2.130 f. (1878) and GS 313, KSA 3.548 (1882) and it features extensively in his notes of 1880 (see Nachlass 1880, 1[129], KSA 9.33, 3[128], KSA 9.89, 6[58], KSA 9.208, 6[229], KSA 9.257); he also continues to make use of 'erhaben' in his late writings. In addition, the brief treatment she offers of D (pp. 180–2) is too superficial. On the sublime in BT see also the excellent study of Matthew Rampley, Nietzsche, Aesthetics, and Modernity, Cambridge 2000.

[4] Dawn: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality, trans. Brittain Smith, Stanford, forthcoming. The sublime as a noun is employed in the following aphorisms of the text, with a concentration in book five: 33, 45, 130, 169, 192, 210, 423, 427, 435, 449, 459, 461, 542, 553, 570; and notions of elevation and exaltation are deployed extensively throughout the text.

have captivated previous humanity and taught it to kneel down before the incomprehensible. I also indicate at the complicated character this knowledge must have for us. I take issue with a recent utilisation of Nietzsche in the service of a "philosophy of fear". In the fourth section I explore how Nietzsche uses the sublime to open up what philosophy now means for us and what it does in relation to the emerging science of knowledge. I suggest that Nietzsche is in effect opening up news "spaces" and "times" for thinking: Our task is now to take our time and go slowly in our search; we are no longer looking for a single answer to our questions or some ultimate solution to the riddles of existence. My interpretation aims to show in what way Nietzsche commits himself to fashioning new sublimities of philosophy, including expanding our appreciation of the beautiful. *Dawn* is an unduly neglected text in Nietzsche's corpus, especially in English-speaking reception.[5] By focusing on the topic of the sublime I hope to reveal in what way it represents an important moment in the evolution of his conception of the role and tasks of philosophy.

I. Nietzsche and the Sublime

According to Baldine Saint-Girons, in an entry on the sublime in Oxford University Press's *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, the sublime, which belongs to old Greek and Latin traditions, has had two main renaissances: the first at the height of classicism and the second in the late twentieth century with the rise of postmodernism.[6] She also notes that the sublime is elaborated at a time of unprecedented change: "In a period of crisis affecting all values, does not the sublime correspond to a will to recapture what dazzles and deserves to dazzle?"[7] At the risk of simplifying what is a very complicated development, it is possible to locate in Nietzsche's thinking three different perspectives on the sublime corresponding to the three main phases of his intellectual development: in his early period he writes as an advocate of the sublime as that which we need to hold

[5] In German Nietzsche-Forschung see the important study by Marco Brusotti Brusotti, Die Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis. Philosophie und ästhetische Lebensgestaltung bei Nietzsche von *Morgenröthe* bis *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Berlin 1997, and "Erkenntniss als Passion. Nietzsches Denkweg zwischen Morgenröthe und der Fröhliche Wissenschaft", Nietzsche-Studien, 26, 1997, pp. 199–225. Brusotti does not, however, focus on the sublime or the sublimities of philosophy.

[6] The 'classic' postmodern texts on the sublime are Jean-Francois Lyotard's essay on "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde", in: Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Inhuman:Reflections on Time, trans. Geoffrey Bennington & Rachel Bowlby, Oxford 1991, Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg, California 1994. See also the volume of essays, edited by Jean-Francois et. al (1993), Of the Sublime: Presence in Question, Albany 1993.

[7] Baldine Saint-Girons, "The Sublime from Longinus to Montesquieu", in: Michael Kelly (ed.), The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics, volume four, Oxford 1998, pp. 322–26, p. 323.

onto; in his middle period, which is the focus of this essay, he adopts a more sober attitude toward the sublime; and in his late writings he is highly critical of our attraction to the sublime and warns against it (for example, the case of Wagner's music). I shall say something about the latter in my conclusion.

In the early to mid 1870s Nietzsche has, in essence, figured the sublime in two principal ways. First, he treats it as the "tragic sublime" in *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which nauseous thoughts about the dreadful and absurd character of existence, as human beings encounter it, are transformed into mental images with which it is possible to live, and in which the sublime represents the artistic taming of the dreadful and the ridiculous or the comic the artistic discharge of the dreadful. And, secondly, as the aesthetic concept of greatness in the unpublished materials of 1872–3 and the *Untimely Meditations*, especially the second untimely on *On the Utility and Liability of History for Life*,[8] in which the lesson imparted is the need to "hold onto the sublime" (*das Festhalten des Erhabenen*) (HL 5, KSA 1.280; see also Nachlass 1872/73 19[22], KSA 7.423).[9] Nietzsche advances this lesson in the context of his criticism of 'the weak personality', a notion he borrows from the Austrian dramatist and critic Franz Grillparzer (1791–1872). The modern human being, Nietzsche argues, has become a strolling spectator of life who lives in the midst of a cosmopolitan carnival of gods, arts, and customs. Great wars and revolutions can hardly detain such a human for more than a fleeting moment. Moreover, war seems to only exist for the sake of history and the journalism that consumes it. We want only more history and never real events. Nietzsche expresses it morally (*Moralisch*): we are no longer capable of holding onto the sublime (*das Erhabene*) because our deeds are merely sudden claps (*Schläge*) of thunder and not rolling thunder (HL 5, KSA 1.280). The sublime is being used by Nietzsche to indicate a dedication to that which is truly important and significant over the fleeting and fashionable. In addition, he appeals at this time to the sublime as a way of drawing attention to the narrowness of life, of the discerning and judging that prevail in German scholarship, including its reliance on domestic and homely virtues, and he contrasts the elevation to greatness afforded by the sublime with what he calls "Philistine homeliness" (KSA 1.778–82, especially pp. 779–80). In his thinking on the birth of tragic thought Nietzsche is concerned with how the "truth" of reality is concealed: the sublime (*das Erhabene*) and the ridiculous represent a step beyond the world of beautiful illusion since both contain a contradiction: "they are not at all congruent with truth: they are a *concealment* (*Umschleierung*) *of truth*" (KSA 1.595). In *Dawn*

[8] In Unfashionable Observations, trans. Richard T. Gray, Stanford 1995.

[9] For further insight see Keith Ansell-Pearson, "'Holding on to the Sublime': Nietzsche on Philosophy's Perception and Search for Greatness", in: Herman Siemens / Vasti Roodt (eds.), Nietzsche, Power, and Politics, Berlin 2008, pp. 767–801.

Nietzsche's concern with the sublime shifts as it is now implicated in the disclosure of reality: what has hitherto struck humankind as ugly is acknowledged and rendered a new source of beauty.

In accordance with the tradition stretching from Longinus to Kant, Schiller, and Schopenhauer Nietzsche employs the sublime in connection with notions of elevation, exaltation, loftiness, ennoblement and the attainment of newly discovered heights of experience. The treatise by Longinus *Peri Hypsous*, translated as *On the Sublime,* literally means 'On the Height', and the text is concerned with showing how our natural gifts can be led to states of elevation.[10] Nietzsche often follows this Longinian tradition in his thinking on the sublime and its meaning for us moderns. At the same time, however, it is bound up for him with practices of purification and sublimation that involve the conquest and overcoming of traditional and conventional conceptions of reality and of what is possible in experience. In the book Nietzsche's concern is with a transitional humanity that is moving from a heritage of religions and moralities to something new, in fact, to uncharted conditions of existence. He is keen to militate against the sublime of dread and terror and to configure the sublime in a more modest and even humbling manner.

The link between the sublime and terror is, of course, the one made by Burke,[11] and in *Dawn* Nietzsche shows that his affinities are perhaps more with Kant who argued that superstition establishes in the mind not a reverence for the sublime – the (transcendental) claim that there is a superior vocation for the human – but the fear and dread of a being of superior might and to whose will the terrified human being is subject.[12] For Kant the task is to judge nature without fear; sublimity is not to be found in any thing of nature but in the mind, "insofar as we can become conscious of our superiority" to both nature within us and also to nature outside us.[13] This position on the sublime is echoed by Schiller when he writes that to conceive God as a powerful and not a holy being is to worship him in a spirit of fear, which degrades us, and not reverence, which exalts us in our own estimation.[14] For Schiller, following Kant, an object is sublime whenever our sensuous nature feels its limits in the face of its presentation, but our rational nature experiences its superiority and its freedom from limits. When we come up short against some sublime object physically, "we elevate ourselves

[10] Longinus, On the Sublime, trans. T. S. Dorsch, Harmondsworth 1965.
[11] See Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, Oxford 1998, part 1, section VII and part II, section II.
[12] Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgment, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis 1987, section 28.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Friedrich Schiller, Essays, ed. Walter Hinderer, trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom, New York 1993, p. 161.

above it *morally*" (e.g. through 'ideas').[15] Fear plays a necessary role in the experience of the sublime simply because the object conflicts with the conditions of our existence and we are not equal to its power on a sensuous or physical level;[16] but the sublime is precisely that experience of coming to know ourselves as not only sensuous or physical and is the source of our experience of dignity. In Schopenhauer in the experience of the sublime the subject is elevated his personhood, above his willing and all willing, and finds itself in a state of exaltation.[17] In this respect the state of the sublime differs from the experience of being in a beautiful state because it involves a struggle:

> with the sublime, that state of pure knowing is obtained first of all by a conscious and violent tearing away from the relations of the same object to the will which are recognized as unfavourable, by a free exaltation, accompanied by consciousness, beyond the will and the knowledge related to it' (ibid).[18]

In D Nietzsche does not explicitly position his thinking on the sublime in relation to either the Longinian tradition or the modern Kantian one. Although we can say that for him a sense of fate or destiny is at play – the title of the text suggests this – Nietzsche does not admit to sharing Kant's conception of our vocation and a transcendental approach is inadequate to the task facing us. Because the sublime is part of humanity's unwilled history and fateful becoming it is in need of purification and overcoming. As we shall see, for Nietzsche the new sublime, including the sublimities of philosophy, is bound up with a new comportment toward existence as it now concerns us as searchers of knowledge, and a new fearlessness is required as we embark on this search free of "the prejudices

---

[15] Ibid., p. 22.

