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# HEIDEGGER AND THE DEATH OF GOD

Between Plato  
and Nietzsche

**Duane Armitage**



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*For my mother Lorita*

## PREFACE

The following text is a set of reflections upon the philosophy of Martin Heidegger in the context of several thinkers and themes, in particular, Nietzsche and modern science and technology. My primary aim is to address the question of “truth” and thus of “being” in the context of Heidegger’s assessment that Nietzsche’s metaphysics is an expression of the underlying metaphysics of modern science and modern technology. But this inquiry is not an end in itself; that is, I do not intend this book to be a mere descriptive analysis of Heidegger’s thinking, but rather I wish to assess not only whether Heidegger’s thinking accomplishes what he intended, but also whether this thinking answers the most important question concerning being and truth, namely their ontological status vis-à-vis modern scientific (Nietzschean) reductionism. It seems to me, for reasons I will later outline, the only way to properly pose and answer this question in a modern context is through Heidegger’s engagement with Nietzsche, since this engagement, in particular, seeks to think through and combat the metaphysics of modernity by using Nietzsche as its representative. Heidegger’s insights concerning Nietzsche are not merely about Nietzsche, but also address science, technology, and the metaphysics that unifies them all, namely will to power.

The basic task of my project is to use Heidegger’s critique of Nietzsche as a way into a deeper critique of modern scientific reductionism. I frame this argument in terms of the “ontological status” of intelligibility (being, truth, etc.) and argue that if any metaphysics (scientific or otherwise) fails to account for such intelligibility, then it fails necessarily,

as it cannot explain or account for its purported ability *to explain* or *account*. My conclusions have direct implications for the viability of a Platonic and theistic account of reality over and against a Nietzschean and atheistic one.

My conclusion, with Heidegger, is that Nietzsche's project, along with the atheist and reductionist accounts of being proposed (axiomatically) by modern science and technology, fails to account for precisely *why* the world is intelligible rather than unintelligible, and thus fails to adequately *explain* not only particular *intelligibles* such as numbers, logical rules, causes, etc., but more importantly, intelligible grounds such as being and truth. I also conclude that Heidegger's proposed solution to the failure of Nietzsche and modern science, namely the posing of the *Seinsfrage*, merely begs the question as to the ontological status of being, truth, and intelligibility. Therefore, I propose a radical conclusion that, because Nietzscheanism collapses into absurdity in its inability to account and explain the intelligibility of reality itself, only a Platonism and Cartesianism of sorts can adequately account for reality in a consistent and intelligible manner. Moreover, and perhaps even more radical than a conclusion that lauds the merits of Descartes, something most unusual for this current period in Continental Philosophy, I argue that there are, in the end, only two possible positions one could take in the history of philosophy—Platonism or Nietzscheanism—and thus the decision as to the viability and truth of one over the other perhaps proves to be *the* most important philosophical question to be asked. It is precisely this question that Plato posed initially in his *Sophist* concerning the *Gigantomachy*, or the battle between “gods” and “giants” concerning the nature of being itself.

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## Introduction

*There appears to be a sort of war of giants and gods going on amongst them; they are fighting with one another about 'being'....<sup>1</sup>*  
—Sophist 246a

**Abstract** The Introduction performs a twofold function: first, to set up the problematic of the Gigantomachy, or “battle between gods and giants,” concerning the question of being; second, to lay out a road map as to how the book’s argument will commence. The Gigantomachy concerning being is first mentioned in Plato’s *Sophist* in terms of a battle between a transcendent idealism (“the gods”) and a reductive materialism (“the giants”). This text takes this original Platonic problem vis-à-vis the philosophy of Nietzsche and Heidegger, and argues, in the end, in favor of the Platonic idealist side of the battle concerning being.

**Keywords** Heidegger · Platonism · Metaphysics

The battle between giants and gods (*gigantomachia*) is a battle with which in (post) modernity we are undoubtedly all too familiar. It is a battle concerning metaphysics, or, whether any such thing exists. The battle is between the giants of materialism, who seek “to drag everything

down to earth out of heaven and the unseen....and affirm that real being belongs only to that which can be handled..." and the gods, who, as "friends of the forms," maintain that "true being consists in certain intelligible and bodiless forms" (246a–b). In other words, this Gigantomachy is a war over the ontological status of intelligibility, meaning, truth, and ultimately *being*. Are intelligibility and meaning ontologically independent of material reality? Or can such intelligibility be simply reduced to materiality and nature? If so, are the semblances of intelligibility and truth merely reducible to the human mind and its constructions? In other words, are truth and being then ultimately dependent upon the human being, rather than existing independently on their own? These questions essentially define the battle between "giants" and "gods," or, as we are perhaps familiar with their guises in the metaphysical tradition: Nietzsche and Plato. Indeed, for Heidegger, the metaphysical tradition is constituted, as such, by a definitive progression of the question concerning the meaning of being, beginning with Plato, up to its final inversion with Nietzsche. John Sallis rightly describes the relation between Plato and Nietzsche as a battle, the Gigantomachy itself, and thus "a battle in which being is at stake."<sup>2</sup>

Nietzsche, who himself defined his own philosophy as precisely an "inversion of Plato,"<sup>3</sup> argues that intelligibility and meaning are mere consequences of the constructions of will to power, which itself is rooted in a natural process. Moreover, anything and everything metaphysical, concerning truth and/or being, proves to be a mere "stabilizing" of becoming. "What is" then is ultimately reducible to the natural, to the material, and anything seemingly transcendent or mind-independent, i.e., anything metaphysical, remains ultimately fictitious. Plato, on the other hand, as a proponent of the forms or Ideas, seeks to ground the material world of nature—the sensible world of becoming—upon the intelligible world of the Ideas, which constitute the "being" and the "truth" of sensible beings that become. Being, thus grounds becoming, as that which exists ontologically independent of the things in the sensible realm. In short, intelligibility, being, and truth are mind-independent and serve to ground the changing sensible world upon a fixed, invisible world of being.