[16] Schiller follows tradition in stressing that the sublime object, whilst frightening, cannot incite actual fear; "Fear is a condition of *suffering* and *violence*; only in a detached consideration of something and through the feeling of activity inside ourselves can we take pleasure in something sublime" (Schiller, Essays, p. 29).

[17] Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation (in two volumes), trans. E. F. J. Payne, New York 1966, volume one, section 39. For further insight into Schopenhauer's influence see Nabais, Metaphysics of the Tragic, pp. 12–29. In his book of 1870 on Beethoven, Wagner argues that music can only be understood through the category of the sublime and unlike beauty, which merely flatters our senses, music excites in us the highest ecstasies; with music we do not return to ourselves but go out of ourselves. Richard Wagner, Beethoven, trans. Edward Dannreuthe, London 1903. For further insight see Nabais, Metaphysics of the Tragic, pp. 29–34.

[18] Rampley instructively notes the difference between Schopenhauer and his German predecessors on the sublime: "If Kant and Schiller were central in raising the discourse of the sublime above that of a mere doctrine of affectivity, Schopenhauer was equally important in emptying it of the Enlightenment moralising which still underpins those two earlier thinkers" (Nietzsche, Aesthetics, and Modernity, p. 87). Furthermore, "Schopenhauer has now rejected the dialectical structure of the concept; whereas it has hitherto involved movements of negation and affirmation, sublimity in his thought no longer contains any affirmation of the subject"(ibid., p. 89).

of morality".[19] We are in the process of becoming creatures that exist largely to know and who seek to conquer the elevation of "morality". Nietzsche does not rule out the possibility that universal interests may follow and be promoted and he uses the image of "the ploughshare" to signify this (it was, in fact, the original title of the text): "But we too have universal, and perhaps more universal interests … because a new ploughshare is to cleave the ground, rendering it fruitful for all?" (D 146, KSA 3.138)

The fundamental change or turning that Nietzsche is proposing finds expression in his metaphorical usage of the image of the sea (he makes extensive use of nautical metaphors in both D and the two subsequent texts, *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*).[20] The sea or the ocean is, of course, a classic image to reference in the tradition of the sublime. The ocean is first appropriated for the sublime by Longinus who contrasts its awesome character with beautifully clear small streams.[21] This is then continued in Burke's association of the sublime with the experience of terror: "A level plain of a vast extent on land, is certainly no mean idea; the prospect of such a plain may be as extensive as a prospect of the ocean; but can it ever fill the mind with any thing so great as the ocean itself?"[22] The reason for this, according to Burke, is owing to the fact that the ocean "is an object of no small terror" and for him terror is "the ruling principle of the sublime".[23] For Kant the "boundless ocean heaved up" is one example of several phenomena of nature where we see at work a dynamical sublime. Here nature is called sublime whenever it "elevates (*erhebt*) our imagination" by exhibiting cases in which the mind comes to feel its own sublimity, that is, in a vocation that elevates it "above nature".[24] As already noted, for Kant the task is to judge nature beyond a state of fear.

Nietzsche was familiar with the deployment of the ocean as an image of the sublime. In his early writings he employs the idea of the ocean to convey an astonishing philosophical insight into the reality of becoming, one that initially strikes mortal human beings as terrifying. He does this in his lecture on Heraclitus in the course at Basel on the pre-Platonic philosophers where he notes that confrontation with the insight into "eternal becoming" has something at first sight that is both terrifying and uncanny: "the strongest comparison is to the sensation whereby someone in the middle of the ocean or during an earthquake,

---

[19] That Nietzsche envisages a relation to the future beyond fear is indicated in the title he gave to book five of The Gay Science, added in 1887: "We Fearless Ones".

[20] For further insight see Duncan Large, "Nietzsche and the Figure of Columbus", Nietzsche-Studien 24 (1995), pp. 162–83.

[21] Longinus, On the Sublime, chapter 35.

[22] Burke, A Philosophical Inquiry, part II, section II.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Kant, Critique of Judgment, section 28.

observes all things in motion." He then notes that it requires an "astonishing power to transmit the effects of the sublime (*des Erhabenen*) and joyful awe to those confronting it" (KGW IV 2.272). Heraclitus comes up with a sublime image (*erhabenes Gleichniss*) to do just this: "only in the play of the child (or that of the artist) does there exist a Becoming and Passing Away without any moralistic calculations" (ibid. p. 278). It is not that we rise above nature and experience the superior power of human Reason, as in Kant, but, rather, that we recognize nature, qua becoming, as the superior power and in "play" we are one with its lack of teleology.

In D Nietzsche appears keen to replace the sublime of terror with a new sublime of human self-conquest and overcoming in which the sea now represents the uncharted future, the comprehensive space beyond familiar land in which the human can purify itself of fear and self-loathing.[25] The task of humanity overcoming itself consists in it freeing itself of its former sense of its (supra-terrestrial) meaning and destiny. Nietzsche advises us to go slowly and wisely:

> *Small doses.* – If you want to effect the most profound transformation possible, then administer the means in the smallest doses, but unremittingly and over long periods of time! What great things can be accomplished at one fell swoop? Thus we want to guard against exchanging head over heels and with acts of violence the moral condition we are used to for a new evaluation of things – no, we want to keep on living in that condition for a long, long time – until we, very late, presumably, become fully aware that the *new evaluation* has become the predominant force and that the small doses of it, *to which we will have to grow accustomed from now on*, have laid down in us a new nature (D 534, KSA 3.305).

II. Nietzsche on the Sources of the Sublime

In one of the text's opening aphorisms Nietzsche argues that, "We must again rid the world of much *false* grandeur" (*Grossartigkeit*)[26] simply because "it offends against the justice which all things may lay claim to from us" (D 4, KSA 3.20). In fact, the task goes much deeper than this since we are in the process of unlearning an inherited symbolism. The task of purifying ourselves of this inheritance involves inquiring into the origins and sources of the sublime. This is something Nietzsche had already begun to undertake in the previous text, *Human, all too Human* where, for example, he locates the origins of the sublime in the religious cult (HH 130, KSA 2.123), and several aphorisms of D continue

[25] See also the prologue to Z (section 3): "Verily, a polluted stream is the human. One must be a veritable sea to absorb such a polluted stream without becoming unclean. Behold, I teach to you the Overhuman: it is this sea, in this can your great despising submerge itself" (KSA 4.15). Thus Spoke Zarathustra, trans. Graham Parkes, Oxford 2005.

[26] The adjectival *grossartig* has the sense of the "sublime" which should not be lost on the reader.

this inquiry.[27] Nietzsche is reflecting in HH on the difference between our modern sensibility and that of primitive peoples. On the one hand in ancient societies people are determined by law and by tradition in which the individual is tied to these almost automatically and moves with the regularity of a pendulum. On the other hand, nature appears as mysterious, something to be dreaded and that cannot be comprehended. To engage with it there must be recourse to magic and sorcery. Nature is seen as a domain of 'freedom', that is of caprice, a higher power, something like a superhuman mode or stage of existence, such as a god. The challenge for early humans is how to exert an influence over these terrible, unknown powers, in order to fetter this immense domain of freedom. It is here that the religious cult is born. The idea arises that constraint can be exercised on the powers of nature through prayers, pleadings and ceremonies, through submission, through the giving of gifts, sacrifices, and flattering glorifications. It is in the cult that Nietzsche in fact locates the origins of law, such as treaties, the pledging of securities, and the exchange of oaths. Many of our nobler ideas have their sources in this context, such as relations of sympathy between human beings, the existence of goodwill and gratitude, treaties between enemies, and so on. Nietzsche also holds that the cult is the source of the feeling of the sublime (*der Erhabenen*): the inner world of the sublime – affected, tremulous, contrite, expectant states – is born in the human being through the cult (HH 130, KSA 2.123).

In D 33 Nietzsche notes that for primitive humanity some evil chance event is interpreted in terms of a demonic power and caprice; there is no investigation into the natural causes of the phenomenon since the demonic cause is taken for granted. In this mental schema we have a demonic cause and a supernatural consequence, such as the punishments and mercies administered by the divinity, in which the sense for reality and taking pleasure in it is spoiled: reality only has value to the extent that "*it is capable of being a symbol*" (D 33, KSA 3.42). In HH Nietzsche had noted that a preoccupation with the symbolic has become the sign of a lower culture and argued that both the individual and humankind will be raised to maturity when it has grown accustomed to valuing lasting and durable knowledge, losing in the process belief in inspiration and any miraculous communication of truths. He insists that it is the estimation of such 'unpretentious truths' that humanity now needs to *hold onto* and that this indicates 'valor, simplicity, temperance':

> Those who worship *forms,* with their measuring stick for the beautiful and the sublime, will admittedly have good reason at first for mocking as the esteem for unpretentious truths and the scientific spirit begin to gain mastery, but only because their eyes have not yet unlocked the charm of the *simplest* form … (HH 3, KSA 2.26)

[27] F. Nietzsche, Human, all too Human, trans. Gary Handwerk, Stanford 1995.

Later in the text Nietzsche argues that a religiously circumscribed horizon of life and culture will not be seen again in European civilization and he anticipates that some of the forces upon which art depends, such as pleasure in intoxication, in ecstasy, and in the symbolic, will die out (HH 234, KSA 2.196).

In D Nietzsche stresses that it is under the spell of the ancient morality of custom that man disdains the causes, the effects, and reality (*Wirklichkeit*) and "spins all his higher feelings of reverence, sublimity [or sublime exaltation] (*Erhabenheit*), pride, gratitude, and love *from an imaginary world*: the so-called higher world" (D 33, KSA 3.42). The results of the process are, Nietzsche thinks, perceptible today: "wherever a man's feelings are *exalted* (*erhebt*), the imaginary world is involved in some way." It is for this reason that the scientific human being has to be suspicious of all higher feelings, so tremendously nourished are they by delusion and nonsense: "Not that they necessarily are or forever have to be: but of all the gradual purifications (*Reinigungen*) awaiting humanity, the purification of the higher feelings will no doubt be one of the most gradual" (ibid., KSA 3.43). In D 32 Nietzsche clearly indicates that the feeling of being "*sublimely exalted* (*erhaben*) above reality" grew out of the experience of suffering for the sake of morality: humanity developed the consciousness that suffering brought it closer to a deeper world of truth. It now has a pride in morality that stands in the way of a new understanding of morality and only a new pride stemming from the tasks of knowledge can break with this inheritance (D 32, KSA 3.41).

In aphorism 45 of *Dawn* entitled "A Tragic Ending for Knowledge" (*Erkenntniss*), a title which has to be read with a certain dose of irony, Nietzsche notes that it is human sacrifice that has traditionally served as the means of producing exaltation (*Erhebung*); this sacrifice has both elevated (*erhoben*) and exalted (*gehoben*) the human being. What if mankind were to now sacrifice itself: to whom would it make the sacrifice? Nietzsche suggests that it would be "the knowledge of truth" since only here could the goal be said to be commensurate with the sacrifice, "because for this goal no sacrifice is too great."[28] But this goal remains too distant and lofty; much closer to home is the task of working out the extent to which humanity can take steps toward the advancement of knowledge and ascertaining what kind of knowledge-drive could impel it to the point of extinction "with the light of an anticipatory wisdom in its eyes." But perhaps here we discover the madness of such a drive if divorced from human ends of cultivation and enhancement of itself into nobler and superior forms:

[28] See also on this GM II 7, KSA 5.302 ff. in which Nietzsche notes that life has always known how to play tricks so as to justify itself, including its "evil", and today, for us moderns and free spirits, this takes the form of "life as a riddle, life as a problem of knowledge". On the Genealogy of Morality, trans. Carol Diethe, Cambridge 2006 (revised second edition).

> Perhaps one day, once an alliance for the purpose of knowledge has been established with inhabitants of other planets and one has communicated one's knowledge from star to star for a few millennia: perhaps then enthusiasm (*Begeisterung*) for knowledge will swell to such a high tide! (D 45, KSA 3.52 f.)

In aphorism 62 entitled "On the Origin (*Ursprung*) of Religions" Nietzsche reflects on how a person's experience of the world and existence assumes the form of a "revelation" (*Offenbarung*) and suggests that this is the problem that underlies the origin of all religions. He imagines the disclosure of the world through human consciousness amounting to a blissful experience. However, ancient religious human beings are so overwhelmed by the experience that they are unable to credit themselves as the source of insight and of such bliss; rather, they feel compelled to credit God (or some superior godlike human being) as the source of the world's revelation. In this process the experience is removed from the domain of doubt and critique and is rendered something holy. Humanity has come to experience itself as being indebted to what can be described as a law of the father: "whenever we elevate (*erhebt*) our creation over ourselves and seemingly disregard our own worth, we then experience the exultation of paternal love and pride, which compensates and more than compensates for everything" (D 62, KSA 3.62 f.). The problem goes deep because from its history of elevation and exaltation humanity has developed within itself much self-abasement, self-hatred, and self-loathing. Nietzsche brings this out in a number of aphorisms. In D 50, for example, entitled "*Belief in Intoxication* (Rausch)" he argues that those who live for "exalted and enraptured moments (*erhabenen und verzückten Augenblicke*)" are usually wretched and disconsolate since they view such moments as their true self and then experience the misery and despair as "the *effect of everything 'outside the self'*". Thus the thoughts they have of their environment, their age, their entire world fill them with vengeful emotions. He continues:

> Intoxication counts for them as the true life, as the real self (*Ich*) … Humanity has these rapturous drunkards to thank for a great deal of evil: for they are insatiable sowers of the weeds of dissatisfaction with self and neighbour, of disdain for this world and this time, especially of world-weariness. Perhaps a whole Hell of *criminals* could not muster an impact as sinister and uncanny, as oppressive and ruinous of earth and air into the farthest future as that tiny, noble community of intractable, half-mad fantasists, people of genius which cannot control themselves and who take all possible pleasure in themselves only at the point where they have completely lost themselves … (D 50, KSA 3.54 f.)

The "morality" that humanity has cultivated and dedicated itself to is one of "enthusiastic devotion" and "self-sacrifice" in which it looks down from sublime heights on the more sober morality of self-control (which is regarded as egotistical). Nietzsche suggests that the reason why morality has been developed in this way is owing to the enjoyment of the state of intoxication that has stemmed from the thought that the person is at one with the powerful being

to whom it consecrates itself; in this way "the feeling of power" is enjoyed and is confirmed by a sacrifice of the self. For Nietzsche, of course, such an overcoming of the human self is impossible: "In truth you only *seem* to sacrifice yourselves; instead, in your thoughts you transform yourselves into gods and take pleasure in yourselves as such" (D 215, KSA 3.192; see also D 269, KSA 3.211).

In his consideration of intoxication, visions, trance, and so on, Nietzsche is dealing with a problem that preoccupies him in his middle and late periods: the problem of fanaticism (D 57 f., 68, 204, 298; see also AOM 15; BGE 10; GS 347). As he notes, such "enthusiasts" will seek to implant the faith in intoxication as "as being that which is actually living in life: a dreadful faith!" (D 50, KSA 3.55) Such is the extent of Nietzsche's anxiety that he wonders whether humanity as a whole will one day perish by its "spiritual fire-waters" and those who keep alive the desire for them. The "strange madness of moral judgements" is bound up with states of exaltation and "the most exalted language" (D 189, KSA 3.162). Nietzsche is advising us to be on our guard, to be vigilant as philosophers against, "the half-mad, the fantastic, the fanatical", including so-called human beings of genius who claim to have "visions" and to have seen things others do not see. We are to be cautious, not credulous, when confronted with the claims of visions, that is to say he adds, "of a profound mental disturbance …" (D 66, KSA 3.64).[29]

Humanity has attempted to short-circuit the paths to truth and virtue. In an aphorism entitled "The Integrity of God" (*Die Redlichkeit Gottes*) Nietzsche writes:

> All religions reveal a trace of the fact that they owe their origin (*Herkunft*) to an early, immature intellectuality in humanity – they all take with astonishing *levity* the obligation to tell the truth; as yet, they know nothing of a *duty on the part of God* to be truthful towards humanity and clear in His communication" (D 91, KSA 3.84 f.).

In *D* 456 "*Redlichkeit*" (honesty) is said to be mankind's "youngest virtue" and a virtue we can advance or obstruct as we see fit (for more on 'honesty' in

[29] At this time Nietzsche is reading Voltaire's *Mahomet* (see HH 221, KSA 2.160–4) and recommending to people, including his sister Elisabeth, that they read it (see letter to her dated 13 February 1881, KGB III 1.62). However, we need to read carefully here since there is the danger of turning Nietzsche's so-called positivistic championing of the Enlightenment against forces of reaction into an all-too timely position against Islam. To avoid this requires a careful analysis of Nietzsche's insights into and comments on different religions. In GS 347, KSA 3.581–3 it is not Islam but Christianity and Buddhism that he describes as teaching fanaticism. In D 68, KSA 3.64–8 Saint Paul is described as a fanatic whilst in D 546, KSA 3.316 f. Epictetus is presented as an example of a non-fanatical person. For further insight into Nietzsche and fanaticism see Bernard Reginster, 'What is a Free Spirit? Nietzsche on Fanaticism', in: Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie 85 (2003), pp. 51–85.

book five, see D 482, 511, 536, 543, 556).[30] He holds to this view because he thinks that both the antique conception of the unity of virtue and happiness and the Christian appeal to the kingdom of God have not been made with total honesty; rather, the supposition has held sway that where we are selfless we are somehow permitted to trouble ourselves less about truth and truthfulness. Consider also in this regard the aphorisms 59–61. Nietzsche notes, quite seriously, that Christianity has wanted to free human beings from the burden of the demands of sober morality by showing a shorter way to perfection, perhaps imitating philosophers who wanted a "royal road to truth" that would avoid wearisome and tedious dialectics or the gathering of rigorously tested facts (on dialectics see also D 41, 43). In both cases a profound error is at work even though such an error has provided comfort to those caught exhausted and despairing in the wilderness of existence (D 59, KSA 3.59 f.). Christianity for Nietzsche can fairly be called a "very *spirited* religion" that has made European humanity something sharp-witted and not only theologically cunning (it is this sharp-wittedness he will build on himself for the task of revaluation and the "self-sublimation of morality" (D Preface 4, KSA 3.16)). The creation of a mode of life that tames the beast in man, which is the noble end of Christianity, has succeeded in keeping awake "the feeling of a superhuman (*übermenschlichen*) mission" in the soul and in the body. Here one takes pride in obeying, which Nietzsche notes, is the distinguishing mark of all aristocrats. It is with their "surpassing beauty and refinement" that the princes of the church prove to the people the church's "truth" and which is itself the result of a harmony among figure, spirit, and task. Nietzsche then asks whether this attempt at an aristocratic harmony must also go to the grave with the end of religions: "can nothing higher be attained, or even imagined?" (D 60, KSA 3.61) When Nietzsche invites in the next aphorism sensitive people who are still Christians from the heart to attempt for once the experiment of living without Christianity he is in search of an authentic mode of life: "they owe it to *their faith* in this way for once to sojourn 'in the wilderness' – if only to win for themselves the right to a voice on the question whether Christianity is necessary. For the present they cling to their native soil and thence revile the world beyond it …" (D 61, KSA 3.61). After such a wandering beyond one's little corner of existence, a Christian may return home, not out of homesickness, but out of sound and honest judgement. Nietzsche

[30] "There have always been many sick people among those who poetize and long for God: furiously they hate the one who understands, and that youngest among the virtues which is called: honesty" (*Redlichkeit*) (Z I, Von den Hinterweltlern, KSA 4.37). For further insight into Nietzsche and honesty see Melissa Lane, 'Honesty as the Best Policy: Nietzsche on *Redlichkeit* and the Contrast between Stoic and Epicurean Strategies of the Self', in: Mark Bevir / Jill Hargis / Sara Rushing (eds.), Histories of Postmodernism, London 2007, pp. 25–53.

sees here a model for future human beings who will one day live in this way with respect to all evaluations of the past: "one must voluntarily *live through* them once again, and likewise their opposite – in order, in the final analysis, to have the *right* to let them fall through the sieve" (D 62, KSA 3.62).