Plato critiques the giants for precisely the simple reason, among many others, that their account (*logos*) destroys the very ability to give an account, a *logos*. That is, materialism cannot account for intelligibility, and thus cannot explain how things are explained, i.e., how things are thought. Moreover, these giants fail to account for immaterial realities such as

justice, virtue, and truth without reducing them to the material, which would be, in effect, to deny their existence or their ontological status as independently existing entities, for essential to their existence is the fact that they are not material. Thus for Plato, the materialist often becomes trapped in the paradoxical claim of neither being willing nor unwilling to affirm or to deny the ontological status of intelligibility, of forms. To deny them would be to argue that truth, goodness, justice, etc., do not exist, a claim that most are unwilling to concede. On the other hand, to affirm them is to displace and contradict their prior claim to materialism.

However, when this ancient Gigantomachy is resurrected by Nietzsche, he remains quite well aware of the paradox that arises in materialism and affirms it nonetheless by offering a full-scale rejection of intelligibility, meaning, truth, and thus being itself in favor of a philosophical position that grounds all of these things in becoming and the will to power. That is, Nietzsche's inversion of Platonism remains radically conscious of its own paradoxical claims, including the self-referential incoherence of claims against truth and being themselves. Nevertheless, Nietzsche proves to be such an interesting thinker precisely because of his consciousness of the absurdity of his own conclusions due to the fact that Nietzsche remained himself wary of Platonism's eventual theism. And Nietzsche, a self-professed "atheist by instinct," we could say, sought and fought against any and every form of theism, and thus attempted to follow the thinking of atheism out to its "logical" conclusions, conclusions that many atheists are unwilling to concede. It is precisely here that Nietzsche confronts this battle vis-à-vis the birth and conclusions of modern science and modern science's "murder" of God.

Indeed, atheistic modern science, for Nietzsche, remains hypocritical precisely because it remains "stuck" in a "pale atheism" that is unwilling to accept its own conclusions. Thus this "sticking point" stands halfway between Nietzsche and Plato, insofar as science wants to dispense with God and transcendence altogether, while at the same time, nevertheless, seeking to hang on to "forms" such as truth and intelligibility. For Nietzsche, modern science need only be honest with itself in the courage of its convictions and finally shrug off the burdensome value of truth, the "long storm" that, according to Zarathustra, has so extensively plagued humanity. Whereas, we could say, for Platonists, modern science must repent by embracing its philosophical and theological foundations and anchoring itself firmly in a metaphysics that would seek to ground the metaphysical "values" of truth and being that it employs.

Heidegger, however, proposes a third way of responding to modern science's conundrum. This third way would attempt to undercut the two camps that constitute *ipso facto* metaphysics proper, namely the Nietzschean-Platonic polarity, which, for Heidegger, we now encounter, in a full-fledged Nietzscheanism, in the metaphysic of modern science and technology. Thus, we could say, while Nietzsche's "meta" position sought to overturn Platonism, Heidegger seeks a meta-metaposition, that seeks to overcome and twist free of the very logic of the battle between Nietzsche and Plato, between the giants and the gods, and thus between the problems that ensue from thinking qua metaphysics itself. Is such an overcoming of metaphysics possible? That is, is it possible to find an alternative third way vis-à-vis the Gigantomachy between Plato and Nietzsche? Is it possible even to *think* apart from or in a radically new manner from the Platonic and/or Nietzschean categories? These are the questions that this book seeks to answer.

Indeed, the thesis of this book is that this ancient war between giants and gods is alive and well in philosophical modernity, particularly in terms of the battle of the reductionism of modern science and technology versus theism and rationalism, and even to some extent of post-modernism versus traditional Platonism and Cartesianism. Although the battle takes various forms, it nevertheless remains an unending battle, even in our contemporary culture. It is within this context that, I believe, the philosophy of Martin Heidegger is best approached, as Heidegger's philosophy attempts to explore the possibility of thinking "outside" of this narrative. Unfortunately, I think Heidegger's philosophy fails at the very act it attempts, namely the "overcoming of metaphysics," the overcoming of the binary of Nietzsche and Plato, for Heidegger himself, in the end, must make ontological commitments to intelligibility that place him on either side of the divide. Nevertheless, there is much to glean from Heidegger's struggle with the Gigantomachy of metaphysics, for Heidegger believes himself to be combatting the problem of nihilism and opening up new possibilities through which to think contemporary nihilism.

The conclusions of this book will be that since Heidegger's project fails, along with Nietzsche's, the only viable alternative to saving intelligibility is Platonism and Cartesianism. Defending traditional Platonism, especially in the current Continental tradition, will prove difficult. Even more so will be providing an *apologia* for Descartes, the father of modern philosophy in the Freudian sense, since nearly everyone vehemently

rejects Cartesianism, at least in some form. Thus, I expect my project here shall prove quite unpopular. Regardless, I believe it is the only viable philosophical position vis-à-vis the nihilism of modernity.

In order to argue in favor of traditional Platonism and Cartesianism, it will first be necessary to tackle Nietzsche's thinking as a metaphysician, and no better thinker, to my mind, is capable of this task than Heidegger, the very thinker who conceives of Nietzsche as *fundamentally* a metaphysician, one with a fundamental thought on being itself. Thus, Heidegger's work on Nietzsche, which includes his four-volume lecture course on Nietzsche given in the mid to late 1930s, proves necessary to my endeavor. After using Heidegger to flesh out Nietzsche and Heidegger's own position with regard to Nietzsche (i.e., exactly why and how Heidegger thinks Nietzsche fails to "overcome" nihilism), I will turn to Heidegger's own attempts, through art and what I have here termed "meta-metaphysics," to overcome Platonism, Nietzscheanism, and thus metaphysical thinking itself. I will argue here that Heidegger's questions concerning the forgetting of being in metaphysics are already quite important for Plato in the form of the question of Platonic *methexis* (participation), for it is around this question of *methexis* that I argue Heidegger's entire philosophy revolves. Moreover, not only are such questions on the mind of Plato himself, but Kierkegaard, prior to both Nietzsche and Heidegger, already sought a quasi-"overcoming" of metaphysics in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, where he attempted to rethink "truth" as "subjectivity" in the hopes of destabilizing the nihilistic "lunacy" of Hegelianism. I will argue that Kierkegaard's overcoming of metaphysics is indeed only a "quasi" overcoming, since he remains committed to the objectivity of truth and thus being. Finally, I will turn to Thomas Nagel's recent publications—*The Last Word* (1997) and *Mind and Cosmos* (2012)—where he launches a full-scale attack on the subjectivism and relativism that he thinks is prevalent in modernity, in modern science, and in postmodernism. In the end, I will conclude, alongside Nagel, that the only defensible philosophical position is that of metaphysics itself, namely a position, along the lines of Plato and Descartes, that seeks to preserve the ontological status and independence of intelligibility, truth, and being.