Nietzsche brings book one of *Dawn* to a close by suggesting that Europe remains behind Indian culture in terms of the progress it needs to make with respect to religious matters. He suggests that it has not yet attained the "free-minded (*freisinnige*) naiveté" of the Brahmins. The priests of India demonstrated "pleasure in thinking" in which observances – prayers, ceremonies, sacrifices, and hymns – are celebrated as the givers of all good things. One step further, he adds, and one also throws aside the gods – "which is what Europe will also have to do one day" (D 96, KSA 3.87). Europe remains distant, he muses, from the level of culture attained in the appearance of the Buddha, the teacher of "self-redemption." Nietzsche anticipates an age when all the observances and customs of the old moralities and religions have come to an end. Instead of speculating on what will then emerge into existence he calls for a new community of non-believers to make their sign and communicate with one another: "There exists today among the different nations of Europe perhaps ten to twenty million people who no longer 'believe in God' – is it too much to ask that they *give a sign* to one another?" (ibid., KSA 3.87 f.) He imagines these people constituting a new power in Europe, between nations, classes, rulers and subjects, and between the un-peaceable and the most peaceable.

It is with this attitude toward the future that Nietzsche approaches aspects of a new sublime, as well as what he calls the "sublimities of philosophy." One gets the distinct impression that he is keen for a general cooling down of the human mind to take place. Indeed, in HH Nietzsche argues that science is needed today as part of general therapeutic practice of reflection and observation that cools down the human mind: "shouldn't we, the *more spiritual* human beings of an age that is visibly catching fire in more and more places, have to grasp all available means for quenching and cooling, so that we will remain at least as steady, harmless, and moderate as we are now …" (HH 38, KSA 2.62). Christianity has brought into the world 'a completely new and unlimited *imperilment*', creating new securities, enjoyments, recreations, and evaluations. Although we moderns may be in the process of emancipating ourselves from such an imperilment we keep dragging into our existence the old habits associated with these securities and evaluations, even into our noblest arts and philosophies (D 57, KSA 3.59). Nietzsche holds that in wanting to return to the affects 'in their utmost grandeur and strength' – for example, as *love* of God, *fear* of God, fanatical *faith* in God, and so on – Christianity represents a popular protest against philosophy and he appeals to the ancient sages against it since they advocated the triumph of reason over the affects (D 58, KSA 3.59).

Nietzsche's evaluation of humanity's implication in a history of fear and self-torment is complex. On the one hand, an "obscure fear and awe" have directed humanity in its consideration of "higher and weightier affairs", and in the process a fearful humanity has prejudged and paralysed thinking, choosing instead to enslave itself to self-abasement, self-torture and much torment of body and soul (D 107, KSA 3.94f.; see also D 142). On the other hand, however, it is possible to locate in the history of human rituals, including rituals of sacrifice, a "prodigious training ground of the intellect" (D 40, KSA 3.47). As Nietzsche notes, it is not only religions that have been hatched and nurtured on this soil but also the "prehistoric world of science" as well as the poet, the thinker, the physician, and the lawgiver: "The fear of the incomprehensible, which, in ambiguous fashion, demanded ceremonies from us, metamorphosed gradually into a fascination with the hardly-comprehensible, and where one knew not how to explicate, one learned to create" (ibid.). He goes so far as to claim that it is fear and not love that has furthered the universal knowledge of humanity – where love is deceptive and blind (it harbours a secret impulse to elevate the other as high as possible), fear has a capacity for genuine discernment, for example, discerning the powers and desires of a person or an object (D 309, KSA 3.225). For Nietzsche we are both heirs to a history of sacrifice and of the sublime and continuers of it; the difference is that now for us the promise of happiness – which centres on a strengthening and elevation of "the general feeling of human *power*" (*Macht*) – seeks to remain true to our mortal dwelling on the earth. It is this aspect of his thinking in D that I now wish to explore.

III. The Sea, the Sea

Book five of D begins with an aphorism entitled "In the great silence," which stages an encounter with the sea. The scene Nietzsche depicts is one of stillness and solitude: "Here is the sea, here we can forget the city" (D 423, KSA 3.259). After the noisy ringing of bells announcing the angelus,[31] which produce the sad and foolish yet sweet noise that divides night and day, all becomes still and the sea lies pale and shimmering but unable or unwilling to speak; similarly, the night sky plays its everlasting evening game with red and yellow and green but chooses not to speak. We are encompassed on all sides by a "tremendous muteness" that is both lovely and dreadful and at which the heart swells. But is there not hypocrisy in this silent beauty? Nietzsche invites us to ask. Would it not speak well and evilly

[31] Since the fourteenth century Catholic churches sounded a bell at morning, noon, and evening as reminder to recite Ave Maria, the prayer which celebrates the annunciation of the both of Christ to Mary by the angel Gabriel. Note by translator of *Dawn*, Brittain Smith.

if it so wished? Would it not mock our feeling of sympathy (*Mitgefühl*) with it? A voice, Nietzsche's voice, then interrupts and declares, 'so be it! I am not ashamed of being mocked by such powers'. This voice pities nature for its silence and on account of the malice that ties its tongue. In this scene the heart, the regulating source of life's blood flow, continues to swell and is startled by "a new truth": "*it too cannot speak*, it too mocks when the mouth calls something into this beauty, it too enjoys its sweet silent malice" (ibid, KSA 3.259 f.). The voice begins to hate speech and even thinking for behind every word it hears the error of laughter, of imagination, and delusion. Should one not, then, mock at one"s pity and at one's mockery? What riddle of existence are we caught up in? Has not all become dark for the philosophy of the morning? The aphorism concludes as follows:

> O sea! O evening! You are terrible mentors! You teach the human being to *cease* being human! Ought he to sacrifice himself to you? Ought he to become as you are now, pale, shimmering, mute, monstrous (*ungeheuer*), reposing above himself? Sublimely above himself? (*Über sich selber erhaben*) (ibid.).

What sublime state is it that the human being might attain here? How can the human being cease being itself? Is this what has really taken place in this experience? The reader has good reason to pause and reflect on what might be expressed in the aphorism. Nietzsche's instruction is never simple or straightforward; there is always ambiguity in it. One response might be to suggest that the encounter with the sea challenges us as humans and our sense of scale and measure, confronting us with something immense and monstrous. But here we have to be careful because of the "mockery" that greets us in the experience. All the names we might come up with to describe the mute sea will come back to us: profound, eternal, mysterious. Are we not endowing the sea with our own names and virtues?[32] Do we ever escape the net of language, ever escape the human?[33]

The basic contrast Nietzsche is making in the aphorism is between stillness and noise (sea and city): in our encounter with the sea, it might be suggested, we quiet our being, become calm and contemplative, think about more than the here and now, the merely fleeting and transient. In D 485 Nietzsche has "B" state, "It seems I need distant perspectives to think well of things" (KSA 3.288). If in the volumes of HH Nietzsche had urged his readers to renounce the first

---

[32] See also Z II, The Dance Song, KSA 4.140: "Into your eye I looked of late, O Life! And into the unfathomable I seemed them to be sinking. But you pulled me out with a golden fishing-rod; mockingly you laughed when I called you unfathomable. 'So runs the talk of all fishes', you said; 'What *they* do not fathom is unfathomable. But changeable am I only and wild in all things, a woman and not a virtuous one'".

[33] See D 117 entitled "In prison", which ends: "We sit within our net, we spiders, and whatever we may catch in it, we catch nothing at all except that which allows itself to be caught precisely in *our* net" (KSA 3.110). See also, from book five of the text, GS 374 on "our new 'infinite'" (KSA 3.626 f.).

and last things and devote instead their energy and attentiveness to the closest things (WS 16, KSA 2.550), the distant things, including distant times return in *Dawn*, perhaps prompted by an encounter with the sea. D 441 entitled "Why what is closest becomes ever more distant" captures this new sense of perspective: "The more we think about everything that we were and will be, the paler what we are right now becomes … We grow more solitary – and indeed *because* the whole flood of humanity resounds around us" (D 441, KSA 3.269).

We have reason to pause because of the reference to the "evening". The dawn-philosophy is a philosophy of the morning and, as such, it has its suspicions about thoughts that come to us in the evening. Several aphorisms in book five address this point. In aphorism 539, for example, Nietzsche draws attention to how our "seeing" of the world is coloured by different emotions and moods and different hours of the day: "Doesn't your morning shine upon things differently from your evening?" (D 539, KSA 3.308) Aphorism 542 begins with Nietzsche declaring that, "It is not wise to let evening judge the day: for all too often weariness then becomes the judge of energy, success, and good will" (D 542, KSA 3.309 f.).[34] For Nietzsche there are different ways of seeing, some more human than others and some that are superhuman (this is what he calls "pure seeing"; see also D 426, KSA 3.261 f. on the "richer form of seeing"). The encounter with sea and evening serves to inspire us to think about these different ways of seeing; we no longer only inhabit the day with its ordinary, prosaic consciousness.

After the opening aphorism the next two (424 f.) consider truth and error and amplify what has been highlighted in the book's opening aphorism: the "problem" of the human is that it is an erring animal and dwells in the space of error. In 424 Nietzsche notes that errors have hitherto served as forces of consolation for humanity (errors of human judgment regarding freedom of the will and the unity of the world, for example).[35] If today we are seekers of truth may we not,

[34] Nietzsche may have been inspired in these reflections by Schopenhauer: "For the morning is the youth of the day; everything is bright, fresh, and easy; we feel strong and have at our complete disposal all our faculties … Evening, on the other hand, is the day's old age; at such a time we are dull, garrulous, and frivolous … For night imparts to everything its black colour", Arthur Schopenhauer, Parerga and Paralipomena (in two volumes), trans. E. F. J. Payne, Oxford 1974: volume one, pp. 434–35.

[35] In his middle period (1878–82) Nietzsche is concerned with exposing a range of errors, which include belief in freedom of the will as a "primary error" made by the organic, belief in unconditioned substances and identical things (HH 18, KSA 2.40), and the fabrication of "unities" (HH 19. KSA 2.40). In GS 115, KSA 3.474 Nietzsche notes that man has been educated by his errors and he lists four notable ones: that he sees himself incompletely; he endows himself with fictitious attributes; he places himself in a false order of rank in relation to animals and nature; and he invents new tables of goods which he accepts them as eternal and unconditional. In WS 9–11 Nietzsche clarifies the conception of freedom of the will he has in mind when he criticises it, namely, one that supposes an 'atomism' in the domain of acting and willing which is the supposition that every action is isolate and indivisible (WS 11, KSA 2.546 f.).

then, expect the same from truth? But can truths be capable of producing the effect of consolation? Is it not in the nature of truth precisely not to console? If human beings exist as truthful beings but employ philosophy as therapy in the sense of seeking a cure for themselves, does this not suggest that they are not, in fact, seeking truth at all? But if the character of truth as a whole is one that makes us ill should we not abolish it in the same way the Greeks abolished gods once they were unable to offer consolation?

In 425 Nietzsche spells out the reason for our ambivalent stance towards errors. On the one hand it is on their basis that humanity has been elevated and has excelled itself again and again, for example, through errors as to its descent, uniqueness, and destiny (see also HH 29). On the other hand, it has to be noted that it is through the same errors that unspeakable amounts of suffering, persecution, suspicion, and misery have come into the world. Our moralities do not wed us to the earth as a site of dwelling and thinking; rather, we consider ourselves "too good and too significant for the earth", as if we were paying it only a passing visit. The "proud sufferer" has thus become in the course of human development the highest type of human being that is revered (D 425, KSA 3.261).

Nietzsche clearly wishes to see much, if not all of this, overturned, but in the name of what and for what ends? Aphorism 501, entitled "Mortal souls", in which Nietzsche suggests that it is a question of relearning both knowledge and the human, including human time as mortal time, offers a partial clarification (KSA 3.294). Several aphorisms in the book consider humanity's misguided dream of an immortal existence. *Dawn* 211, KSA 3.190 is an especially witty aphorism in which Nietzsche considers the impertinence of the dream. He notes that the actual existence of a single immortal human being would be enough to drive everyone else on earth into a rampage of death and suicide out of being sick and tired of it. The wiser strategy is for us to take more seriously the creature that lives typically for seventy years and give it back the actual time it has hitherto denied itself (see also D 72 on the teaching of Epicurus triumphing anew). Nietzsche is inviting us to replace the sublime dream of immortality with a new sobriety toward existence, as this aphorism from book five makes clear:

> With regard to knowledge (*Erkenntniss*) the most useful accomplishment is perhaps: that the belief in the immortality of the soul has been abandoned. Now humanity is allowed to wait; now it no longer needs to rush headlong into things and choke down half-examined ideas as formerly it was forced to do. For in those days the salvation of poor "eternal souls" depended on the extent of their knowledge acquired during a short lifetime; they had to *make a decision* overnight – "knowledge" took on a dreadful importance (D 501, KSA 3.294).

Nietzsche argues that we are now in a new situation with regard to knowledge and as a result we can conquer anew our courage for making mistakes, for experimentation, and for accepting things provisionally. Without the sanction of

the old moralities and religions individuals and entire generations, "can now fix their eyes on tasks of a vastness that would to earlier ages have seemed madness" (ibid.). Humanity has now earned the right to self-experimentation.

Aphorism 507 entitled "Against the tyranny of the true" signals a warning however concerning our devotion to knowledge through experimentation. Here Nietzsche stages an anxiety that takes on a more dramatic form in his later writings and their questioning of the will to truth. In this aphorism he asks why it should be considered desirable that truth alone should rule and be omnipotent. We can esteem it as a "great power" but we should not allow it to rule over us in some tyrannical fashion. Much healthier is to allow truth to have opponents and for us to find relief from it from time to time, and be at liberty to reside knowingly in "untruth". Failure to place truth within a rich economy of life will make it, and ourselves in the process, "boring, powerless, and tasteless" (D 507, KSA 3.297). In the next work, *The Gay Science*, the first three books of which Nietzsche initially conceived as a continuation of *Dawn*, Nietzsche focuses on the task of the "incorporation" (*Einverleibung*) of truth and knowledge and holds this to be our new experiment (GS 110, KSA 3.469–71).

A number of questions and doubts might emerge from Nietzsche's outline of this new set of tasks for humanity. Let us accept that we wish to learn to know and become genuine knowers, but does this mean and must it mean always as *human* knowers? Would this not mean always playing a part in the same comedy and never being able to see into things except through the same pair of eyes? Might there not be beings with different eyes and better equipped for knowledge? Moreover, if we are condemned to see only with human eyes and to know with human minds does this not signal in fact the impossibility of knowledge? As Nietzsche rhetorically puts it, do we come to know at the end of all our knowledge only our own organs? (D 483, KSA 3.287)[36] Will this not lead to misery and

[36] Nietzsche rehearses this sceptical position again in BGE 15, KSA 5.29, but he has to be read and heard carefully on the issue he is raising: "What? And others even say the external world is the work of our organs? But then our body, as part of this external world, would be the work of our organs! But then our organs themselves would be – the work of our organs! It seems to me that this is a complete *reductio ad absurdum*, assuming that the concept of a *causa sui* is something fundamentally absurd. Consequently, the external world is *not* the work of our organs?" Beyond Good and Evil, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York 1966. I think Nietzsche is seeking to indicate two points when he philosophizes in this way: first, that it is indeed through our sense organs that we come to know the world and there can be no other access to the world except through a certain kind of humanization (see especially GS 111 f.); second, this does not mean that all there is are sense organs with no external world to be disclosed. Sense organs do not only disclose organs, e.g. the body. Nietzsche appears to be suspending the question whether idealism or realism is the correct philosophy and instead drawing our attention to the limits of representation and the fact that we know largely a *human* world. In this sense he is close to Kant, of course. In HH 16, KSA 2.36–8 Nietzsche expresses agnosticism with respect to the idea of the thing-in-itself, maintaining that although there might be a "metaphysical world" such a world is of little concern to us and one that can only be expressed in terms of the negative ontology of an incomprehensible otherness.

disgust with ourselves? These are the questions Nietzsche considers in aphorism 483 and his answer to them provides one clue as to his conception of the image of the sea that the final book of the text starts with. He suggests that even when it proves to be the case that our search for knowledge returns us always to ourselves this does not mean that new knowledge is not to be had for even here we have a form of being that remains largely unknown and unexplored: "This is a wicked attack – *reason* is attacking you! But tomorrow you will be right back in the midst of knowing (*Erkennen*) again and so also in the midst of unreason, by which I mean: in the *pleasure* (*Lust*) of being human. Let us go down to the sea!" (D 483, KSA 3.287; see also D 539) The question pops up: why would we from this experience go down to the sea? Would we encounter there only ourselves, or perhaps a challenge to ourselves that would lead us to discover ourselves – and the world – anew? For are we not fundamentally at the core unknown to ourselves? Contra the tendency towards self-loathing, then, Nietzsche is advising us that there are good reasons for taking pleasure or delight in our continuing human-ness. We have reasons to be cheerful and this occupies Nietzsche in aphorism 551 "Of future virtues".

In a recent study of the philosophy of fear Lars Svendsen has argued, in a chapter that considers the sublime and which begins with a position attributed to Nietzsche, that fear is something that lends colour to the world and a world without it would be boring: "In an otherwise secure world, fear can break the boredom. A feeling of fear can have an uplifting effect".[37] While Nietzsche is not oblivious to the shock function fright can sometimes play in human existence,[38] he does not hold in *Dawn* to the position Svendsen credits him with: "Nietzsche complains that the world has lost much of its charm because we no longer fear it enough".[39] In truth, in the passage on which this claim is based (D 551), Nietzsche makes no such complaint and his position is more subtle. Nietzsche is looking forward to new experiences and new possibilities of life, not backward to previous experiences and ancient reverences. In D 551 he is taking cognisance of several facts as he judges them. He observes that as the world becomes more

[37] Lars Svendsen, A Philosophy of Fear, trans. John Irons, London 2008, p. 91. Svendsen's book sets itself a laudable aim: to "break down the climate of fear that surrounds us today" and that has colonized our life-world (p. 8). The "fear" at work here is what he calls "low-intensity fear" (p. 75).

[38] In a note of 1872–3 Nietzsche writes, "Fright (*Das Erschrecken*) is the best part of humanity" (Nachlass 1872/73, 19[80], KSA 7.447). The context in which he states this is a consideration of the conditions under which we venerate what is rare and great, including what we imagine them to be and including the miraculous. Nietzsche's preoccupation with "greatness" in the *Untimelies* has to be understood in the context of his attack on a self-satisfied and philistine bourgeois culture. The context of his reflections on the fate of fear and reverence in D is quite different and are part of the philosophy of the free spirit and European wanderer.

[39] Svendsen, A Philosophy of Fear, p. 73.

comprehensible to us the more that solemnity of all kinds decreases. Hitherto, he notes, it was fear that informed humanity's attitude of reverence as it found itself overcome in the face of the unknown and the mysterious, forcing it to "sink down before the incomprehensible." He then asks whether the world will lose some its appeal once a new humanity comes into being that has grown less fearful in the face of the character of the world: might it not also result in our own fearsomeness becoming slighter? His answer is negative and it is such because of the courage that he sees as among our new virtues. This is a species of courage so courageous that it feels itself to be "*above* people and things," it is a kind of "excessive magnanimity" and, he notes, has hitherto been lacking in humanity (D 551, KSA 3.321).