My thesis then is simply that the history of philosophy confronts one with a choice: gods or giants, Plato or Nietzsche, realism or anti-realism. Not to answer this question, by inquiring instead, as does Heidegger, into the "fundamental grounds" of this bifurcation, while interesting and even essential otherwise, is to sidestep and ultimately beg the question as

to the ontological status of intelligibility. In other words, either meaning, intelligibility, logic, reason, etc., are real or they are not. If they are, then Platonism, and even theism, inevitably follows (this, of course, will have to be demonstrated). If they are not real, then Nietzsche is correct, and “truth” and “being” are ultimately fictions; if truth is a fiction, then Nietzsche’s own philosophy cannot even purport to be “true,” and thus must simply be an aesthetic perspective.

It should be noted that throughout this text I give credence and concession to Nietzsche’s (and Heidegger’s) understanding of the equivalency of metaphysics and Platonism. That is, I concede, with Nietzsche, that, following Plato, all subsequent philosophies and philosophical systems, including Aristotle up and through Descartes and Hegel, are none other than Platonism, insofar as each of these “systems” axiomatically assumes the split world between being/becoming, transcendent/immanent, intelligible/sensible, etc. Moreover, although I wholly disagree with Nietzsche and his conclusions, I nevertheless fundamentally agree (as does Heidegger largely) with Nietzsche’s reading of the history of philosophy as the history of metaphysical Platonism, which *ipso facto* means that any concession to the objective, ontological status of intelligibility leads inevitably not only to mind-independence, but to transcendence (i.e., metaphysics) and to *the* transcendent itself. My concession to these claims of Nietzsche and Heidegger will indeed be unpacked and defended throughout the body of this text. (My concession is hardly unique as it is indeed axiomatic to Continental thinking, insofar as such thinking merely assumes both Nietzsche and Heidegger’s critique and attempts to overcome metaphysics qua Platonism.) Nevertheless, my thesis concerning the necessity for a decisive confrontation with the Gigantomachy hangs upon the axioms of Nietzsche’s reading of the history of Western philosophy as synonymous with metaphysics and indeed Platonism. In other words, Nietzsche was right in concluding that the Gigantomachy concerns a choice between himself and Plato. For reasons we shall see, I remain persuaded by the latter.

It should also be noted that throughout the text I use the terms “reason” and “intelligibility” (especially within the context of the terms “being” and “truth,”) in the classical Platonic-Aristotelian sense to refer to unchanging, mind-independent realities. That is to say, reason refers to that intellectual capacity by which we arrive at truths about the way reality *is* that are both *universal* and *necessary* (non-contingent), and, as such, immutable and timeless. Such universal and necessary rational



truths are what Aristotle and Plato called “forms,” and what I refer to simply as “intelligibility.” Intelligibility, as I will show, includes a broad range of rational truths, including the truths of mathematics and logic, as well as moral and ethical truths, and thus refers to any way in which reality is ordered and organized such that a mind is able to “think” it. It will become clear in the text itself that this ability to think (and thus *to know*) reality is inextricably bound with the concept of *being* itself.

## NOTES

1. Translation mine. I have consulted the following translations: Plato, *Sophist or the Professor of Wisdom*, trans. Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 1996) and F. M. Cornford’s translation in Plato, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961). Unless otherwise indicated, translations of the Platonic dialogues will be by Cornford.
2. John Sallis, *Platonic Legacies* (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 2004), 7.
3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefe* ([Nietzschesource.org](http://Nietzschesource.org), 2009) NF-1870, 7[156], last accessed May 25, 2017.

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## Nietzsche and the Battle Over Being

**Abstract** This chapter concerns the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, in particular, a consideration of Nietzsche as a metaphysical thinker. This chapter is divided into three main sections: (1) a discussion of Nietzsche's philosophy of science vis-à-vis his atheism, (2) a discussion of Nietzsche's metaphysics through the lens of Martin Heidegger; and (3) a discussion of Nietzsche's overcoming of metaphysics in the context of art. The goal of this chapter is to establish Nietzsche's thinking on the materialist side of the Gigantomachy.

**Keywords** Nietzsche · Atheism · Theism · Philosophy of science  
Heidegger

### NIETZSCHE

According to Gianni Vattimo, it is precisely Heidegger's insistence upon identifying Nietzsche as a metaphysician that makes Heidegger's reading(s) of Nietzsche so unique for their time period.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the basic and continual theme running throughout all of Heidegger's thinking on Nietzsche is an attempt to think and rethink how Nietzsche conceived of "being," and thus to identify Nietzsche's "fundamental metaphysical position." Nietzsche is, therefore, for Heidegger, a thinker concerned with the *Seinsfrage*, the being question, at least insofar as metaphysics is capable of thinking such a question. Moreover, Nietzsche's

metaphysics is a thinking on being that presents itself quite strangely and uniquely vis-à-vis the history of metaphysics, in that it is a metaphysics that attempts to destroy “metaphysics” (and thus “being” itself). Yet, for Heidegger, Nietzsche’s thinking about being marks the essence and ground of Nietzsche’s thinking overall, such that if one were to understand precisely how and in what way Nietzsche understood the term “being,” then the concealed truth of Nietzsche’s thinking could finally, and for once, be *thought*. Nevertheless, better insight into Nietzsche is not quite what Heidegger seeks as his ultimate intent, for Heidegger uses Nietzsche as a *means* toward better insight into modernity. Indeed, Heidegger argues that Nietzsche’s thinking speaks the very essence of the metaphysics of our current time. However, before we can say why and how Heidegger undertakes such a project, we first need to understand what Nietzsche’s fundamental metaphysical position in fact is; that is, how does Nietzsche understand the being of beings?