Nietzsche concludes the aphorism by declaring the age of "harmless counterfeiting" to be over and he looks ahead to the "astronomers of the ideal" who will take over the role of the poets whose task was to be seers who could recount to us "something of the *possible*!" (ibid.) In short, what Svendsen misses is the key point of book five of D and around which its various insights hinge, namely, the promise of new dawns and an essential part of realising this promise consists in conquering and purifying ourselves of the anciently established sublime.[40] If, as might be supposed, there are reasons for nihilism there are also equally good reasons for its exact opposite: "If only they wanted to let us experience in advance something of the *future virtues*! Or of virtues that will never exist on earth, although they could exist somewhere in the world – of purple-glowing galaxies and the whole Milky Ways of the beautiful! Where are you, you astronomers of the ideal?" (D 551, KSA 3.322)[41] Nietzsche does not, then, align his thinking with the cause of spreading fear or terror:

> The pessimist, who gives all things the blackest and gloomiest colours, makes use of only flames and bolts of lightning, celestial effulgence, and everything that has glaring brilliance and confuses the eye; brightness is only there for him to increase the horror (*Entsetzen*) and to make us sense that things are more terrifying (*Schreckliches*) than they really are (D 561, KSA 3.327).

---

[40] This is not to deny that there is not at work in Nietzsche a will to the terrifying and questionable character of existence since this is one of the distinguishing features of the strong type as he conceives it (Nachlass 1887, 10[168], KSA 12.555–7, WP 852). The point to be stressed, however, is that Nietzsche always appeals to "courage" as the best destroyer and to a courageous humanity, not a fearful one. BT can also be read as being beyond a philosophy of fear: " … we are forced to gaze into the terrors (*die Schrecken*) of individual existence – and yet we are not freeze in fear (*und sollen doch nicht erstarren*)" (BT 17, KSA 1.109). The Birth of Tragedy, trans. Ronald Speirs, Cambridge 1999 (translation modified). See also a revealing note from 1887: "Everywhere that a culture *posits evil*, it gives expression to a relationship of *fear*, thus a *weakness*" (Nachlass 1887, 9[138], KSA 12.413, WP 1025).

[41] Although the concept of nihilism does not appear in Nietzsche's published writings until 1886 with *BGE* he is thinking about nihilism in his notebooks of 1880 which contain notes on the nihilists, including the Russian nihilists. (See Nachlass 1880, 4[103], 4[108], KSA 9.125 and 127).

Just as a significant number of aphorisms in the text address the sublime so do an equally significant number attend to questions of beauty, the beautiful and the ugly. In an earlier part of the book, in aphorism 239, Nietzsche notes that modern composers have discovered that "interesting ugliness" is possible in their art and like drunkards they have thrown themselves into an "ocean of ugliness" (D 239, KSA 3.200). In the discovery of "contrast" the strongest affects become possible and we no longer want simply "good music". The soul of the composer is changing since it is opening up its inner world to evil acts and encounters innocence in them: "For our composers haven't the slightest scent of the fact that they are setting their own history, the history of the uglification of the soul, to music. Formerly, a good composer was obliged to become, almost for the sake of his art, a good person –. And now!" (ibid.) In aphorism 468 from book five entitled "The Realm of Beauty is Bigger," Nietzsche suggests that new appreciations of beauty are becoming possible now that we no longer accept the limitation of restricting beauty to the morally good: "Just as surely as evil people have a hundred types of happiness about which the virtuous have no clue, they also have a hundred types of beauty: and many have not yet been discovered" (D 468, KSA 3.281). In aphorism 550 on "Knowledge and Beauty" Nietzsche suggests a reorientation in our thinking about beauty and reality. He notes that hitherto people have reserved their veneration and feelings of happiness for works of imagination and dissemblance (*Verstellung*) while the opposite phenomena leave them cold. Pleasure or delight is taken only by plunging into the depths of semblance (*Schein*) and by taking leave of reality. This developed taste for semblance and appearance over reality has encouraged the aesthetic attitude that takes reality (*Wirklichkeit*) to be something ugly. Contra this development Nietzsche suggests that knowledge of the ugliest reality can be something beautiful for us and the discovery of reality – which is what we idealists of knowledge inquiring into existence are doing – generates for us so many subtle pleasures. Do we not need to ask whether the "beautiful in itself" makes any sense?[42]

> The happiness of those who seek knowledge increases the amount of beauty in the world and makes everything that is here sunnier; knowledge does not merely place its beauty around things but, in the long run, into things – may future humanity bear witness to this proposition! … What danger for their honesty (*Redlichkeit*) of becoming, through this enjoyment, a panegyrist of things! (D 550, KSA 3.320 f.; see also D 433, 513, 515)

[42] See also TI IX 19, KSA 6.123, on this: "The 'beautiful in itself' is merely a word, not even a concept". Twilight of the Idols, trans. Duncan Large, Oxford 1998.

IV. On the Sublimities of Philosophy

In a number of aphorisms scattered throughout book five of *Dawn* Nietzsche configures the operations of philosophy in relation to the sublime and reflects on its sublimities. Philosophy's love of knowledge – and to be a lover of knowledge is for Nietzsche to be an essentially unrequited lover – now develops as a form of passion that shrinks at no sacrifice.[43] In aphorism 429 he notes that we moderns fear a possible return to barbarism and not because it would make us unhappier since in all ages barbarians have been happier peoples. Rather, he argues, our drive to knowledge has become so strong for us that we now cannot tolerate the idea of happiness without knowledge: "The restlessness of discovery and divining has become just as appealing and indispensable to us as an unrequited love is to the lover; a love he would never trade at any price for a state of apathy; indeed, perhaps we too are *unhappy* lovers!" (D 429, KSA 3.264) We now honestly believe, Nietzsche writes, that "under the pressure and suffering of *this* passion the whole of humanity must believe itself to be more sublime (*sich erhabener*) and more consoled than previously, when it had not yet overcome its envy of the cruder pleasure and contentment that result from barbarism" (ibid). Nietzsche holds that we feel "more consoled", I think, because of our growth in intellectual strength: we have the chance of knowledge and rendering things comprehensible, and with this there comes a new courage, fearlessness, and cheerfulness (*Heiterkeit)*. We even entertain the thought that humanity might perish of its newfound passion for knowledge, though clearly Nietzsche is not an advocate of this. As he notes, such a thought can hold no sway over us. Our evolution is now bound up with this passion, however, and the task is to allow ourselves to be ennobled and elevated by it: " … if humanity is not destroyed by a *passion* it will be destroyed by a *weakness*: which does one prefer? This is the main question. Do we desire for humanity an end in fire and light or in sand?" (ibid., KSA 3.265; see also D 435, KSA 3.267 on perishing as a "*sublime ruin*" (*erhabene Trümmer*) and not as a "molehill").

In aphorism 427 Nietzsche employs the sublime to address what philosophy now means and does in relation to the emerging science (*Wissenschaft*) of knowledge. He draws a comparison with rococo horticulture, which arose from the feeling that nature is ugly, savage, and boring and thus the aim was to beautify it. This is now what philosophy does with science, beautifying what strikes us as ugly, dry, cheerless, and laborious.[44] Philosophy is a species of art and poetry and

[43] For further insight into Nietzsche's figuration of knowledge at this point in his intellectual development see Mazzino Montinari, Nietzsche's Philosophy as the "Passion for Knowledge", in: Mazzino Montinari, Reading Nietzsche, trans. Greg Whitlock, Urbana 2003, pp. 57–69.

[44] See also Z I, Vom Krieg und Kriegsvolke, KSA 4.59: "You are ugly? Well, then, my brothers! Put the sublime (*das Erhabene*) around you, the mantle of the ugly!"

thus a form of "entertainment": it wants to entertain (*unterhalten*) "but, in accordance with its inherited pride, it wants to do this in a more sublime and elevated manner (*in einer erhabenen und höheren Art*) and before a select audience" (D 427, KSA 3.263). Nietzsche already has here, then, the conception of the project of the "gay science" with its mixture of poetry, song, the philosophical aphorism, and dedication to science. In this aphorism from *Dawn* Nietzsche speaks of philosophy enabling us to wander in science as in "wild nature" and without effort or boredom. Such an ambition for philosophy is one that makes religion, hitherto the highest species of the art of entertainment, superfluous. Eventually a cry of dissent against philosophy may emerge, one voiced by pure scientism and naturalism: "'back to science,' to the nature and naturalness of science!" At this point, Nietzsche notes, an age of humanity's history may then commence that discovers the mightiest beauty in precisely the wild and ugly sides of science, "just as it was only from the time of Rousseau that one discovered a sense for the beauty of high mountains and the desert" (ibid.).[45] In short, Nietzsche can see no good reason why humanity cannot grow in strength and insight with science: even when science deflates it humanity can experience an elevation above itself.

In aphorism 449 Nietzsche appeals to the "spiritually needy" and considers how the new tasks and new modes of knowledge suppose solitude as their condition. He imagines a time for higher festivals when one freely gives away one's spiritual house and possessions to those in need. In this condition of solitude the satiated spirit lightens the burden of its own soul, both eschewing praise for what it does and avoiding gratitude which is invasive and fails to respect solitude and silence. This is to speak of a new kind of teacher who armed with a handful of knowledge and a bag full of experiences becomes, "a doctor of the spirit to the indigent and to aid people here and there whose head *is disturbed by opinions* …" (D 449, KSA 3.272) The aim is not to prove that one is right before such a person but rather, "to speak with him in such a way that … he himself says what is right and, proud of the fact, walks away!" Such a teacher exists like a beacon of light offering illumination. Nietzsche imagines this teacher existing in the manner of a new kind of Stoic and inspired by a new sublime:

> To have no advantage, neither better food, nor purer air, nor a more joyful spirit – but to share, to give back, to communicate, to grow poorer! To be able to be humble so as to be accessible to many and humiliating to none! To have experienced much injustice and have crawled through the worm-tunnels of every kind of error in order to be able to reach many hidden souls along their secret paths! Always in a type of love and a type of self-interest and self-enjoyment! To be in possession of a dominion and at the

[45] On Rousseau's creation of a new and original emotion compare Henri Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, trans. R. Ashley Audra & Cloudesley Brereton, Notre Dame 1977, pp. 41 f.