In order to inquire into Nietzsche’s fundamental position on being, we need to understand how such a position arises out of his understanding of modernity, namely out of the rise of modern science and the death of God. This involves a discussion of truth, in particular, of what Nietzsche sees as truth’s failure in modern science, which is, in the end, the failure of modern science itself. Yet how does modern science fail for Nietzsche? As we shall see, it fails precisely because it cannot disentangle itself from theism, which seems quite ironic, since science is ostensibly responsible for the very death of theism. But for Nietzsche, modernity lies in the wake of nihilism precisely because it cannot wake up from its theistic dream; it cannot untether itself from theism. Exactly why this is the case will be explored in what follows.

It should be noted that the literature on Nietzsche, particularly on his critique(s) of science and metaphysics, is quite vast. It would be impossible to deal here with the many nuanced readings of Nietzsche’s critique without losing sight of our goal, namely Heidegger’s engagement with and appropriation of Nietzsche so as to use Nietzsche’s metaphysics to speak the metaphysics of modernity/postmodernity. Furthermore, it proves quite difficult to study Nietzsche as a systematic or consistent thinker by any stretch; thus, differing and contentious interpretations of Nietzsche are to be expected. Nevertheless, I find Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche largely correct, and this will require some defense on my part. Thus, recourse to commentary on various contemporary Nietzsche readings will prove necessary. However, for the most part, I will offer a

reading of Nietzsche through the texts that Heidegger himself engages, texts that include the controversial *Will to Power*. We shall find then, in the following selections from Nietzsche, what Heidegger thought to be the metaphysics of our contemporary world, a metaphysics oscillating between scientific naturalism and postmodern subjective-relativism. My goal(s) then in what follows will be simply to show that the postmodern or subjectivist reading of Nietzsche (Heidegger's reading, in the end) is largely correct, and, furthermore, to link this reading to Heidegger's attempt both to appropriate and overcome Nietzsche.

My argument initially will be that the Nietzschean position (by Nietzsche's own admission) is the *truth* of naturalism, of all types, in that this position makes the *metaphysics* of naturalism explicit, and thus brings the logic of naturalism to its (logical) conclusion. Thus, I argue, Nietzsche's naturalism lies inchoate in any and all naturalisms. This, I believe, is the essence of Heidegger's critique of Nietzsche, namely that Nietzsche remains within the metaphysical and the Platonic system, and thus within the modern scientific project as well. I will show that to argue for any intelligibility, i.e., "being" or "truth," is to place oneself within the realm of metaphysics, and thus in the Platonic realm *ipso facto*. As we shall see, Nietzsche himself is well aware of this problem, and indeed struggles greatly to resist it by nevertheless attempting to destroy the very notions of being and truth in favor of the will to power.

### NIETZSCHE'S PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

"Science," or "modern science," is a term consistently employed by Nietzsche to denote the entire project of *scientia* writ large, that is, the search for knowledge of objective truths in nature. This search for truth had its origin in Greek thinking and reaches its climax in modernity ("modern science") with the emphasis upon method in Descartes and Bacon, the mathematization, and thus mechanization of nature in Galileo and Newton, and finally in Darwin's theory of evolution. Nietzsche thinks that although there are many facets and common threads underlying science and its modern instantiation, there nevertheless remains one central motive behind science qua *scio* or *scientia*, namely the *will to truth*. Thus, as we shall see, modern science for Nietzsche is a project that not only began with Plato, but fails to realize that it is still utterly Platonic, and thus theistic, for it fails to realize that it

not only values but *believes* in objective truth and intelligibility, of which it thinks it can have knowledge (*scientia*).

Thus, for Nietzsche: *modern atheism remains just as theistic as the theism it denies*. In my estimation, this amounts to Nietzsche's most overlooked thought and one of the most underappreciated ideas in the history of philosophy, as it concerns the absolute hypocrisy of modern atheism. Modern atheism (or "pale atheism" as Nietzsche calls it),<sup>2</sup> generated by modern science's "death of God," remains ultimately unable to free itself from its entrenchment in theism. Why? Precisely because it still puts faith in the primary theistic value: *truth*. For Nietzsche, insofar as modern atheism believes no longer in the truth of theism, but in the truth(s) of modern science, it remains ever more fixed in theism and its values. Thus, modern science (and its atheism) has failed to realize that in "killing God" it has, in one fell swoop, also killed itself. That is, the "death of God," caused *by* the birth of modern science, has also proved to be the death, the suicide, of modern science, for science has killed the need for truth, for being, and ultimately for rationality. In what follows, I would like to discuss the implications of this remarkable and often ignored insight of Nietzsche.

We could state Nietzsche's argument in a slightly different way: the will to truth in modern science has *destroyed itself*. How? By the revelation, by way of Darwinism, that the human being is a mere animal, that is, an irrational animal seeking not truth but *power* in the form of survival and adaptation.<sup>3</sup> "Rationality" represents the farce that the human intellect can actually know truth about the world. Reason, if the Darwinian anthropology proves correct, is merely a useful means toward life, the enhancement of life.<sup>4</sup> The human intellect then, serving our adaptive biology, has no real interest in truth, in what is actually true, but rather seeks only life, or power—power over its environment in order to ensure life, adaptability, survival, etc. Thus, the logic of Darwin shows that *the will to truth* has revealed itself *as* the *will to power*. That is, the very desire for truth is, in reality, a desire not for truth, but for power. Truth is simply the guise under which power operates. Now, if Darwinism is right, then this pursuit of power (over truth) applies self-referentially, that is, to the truth(s) of Darwinism and (and all so-called truths in modern science). Thus, for Nietzsche, the very ideal or value of truth itself must be called into question.

Now, with Darwinian evolution by natural selection, belief in God becomes ultimately incredible insofar as God is no longer needed to

explain the origin and *meaning* of the human being. Yet, for Nietzsche, we have still not realized the radical implications of Darwinism, namely that truth itself becomes obsolete and subservient to adaptability; truth becomes a fiction, a mere biological mechanism designed to increase our survival. Not “the truth,” but the *value* or *belief* in truth, is what proves useful, valuable, for survival. In other words, if *all* human behavior is adaptive, this must include the very search for truth itself, in which case, truth itself would no longer be true, but adaptive. There is then no truth, rather only power. Truth, in a sense, defangs the world and makes it easier to dominate, but truth is not actually “true.” Nietzsche writes, “Truth is the kind of error without which a certain species of life could not live. The value for life is ultimately decisive.”<sup>5</sup> The truth then is, in a sense, the ultimate lie.

Nietzsche’s contentious text *The Will to Power*<sup>6</sup> contains many notes, under the heading “Biology of the Drive to Knowledge,” that furthers this instrumentalist approach to truth and science (*scientia*). Indeed, for Nietzsche, “the criterion of truth resides in the enhancement of the feeling of power” (WP 534). Knowledge, or *scientia*, propelled by power, by life, seeks not the truth, but simply more life, more power, and in order for it to do so, the mind must take control of its environment: “[t]he entire apparatus of knowledge is...directed not at knowledge but at taking possession of things...” (WP 503). Nietzsche even goes so far as to liken the intellect, and its schematization of the world, to Procrustes and his bed, insofar as it stretches, cuts, and ultimately distorts reality in order to fit it into the mind’s specific projects and plans, namely those that are useful for enhancing of life (WP 499).

Yet—and Nietzsche is well aware of this—if indeed truth were merely a function of power, of adaptation, then *any* predication concerning the truth would not be “true” but merely adaptive. This includes the idea of Darwinism itself, namely that “the truth is adaptive.” In other words, Darwinism itself, like the metaphysical value of the truth, would prove to be self-referentially unintelligible. Much like the classical “Liar’s Paradox,” where the liar claims that “everything” he says “is a lie,” which would itself be a lie, and thus ultimately unintelligible and meaningless, so also does the fundamental truth of modern science prove to be unintelligible and itself a lie, insofar as it claims that humans are animals who adapt at the expense of the (necessary) fiction of truth. Thus, it could simply be *beneficial* for us to think that Darwinism (and any truths of modern science for that matter) were true.<sup>7</sup> Thus, even if reason, as

successful adaptive function, could “track reality,” we nevertheless would have no way of knowing that it could (other than, as we shall see, by assuming it does so based upon our ability to control it), for once truth becomes subsumed by utility and power, veracity cannot be discernible. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, in the end, according to Nietzsche, there remains no static reality (i.e., being) for the mind to “track.” Therefore, reason itself, as the very ground of the will to truth, is ultimately proven to be a sham, and proven such by itself, for the very will to truth itself has led to the truth of Darwinism. This truth, it seems, has turned against itself.

Nietzsche’s “logic” here is no doubt circular. Yet, it is precisely this circular logic to which modern atheism remains oblivious. Modern atheism is still, for Nietzsche, “pious.”<sup>8</sup> Why? Quite simply, modern atheism still believes in truth, and such belief is a *metaphysical* belief in the value of truth, namely that truth is not only “true” and “real,” but that truth is “good” and “better” than what is false (GM 3:24). Nietzsche notes, thus:

Unconditional honest atheism...is therefore *not* the antithesis of that ideal [theism, the ascetic ideal of religion], as it appears to be; it is rather only one of the latest phases of its evolution, one of its terminal forms and inner consequences –it is the awe-inspiring *catastrophe* of two thousand years of training in truthfulness that finally forbids itself the lie involved in belief in God. (GM 3:27)

Atheism, with its convictions of the truths of modern science, insofar as it still has *faith* in the truth, is, therefore, still a species of theism. Atheism of this kind, “pale atheism,” remains the latest phase in theism’s—or as we shall see shortly, Platonism’s—evolution.

Furthermore, we could add, modern atheists fail to see that behind faith in truth lies faith in the idea that the world is ordered, discoverable, and ultimately ordered by an *orderer*, a designer. Why else should our intellect “link up,” so to speak, with reality? On what basis do I trust in my rational faculties? Like Descartes, Nietzsche sees the problem of linking the mind with reality as requiring God as the “epistemological guarantor” to guarantee that my ideas about the world are really true. Yet once God dies, recourse to such a guarantor, or any guarantee for that matter, proves futile. Nietzsche therefore writes,

It is still a *metaphysical faith* that underlies our faith in science – and we men of knowledge of today, we godless men and anti-metaphysicians, we, too, still derive *our* flame from the fire ignited by a faith millennia old, the Christian faith, which was also Plato's, that God is truth, that truth is *divine*. But what if this belief is becoming more and more unbelievable, if nothing turns out to be divine any longer unless it be error, blindness, lies – if God himself turns out to be our *longest lie* ... Science itself henceforth *requires* justification (which is not to say that there is any such justification)...The will to truth requires a critique – let us thus define our own task –the value of truth must for once be experimentally *called into question*.... (GM 3:24)

Only when the will to truth is subjected, or perhaps subjects itself, to an immanent critique can the nihilism of theism be finally overcome. Nietzsche thus later writes, “There are many kinds of eyes...and consequently there are many kinds of ‘truths,’ and consequently there is no truth” (WP 540).