> same time inconspicuous and renouncing! To lie constantly in the sun and the kindness of grace and yet to know that the paths rising to the sublime (*zum Erhabenen*) are right at hand! – That would be a life! That would be a reason to live, to live a long time. (Ibid)

In this new mode of life we are strengthened and encouraged by the promise of the sublime and with a love that at one and the same time centres on ourselves and yet freely gives to others. Interestingly, in his treatment of the ancient Greeks Nietzsche had viewed tragic art as the means by which a people had conquered a world-weary pessimism (e.g. the wisdom of Silenus) and to the point where they loved life to such an extent that they wanted long lives. The pain and suffering of life no longer counted as an objection but became the grounds of a beautifying and sublime transfiguration of existence. In book five of D he is now envisaging how such comportment towards life can exist for us modern free spirits who have renounced so much (God, religion, the first and last things, romantic music, and so on). In D 440 Nietzsche in fact raises the question whether the philosopher of the morning is really renouncing things or gaining a new cheerfulness or serenity:

> To relinquish the world without knowing it, like a *nun* – that leads to an infertile, perhaps melancholic solitude. This has nothing in common with the solitude of the thinker's *vita contemplativa*: when he elects *it,* he in no way wishes to renounce; on the contrary, it would amount to renunciation, melancholy, downfall of his self for him to have to endure the *vita practica*: he relinquishes the latter because he knows it, knows himself. Thus he leaps into *his* water, thus he attains *his* serenity. (D 440, KSA 3.269)

For the thinker who now has the new dedication to knowledge and can recognise the extent of its future-oriented character – it is such because the discoveries of knowledge always run ahead of a humanity that in time will seek to become equal to it – existence is lived magnanimously. In aphorism 459 entitled "The thinker's magnanimity" Nietzsche writes:

> Rousseau and Schopenhauer – both were proud enough to inscribe upon their existence the motto: *vitam impendere vero* ("to dedicate one's life to truth"). And again – how they both must have suffered in their pride that they could not succeed in making *verum impendere vitae*! ("to dedicate truth to life") – *verum*, as each of them understood it – in that their lives tagged along beside their knowledge like a temperamental bass that refuses to stay in tune with the melody! But knowledge would be in a sorry state if it was meted out to every thinker only as it suited his person! And thinkers would be in a sorry state if their vanity were so great that they could only endure this! The great thinker's most beautiful virtue radiates precisely from: the magnanimity with which he, as a person of knowledge (*Erkennender*), undauntedly, often shamed, often with sublime mockery (*mit erhabenem Spotte*) and smiling – offers himself and his life in sacrifice (D 459, KSA 3.276).

Neither Rousseau nor Schopenhauer, Nietzsche is arguing, possessed the cognitive maturity that allows for knowledge and life to enter into a new mar-

riage in which knowledge elevates and pulls life up with it: their emotional personalities interfered too much to permit this process to take place.[46]

We can contrast this with the depiction Nietzsche provides of the likes of Plato, Spinoza, and Goethe in aphorism 497 entitled "The purifying eye."[47] In the genius of these natures we find a spirit that is only loosely bound to character and temperament, "like a winged essence that can separate itself from the latter and soar high above them (*sich dann weit über sie erheben kann*)" (D 497, KSA 3.292). Nietzsche then contrasts this genius with another kind, namely, those thinkers who boast of it but who in fact have never escaped from their temperament, and he gives as an example the case of Schopenhauer. Such geniuses are unable to fly above and beyond themselves but only ever encounter themselves wherever they fly. Nietzsche does not deny that such genius can amount to greatness, but he is keen to point out that what they lack is that which is to be truly prized – "the *pure, purifying eye*". Such an eye is not restricted in its vision by the partial sightedness created by character and temperament and can gaze at the world "as if it were a god, a god it loves" (ibid., KSA 3.293). Although these geniuses are teachers of "pure seeing", Nietzsche is keen to stress that such seeing requires apprenticeship and long practice.

It is clear that for Nietzsche true genius is something extremely rare simply because so few can free themselves from their temperaments and character.[48] Most of us see existence through a veil or cloak and this occupies his attention in aphorism 539. He challenges us to reflect on whether we are in fact suited for knowing what is true or not. Our mind may be too dull and our vision may be too crude to permit us access to such knowledge. He runs through the many subjective elements of our perception and vision of the world, how, for example, we are often on the look out for something that affects us strongly and at other times for something that calms us because we are tired: "Always full of secret

[46] On Schopenhauer compare Wittgenstein: "Schopenhauer is quite a *crude* mind, one might say. I.e. though he has refinement, this suddenly becomes exhausted at a certain level and the he is as crude as the crudest. Where real depth starts, his comes to an end. One could say of Schopenhauer: he never searches his conscience" (Ludwig Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, trans. Peter Winch, Chicago 1980, 36e).

[47] See also Z I, Vom Baum am Berge, KSA 4.53: "The liberated in spirit must yet purify himself. Much prison and mustiness is in him yet: his eye must yet become pure". Ironically perhaps, Schopenhauer's own insight into Goethe seems to anticipate Nietzsche: "Such a life, therefore, exalts the man and sets him above fate and its fluctuations. It consists in constant thinking, learning, experimenting, and practising, and gradually becomes the chief existence to which the personal is subordinated as the mere means to an end. An example of the independent and separate nature of this intellectual life is furnished by Goethe" (Schopenhauer, Parerga and Paralipomena, volume two, p. 75).

[48] Nietzsche's conception of the genius surely has affinities with Schopenhauer who defines genius as "the highest degree of the *objectivity* of knowledge" (this knowledge is a synthesis of perception and imagination and found in a rare state and abnormal individuals) (Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation: volume two, p. 292; see also chapter XXXI).

predeterminations as to *how* the truth would have to be constituted if you, precisely you, were able to accept it!" (D 539, KSA 3.308) To attain objectivity of perception and vision is hard for human beings – to be just toward something requires from us warmth and enthusiasm, and the lovable and hateful ego appears to be always present – and may in fact be only attainable in degrees. We may, then, have good reasons for living in fear of our own ghost: "In the cavern of every type of knowledge, are you not afraid once more of running into your own ghost, the ghost that is the cloak (*verkleidet*) in which truth has disguised itself from you?" (Ibid) For Nietzsche both Goethe and Schopenhauer are geniuses: the difference is that one is more capable than the other of "pure seeing" and hence more profound.

In aphorism 547, "Tyrants of the spirit," Nietzsche suggests that we should no longer feel the need to rush knowledge along to some end point. There is no longer the need, he holds, to approach questions and experiments as if the solutions to them had to correspond to a typical human time span. We are now free to take our time and go slowly:

> To solve everything at one fell swoop, with one single word – that was the secret wish: this was the task one imagined in the image of the Gordian knot or of Columbus' egg; one did not doubt that in the realm of knowledge as well it was possible to reach one's goal after the manner of an Alexander or a Columbus and to solve all questions with *one* answer (D 547, KSA 3.317).

The idea evolved that there was a riddle to solve for the philosopher and that the task was to compress the problem of the world into the simplest riddle-form: "The boundless ambition and jubilation of being the "unriddler of the world" were the stuff of thinker's dreams" (ibid., KSA 3.318). Under such a schema of the task of thinking philosophy assumed the guise of being a supreme struggle for the tyrannical rule of spirit reserved for a single individual (Nietzsche thinks that it is Schopenhauer who has most recently fancied himself as such an individual). The lesson to be drawn from this inheritance is that the quest for knowledge has been retarded by the moral narrow-mindedness of its disciples; in the future, Nietzsche declares, "it must be pursued with a higher and more magnanimous basic feeling: "What do I matter!" stands over the door of the future thinker" (ibid).

In aphorism 553 Nietzsche directly addresses the question of the direction of this new philosophy of the morning: where is it headed with all its detours? He himself raises the suspicion that it may be little more than the translation into reason of a concentrated drive, "for mild sunshine, clearer and fresher air, southerly vegetation, sea air, transient digests of meat, eggs, and fruit, hot water to drink, daylong silent wanderings … almost soldierly habits", and so on. In short, is it a philosophy "that at bottom is the instinct for a personal diet" and hygiene, one that suits a particular idiosyncratic taste and for whom it alone is beneficial? (D 553, KSA 3.323) He continues:

> An instinct that is searching for my own air, my own heights, my own weather, my own type of health, through the detour of my head? There are many other and certainly more loftier sublimities (*höhere Erhabenheiten*) of philosophy and not just those that are more gloomy and more ambitious than mine – perhaps they too are, each and every one, nothing other than intellectual detours for these kinds of personal drives? – In the meantime (*Inzwischen*) I observe with new eyes the secret and solitary swarming of a butterfly high on the rocky seashore where many good plants are growing; it flies about, untroubled that it only has one more day yet to live and that the night will be too cold for its winged fragility. One could certainly come up with a philosophy for it as well: although it is not likely to be mine. (Ibid., KSA 3.323 f.)

Although Nietzsche can observe and appreciate the butterfly in a new way, as he now can all things of nature, its mode of life is too simple and untroubled – it lives solely in the moment – in contrast to the philosophy of life his search is opening up, which is one of deep and troubled fascination and with ever-new peaks of elevation.[49] In his very first sketch of the eternal recurrence of the same from August 1881, in which he reflects on the new passion of knowledge and on the play of truth and error in humanity's evolution, Nietzsche brings his reflections to a close by invoking what he calls the "various *sublime states* (*erhabenen Zustände*)" he had to undergo as foundations of the various chapters he plans for his book on recurrence, "so as to gain an imprint (*Abbildung*) of my ideal, as though through addition. And then to go even higher!" (Nachlass 1881, 11[141], KSA 9.495 f.)