In summary, we could say that Nietzsche's naturalism, i.e., his radical Darwinism, leads eventually to his postmodernism, or metaphysical relativism.<sup>9</sup> That is, Nietzsche's commitment to a seemingly “anti-metaphysical” world leads logically to its own self-destruction in a postmodern worldview that denies the very possibility of truth itself. Therefore, every truth, including the truth of Nietzsche's own predications proves to be a lie. Nietzsche's metaphysical relativism (a relativism that remains relative to the subject's will to power, as we shall see) is the result of his suspicious hermeneutics, which shows that behind the will to truth *lies* the will to power. Thus, we enter into a strange paradox when taking Nietzsche's thoughts on truth seriously, for these thoughts are ultimately self-destructive, as they are self-referentially incoherent. If Nietzsche is right, then he cannot be right (since “being right” would be mere fiction of the will to power). Nietzsche's philosophy then deconstructs to the point of self-destruction.

This self-referential unintelligibility and self-destruction mark the heart of Nietzsche's madness. Yet, it simultaneously, according to Nietzsche himself, marks the madness of modern science as a whole! Indeed, what ultimately concerns us, for our purposes, is not a simplistic interpretation of Nietzsche as a relativist, but rather the essential insight into Nietzsche's thinking concerning modern science, namely modern science's own self-referential deconstruction at its own hands



(i.e., its own suicide). The very will to truth itself, which led to the truths of modern science, led simultaneously to its own self-destruction in uncovering the “truth” that truth is merely a servant of the will to power. Modern science, therefore, for Nietzsche, necessitates an abandonment of truth in favor of power.

But, if the “truths” of modern science are merely fictitious, how is it possible to explain modern science’s success, in particular, the success of modern technology? For Nietzsche, the fact that modern science is successful via modern technology proves not that it reveals any truth about the world, but rather that modern science has invented a successful way merely to control the world. Modern science is successful precisely *not* because it is true, but because it “works,” and it works by, as Descartes once prophesied, “mastering and possessing nature.” In other words, there need not, for Nietzsche, be any direct correlation (causation) between our ability to control the world and our ability to actually “know” it. “‘Explanation’ is what we call it, but it is ‘description’ that distinguishes us from older stages of knowledge and science. Our descriptions are better – we do not explain any more than our predecessors” (GS 112). That is, we merely describe the world so as to master it, *so that* we can master it. Explaining the truth of “what is” is of little “use” when one can merely describe it better so as to master it. “It is perhaps just dawning on five or six minds that physics too is only an interpretation and arrangement of the world...and *not* an explanation of the world.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed for Nietzsche, the fundamentals of science (and of reason as well), namely causality, substance, and measurement (mathematics) all are called into question and are hypothesized as mere fictions that enable better mastery, control, and domination of reality: “Science [is] the transformation of nature into concepts for the purpose of mastering nature....” (WP 610).

Concerning cause and effect, Nietzsche writes that such a relation “probably never occurs — in reality there stands before us a continuum of which we isolate a couple of pieces...an intellect which saw cause and effect as a continuum ... would reject the concept [itself] ...and deny all conditionality” (GS 112).<sup>11</sup> Causality is again an instrumental fiction of the intellect. Nietzsche’s critique of causality is well documented in the literature, with some scholars arguing for softer or harder versions of his critique.<sup>12</sup> Regardless, Nietzsche’s critique of causality at the very least mimics Hume’s, who disputed the idea of a necessary connection between effect and cause. Furthermore, Nietzsche’s critique of causality

is not isolated, but rather, part of a larger critique of rationality in general, which includes logic, number, substance, and reason itself.<sup>13</sup>

Concerning logic, number and categories of rationality in general, Nietzsche questions the Cartesian correlation and application of these categories to reality and seems to suggest, at times, that they do nothing more than falsify sense data (BGE 4). Nietzsche writes,

*Logic*, too, rests on assumptions that do not correspond to anything in the real world, e.g., on the assumption of the equality of things, the identity of the same thing at different points of time...So it is with *mathematics*, which would certainly not have originated if it had been known from the beginning that there is no exactly straight line in nature, no real circle, no absolute measure. (HA 11)<sup>14</sup>

Logic as the science of reason and reason's application of categories has little to do with the "real" world (although one wonders what such "reality" could mean here), for there exist no changeless identical objects, i.e., substances, to which these categories could apply.<sup>15</sup> Like mathematics, reason operates by the use of prescribed, regulative fictions, whose sole aim remains to control the world:

*Number* –the invention of the laws of numbers was made on the basis of error, dominant even from the earliest times, that there are identical things (but in fact nothing is identical with anything else)...When Kant says 'the understanding does not draw its laws from nature, it prescribes them to nature,' this is wholly true with regard to the *concept of nature* which we are obliged to attach to nature...but which is the summation of a host of errors of the understanding. –To a world which is *not* our idea the laws of number are wholly inapplicable.... (HA 19)<sup>16</sup>

Again, for Nietzsche, the "reason" for this falsification lies in our ability to control and dominate the world around us, the world that remains, as we shall see, in a perpetual state of chaos, or at least of becoming. In other words, the will to power is at the heart of the will to truth and is the primary motivating factor toward finding truth. The will to power falsifies and distorts the world of *becoming* into the world of *being*, so that we can live and thrive. Nietzsche, therefore, says of science that

Ultimately, man finds in things nothing but what he himself has imported into them: the finding is called science...[and thus in] *summa*, science is

preparing a sovereign ignorance, a feeling that there is no such thing as “knowing,” that it was a kind of arrogance to dream of it, more, that we no longer have the least notion that warrants our considering “knowledge” even a possibility –that “knowing” itself is a contradictory idea. (WP 606, 608)

It seems then the only conclusion that can be drawn from Nietzsche’s philosophy of science is that science represents the fictions of the will to truth driven by the will to power. Science’s desire for truth is motivated solely by life, by power, by the will to power. It is Nietzsche’s commitment to a naturalistic, non-metaphysical understanding of the human being that leads to such conclusions. However, as argued above, it is precisely Nietzsche’s naturalism that inevitably leads to his postmodernism, or his commitment to the perspectival relativism and the idea that “there is no truth” (WP 540).

Brian Leiter explicitly rejects this “postmodern” interpretation of Nietzsche, that argues for a radical, relativistic reading of Nietzsche’s conception of truth, which ultimately, as we have seen, proves self-referentially inconsistent, and thus collapses into mere aestheticism. Instead, Leiter views Nietzsche’s philosophy as naturalistic plainly and simply. Leiter’s Nietzsche is a philosopher who “knows certain truths that others –Christians and most philosophers, moralists –fail to comprehend.”<sup>17</sup> Nietzsche then is not a relativist, at least concerning the naturalistic truths of modern science, but rather a staunch naturalist who indeed believes in the truth of modern science. Yet, Leiter’s only argument for this reading is the fact that Nietzsche, in practice, speaks *as if* he is telling the truth. That is, Leiter correctly notes that Nietzsche privileges certain claims about the world over others, e.g., that “all evidence of truth comes only from the senses” (BGE 134), for which, Leiter thinks, it would be impossible to account if Nietzsche were simply a relativist, as claims can only be privileged if they are objectively truer than others.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Leiter argues that even Nietzsche’s critique of causality cannot be toward causality *simpliciter*, since Nietzsche’s own hermeneutics seeks the deep and hidden causal explanations and motivations to human behavior, i.e., the will to power.<sup>19</sup>

As said above, for our purposes, what Nietzsche himself really believed is somewhat irrelevant—as it may be impossible to find that kind of precision and consistency in his writings. It is rather more important that we follow his thoughts to their ultimate philosophical implications.

However, it is precisely here where Leiter's reading fails. That is, Leiter fails to follow the implications of Nietzsche's own logic, and simply avoids or stretches passages that clearly indicate Nietzsche's relativistic views on truth, whether naturalistic truths or metaphysical. Leiter certainly wishes to keep Nietzsche consistent by avoiding the move that I have made from Nietzsche's naturalism to his postmodernism. Indeed, it has been my contention that it is precisely Nietzsche's naturalism and his naturalistic interpretation of the world—his qualified "Darwinism"—that eventually (d)evolves into postmodernism just by taking the truths of naturalism to their self-referential and self-destructive conclusions of incoherence. That Nietzsche himself recognized such a movement in his own thinking seems apparent in his hostility toward modern atheism and its "faith" in "truth." Moreover, it becomes very difficult to maintain a naturalistic reading of Nietzsche vis-à-vis the host of instrumentalist passages I have cited above, that is, passages where Nietzsche outright claims that science offers no "knowledge" of the world, but rather mere domination of it. Given Nietzsche's vehement critiques not only of science, but of the very conceptual categories that make science possible—logic, mathematics, causality, substance, and even reason itself—I find Leiter's naturalistic interpretation of Nietzsche untenable.

That Nietzsche was indeed a full-blown relativist, postmodernist, is currently not in vogue (Continentalists tend to ignore it,<sup>20</sup> Analyticians tend to deny it), and thus invites some contention. Again, rather than holding fast to "the postmodern Nietzsche," it may be simply impossible to find consistency in his writings, and perhaps purposefully so. Nevertheless, there are several passages in his writings that deserve some attention, for they point to a kind of radical perspectivism that goes beyond a mere "hierarchy" of better or worse perspectives, or interpretations. For example, in *Beyond Good and Evil* 22, Nietzsche openly mocks those who disdain philology in favor of the "hard science" of physics, and quickly reminds us that it is indeed possible for all to be the mere interpretation of the will to power. Yet, he realizes that if indeed everything is a perspective, an interpretation, then his interpretation would only be "an" interpretation, and thus self-defeating: "Granted this [Nietzsche's critique] too is only interpretation –and you will be eager enough to raise this objection? –well, so much the better" (BGE 22). In other words, Nietzsche is aware of the self-referential predicament in which he has put himself. He simply does not care. Furthermore, Nietzsche at times flatly states that there, in fact, is "no truth." In several passages from the

*Will to Power*, all composed around the same time period (1885–1886), Nietzsche writes of the vapidness of truth:

The world with which we are concerned is false, i.e., is not a fact but a fable...it is 'in flux,' as something in a state of becoming, as falsehood always changing but never getting near truth: for *–there is no 'truth'.* (WP 616, emphasis mine)

And again,

'Interpretation,' the introduction of meaning –not 'explanation' ... There are no facts, everything is in flux, incomprehensible, elusive; what is relatively most enduring is –our opinions. (WP 604)

And finally,

Reverence for truth is already the consequence of an illusion –and that one should value more than truth the force that forms, simplifies, shapes, invents [i.e. will to power]. 'Everything is false!' 'Everything is permitted!'. (WP 602)

Nietzsche, in these three passages from *Will to Power*, seems to present a strangely “consistent” view of the “inconsistency” of having a view, a *true* view at least: there is no truth, and everything is in a state of becoming, of flux. Such a self-aware, self-referentially defeating perspective fits quite nicely into our claim that because of his naturalism, Nietzsche winds up inevitably in postmodernism, the latter an eventuality of the former. Nietzsche is then not “just” a relativist in any simplistic sense. Rather Nietzsche’s relativism is the result of his anti-metaphysical commitments to naturalism. Nietzsche’s relativism flows from his naturalism. Science then, modern science (à la Darwin) at least, leads to relativism (that is, if it is taken to task concerning its implications). Of this, Nietzsche is well aware, and thus has little problem arguing that truth is an illusion of will to power and *everything* is false.

It is worth noting that David Story argues that Nietzsche presents at times elements of a “non-reductive naturalism,” i.e., a naturalism that remains committed to the belief that the natural world is the only real world, but nevertheless does not seek to *reduce* the “higher” elements of human experience (e.g., values) to the lower (e.g., physical mechanisms).