For Nietzsche the consolations of religion are fast disappearing from our consciousness (AOM 169; D 68), and the new sublimities he is fashioning can be understood, I think, as providing new consolations of philosophy. What has gone for us free spirited moderns are precisely those things Boethius sought as consolation from philosophy: belief in ultimate goodness, in an avenger and a final improver, belief in Providence, resting in endless trust, and so on (GS 285, KSA 3.527 f.).[50] Whilst the passion of knowledge and task of incorporating truth do not exist in order to console us or to satisfy the heart's desire – indeed, they challenge us to the very core of our being since truth and knowledge reveal that we are not what we take ourselves to be as (moral) agents or subjects – philosophy can entertain us in new ways. What does Nietzsche mean when he describes in book five of D philosophy as a form of 'entertainment'? I think he has in mind two things: first, philosophy "entertains" thoughts and ideas as a matter of its style and taste, and, second, following on from this, by reflecting on the "human, all too human" through psychological observation – for Nietzsche one of the consequences of the decline of the old sublime is that we will now focus

[49] In GS 83, KSA 3.438 Nietzsche refers to the "wings of the butterfly that is called moment" (*Augenblick*).

[50] What Boethius wants from philosophy is assurance that the wicked will not go unpunished and knowledge that the world is a rational order and guided by Providence. See Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, trans. V. E. Watts, Middlesex 1969.

our energies on the human, all too human – it will help "lighten the burden of life" (HH 35, KSA 2.57). This is an important therapeutic aspect of Nietzsche's thinking and one that merits a much more detailed analysis than I am able to provide here.[51]

Conclusion

Nietzsche's interest in the sublime has largely been unexplored in the literature to date and yet, as I hope to have indicated, by examining how it is figured in his texts we gain valuable insights into both his intellectual development and his conception of philosophical praxis. Certainly, there has been no significant work I know of that has paid attention to the complex movements of thought on the sublime that I have identified as being at work in D. Nietzsche is a serious thinker of the sublime and the concept is doing important work in his writings. In conclusion I wish to review the figuration of the sublime we find in the 'middle period' of his writings and offer some brief reflections on the development of the sublime in Nietzsche's writings after D.

Although Nietzsche will continue to figure the sublime in different ways in subsequent texts, several crucially important moves have been made by him in the texts of the middle period. They include: (a) discriminating between the sublime of the sage of old and the new sublimities of philosophy; and (b) showing how the sublime can now serve as a point of attraction to new realities and experiences (e.g. the ugly).[52] In HH 217, for example, Nietzsche notes that the ugly aspect of the world, which was originally hostile to the senses, has now been conquered for music: "its sphere of power, especially to express the sublime (*Erhabene*), dreadful, and mysterious, has grown astonishingly wide" (HH 217, KSA 2.177). In GS Nietzsche will continue to make use of the sublime in both critical and illuminating senses. In the well-known aphorism on giving style to one's character, for example, he figures it in the context of this problematic, noting how the ugly that cannot be removed is on the one hand concealed and, on the other, "reinterpreted and made sublime" (*Erhabene*) (GS 290, KSA 3.530). In GS 313 he indicates clearly that his intention is not to continue the association of the sublime with images of cruelty and torture: "I want to proceed as Raphael

[51] See Keith Ansell-Pearson, For Mortal Souls: Philosophy and Therapeia in Nietzsche's *Dawn*, in: Clare Carlisle / Jonardon Ganeri (eds.), Philosophy and Therapeia, Cambridge, forthcoming 2010.

[52] For Burke ugliness is consistent with the idea of the sublime but must be united "with such qualities as excite a strong terror" (A Philosophical Inquiry, p. 109). Nietzsche's thinking of the ugly and its transfiguration is quite different and linked to more general concerns about human becoming through aesthetic transfiguration.

did and never paint another image of torture. There are enough sublime things (*erhabenen Dinge*) so that one does not have to look for the sublime (*die Erhabenheit*) where it dwells in sisterly association with cruelty" (GS 313, KSA 3.548). His ambition, he tells us, could never find satisfaction if he became "a sublime (*sublimen*) assistant at torture" ("sublim" may be being used here in the sense of "subtle" or "impressive"). This is in accord with the treatment of the history of spirit we find in *Dawn*. In D 39, for example, Nietzsche notes that the teaching of "pure spirituality" has taught only deprecation, ignorance, or tormenting of the body and self-torment. In the process it has produced souls that are gloomy, anxious, and oppressed. Moreover, the only pleasure a pure spirit can muster is in the form of ecstasy: "their system reached its apogee when it accepted ecstasy both as the highest goal in life and as the standard according to which everything earthly was *condemned*" (D 39, KSA 3.47; see also D 76 f.).

The sublime continues to be utilised by Nietzsche in his subsequent writings in both its adjectival and noun forms. To understand the ends for which he employs the sublime the specific intellectual problems he is concerned with in his late writings, as well as the nature of his polemics, need to be carefully examined and appreciated. To indicate this I will offer some brief insight into the criticism of the sublime we encounter in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *The Case of Wagner*.

In the discourse entitled "On Those who are Sublime" in part two of Z Nietzsche has his eponymous hero reflect on what lies at the bottom of his sea and forces him to acknowledge that it harbours "sportive monsters" (Z II, Von den Erhabenen, KSA 4.150). He encounters a "sublime one" and notes how ugly he appears as a "penitent of the spirit". The sublime one is "decked out with ugly truths" and although many thorns hang on his attire, no rose can be seen on him. Such a spirit has learned neither laughter nor beauty but has returned from the forest of knowledge bearing a gloomy disposition. Not until he has grown weary of his sublimity (*Erhabenheit*), Zarathustra states, will beauty radiate from this spirit and only at this point would Zarathustra find him a creature of taste and something tasty. He needs to become 'elevated' (*ein Gehobener*) and not merely 'sublime' (*ein Erhabener*): "He has subdued monsters, he has solved riddles: but he should also redeem his own monsters and riddles, and transform them into heavenly children" (ibid., KSA 4.151).

Nietzsche privileges here, as he will also do in *The Case of Wagner*, the beautiful over the sublime. Zarathustra notes that for the hero of knowledge the beautiful is the most difficult to attain and cannot be won by a violent will: "When power becomes gracious and descends into the visible: beauty I call such a descent" (ibid., KSA 4.152).[53] In his interpretation of this discourse in his magisterial

[53] For a relevant analysis of Nietzsche on beauty see John Richardson, Nietzsche's New Darwinism, Oxford 2004, chapter four, especially pp. 260–70.

study of *Z*, Robert Gooding-Williams maintains that what is being criticised in it is the sublime as we encounter it in Kant and Schopenhauer, namely the idea of a supersensible subject.[54] Whilst this is relevant I think that the criticism developed in this discourse is, in fact, a *self*-criticism. Nietzsche is directing his thinking on the need to conquer the gloomy sublime with the gracious beautiful at himself and as a task which needs to inspire his own philosophical practice. There is an abundance of material in D to indicate that this is the case (and we should note that Z is in many respects a dramatic version of what has been taught in the free spirit trilogy of 1878–82).

Just what troubles Nietzsche about the sublime is made explicit in his late text, *The Case of Wagner*.[55] In this text Nietzsche opposes the entire "theatricality" of Wagner's music dramas. Thus, for example, he speaks of a "theatocracy" being established with Wagner, of the composer's "theatre-rhetoric," and of the fact that even as a musician Wagner is a "rhetorician". He criticises the "counterfeiting of transcendence and the beyond" (CW Postscript) at work in Wagner's operas, and it is in this context of exposing the theatricality of Wagner the musician that Nietzsche advances his criticism of the sublime. As a theatocrat, Nietzsche contends, Wagner needs the sublime (*Erhaben*) in the form of the "profound and overwhelming". He needs this to excite and elevate his audience and they in turn, as lovers of the theatre, need the sublime conceived as the profound, the gigantic and the overwhelming (CW 6, KSA 6.24).

Nietzsche sets himself in opposition to this dependence on the sublime, I would argue, in the name of a certain rationalism. It is "rationalism" that defines Nietzsche's philosophical position in both his middle and late periods. The appeal to reason and principles of rationality is strong in D and informs his criticism of Wagner in CW. Wagner's sublime, for example, he argues, gives people "vague presentiments" and stupefies thinking: "Above all, no thinking! Nothing is more compromising that a thought!" (ibid.) Nietzsche calls this elevation of people to the sublime "idealism" and it is at this that his criticism is directed. However, it would be mistaken to infer from this that Nietzsche completely renounces the concept and experience of the sublime and is unable to refashion it for new and different ends. In a note from 1883 for example, he posits his "demand" in terms that explicitly draw upon the sublime: "My demand: to produce beings who stand sublimely (*erhaben dastehen*) above the whole human species: and to sacrifice oneself and one's 'neighbors' to this goal." (Nachlass 1883, 7[21], KSA 10.244)

What Nietzsche is opposed to, I believe, is any attempt to revivify for us moderns the old religiously-inspired sublime. In taking this to task, however, he

[54] Robert Gooding-Williams, Zarathustra's Dionysian Modernism, California 2001, pp. 176–80.
[55] The Case of Wagner, trans. Judith Norman, Cambridge 2005.

leaves open the possibility of other and new experiences of the sublime. Nietzsche's challenge consists in asking the following question: can we be ennobled and elevated by the passion of knowledge and by the insight that the human is an "experiment"? Even when he posits the *Übermensch* as the new meaning of the earth Nietzsche is, in fact, also inviting us to return to the human, to discover it anew and learn what the human is through purifying knowledge. The human does not cease to remain the focus of Nietzsche's attention and concern.