While Storey clearly concedes that Nietzsche often speaks as indeed a *reductive* naturalist, Storey argues that there nevertheless remain significant portions of Nietzsche's thinking that are nonreductive.<sup>21</sup> The argument here for Nietzsche's "non-reductionism" hangs on, I believe, an equivocation of what is meant by there being "no values" for Nietzsche. Storey contends that the dependence of valuing upon the human subject does not mean that there are *no values* (we could just as easily replace value here with intelligibility), but merely that they are not *objective*; in other words, values are *real*, for indeed we find ourselves in a world of values historically handed over to us; moreover we are the beings that create values, whether knowingly or unknowingly.<sup>22</sup> Values, thus exist and are real; they are just not *objectively* real. Now, I certainly agree that Nietzsche thinks values are "real" in the subjective and experiential sense. However, my contention is that if for Nietzsche values hold no *objective* ground, then regardless of their subjective reality, certain implications follow, namely that values can be *reduced* to merely functions and aims of the will to power. Thus Storey's defense of Nietzsche, at least for my (and Heidegger's) purposes, fails to adequately counter the hard reductionism that Nietzsche's philosophy almost demands. I see still no reason why values are not merely subjective byproducts of the will to power and the subject's value positing.

Storey does note that Nietzsche at times speaks of values as not so much relative to the human being, but rather to *life* itself, that is, to life's preservation and enhancement. Thus, something like "life" would be the objective, or at least the relative, "ground" of value. However, given Nietzsche's commitment to the relativity of truth and fact (e.g., "there are no facts, only interpretations"), Nietzsche's thought demands that one still apply his critique of truth self-referentially to even his own thinking on value and life, which would, in turn, relativize even the value of life and, as we have seen, will to power, to mere subjective whim. As we have seen, Nietzsche himself notes he too only offers an interpretation (and not the truth), and thus remarks "so much the better" (BGE 22).<sup>23</sup>

## NIETZSCHE'S METAPHYSICS

If what lies behind modern science's will to truth is will to power, how is such will to power masquerading as truth related to theism? That is, how is science's commitment to truth ultimately theistic? We have seen

that this has much to do with truth's being conceived as a "value," i.e., as a "good." But, for Nietzsche the problem runs deeper, and, therefore, Nietzsche's critique of science goes even further, namely toward the understanding of "being" operative in modern science. Implicit in what was said above, modern science (and science in general) quite simply engages in the ultimate falsification of reality by changing *becoming* into *being*. Science freezes becoming and distorts it into being, and such is the *conditio sine qua non* for not only science, but also "reason," as we have come to understand it. Yet, such a distortion of becoming is much older than science. This distortion is as old as metaphysics; in fact, this distortion is the essence of metaphysics, which is best expressed, for Nietzsche, in the philosophy of Platonism. And, of course, Platonism is at the root of theism, of Christianity, which is nothing more than "Platonism for the masses" (BGE, preface).

Platonism is metaphysics. Meta-physics, as the name suggests, is *meta ta phusika*, that which "goes beyond" the physical to the metaphysical, beyond beings to their "being." Platonism, and thus all subsequent metaphysics, simply splits the world in two (HA 5). Platonism divides the world into the sensible world of appearances, of change and becoming, on the one hand, and into the invisible, supersensible world of truth and being, of what does not change, on the other; this latter "true" world constitutes what things truly "are," despite their chaotic oscillating appearance as becoming. This division of worlds marks the primary falsification, for Nietzsche, at the root of Platonism and of all metaphysics proper that follow, including theism and science. Theism operates with a divided world of heaven and earth, the eternal and the temporal, the infinite and the finite. So too does science operate concerning the world of appearances and the world of "truth" that the human cognitive apparatus discovers or uncovers. At the heart of science is the same element that is at the heart of theism, namely metaphysics, Platonism, a division of the world into two. Nietzsche's "hermeneutics of suspicion" thus seeks to understand precisely why and to what end Platonism originally divided the world. It is here that Nietzsche uncovers what he thinks marks the birth of "the ascetic ideal."

Broadly speaking, Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, like the metaphysics it criticizes, splits the morality of human beings into two kinds: masters and slaves. The masters are those powerful and ordinary creators of value who affirm life, say "yes" to life, while the slaves are those weak and reactive "deniers" of life, who create values out of

a defensive, reactionary weakness. Both masters and slaves are driven by will to power, by a will to life, to live, and to thrive. The difference between them lies in the way in which they employ will to power: actively or reactively. Quite simply, masters affirm life; slaves deny it. It is this “denial of life” that constitutes the ultimate origin of not only Christian morality, but of metaphysics (Platonism) itself, and, therefore, of all the various metaphysical configurations that follow, including science. And this “denial of life” is *nihilism* itself in the form of what Nietzsche calls the “ascetic ideal.”

Characteristic of the ascetic ideal’s denial of life is *ressentiment* (resentment). The weak, or those in a threatened position of less power, resent the masters, and, therefore, seek revenge against those more powerful than they. Yet, resentment runs deeper than morality and resents all life itself; this resentment, or *will to revenge*, toward life as a whole is the hallmark of the ascetic ideal. As a reactive form of will to power, resentment resents life itself, reality itself, and as such gives birth to metaphysics proper, to the diving of the world in two. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche provides a somewhat deeper insight into the meaning of revenge and resentment. “This, yes, this alone is revenge itself: the will’s repugnance against time and its ‘it was.’”<sup>24</sup> Revenge hates time. In particular, revenge hates, revolts against, time’s passing, time’s “it was.” In short, the human being takes revenge on becoming, for it cannot stand becoming’s lack of permanency, i.e., that things change. Moreover, things change in such a way that we resent the way in which they did change and how such changes cannot be undone, for they lie in the past, in the “it was,” and thus things now “are not.” Metaphysical resentment or revenge goes, therefore, one could say, a step deeper than merely moral revenge that seeks to punish those in power. Metaphysical revenge revolts against reality itself, insofar as reality “is” not permanent, but is becoming, that is, insofar as it lacks the constitution of “being,” of “isness,” of staticness. Metaphysics then, driven by revenge, hates reality qua becoming and creates, out of this revenge, the other “true” world. Thus “the *ressentiment* of metaphysicians against actuality is here creative,” in that it creates the other world (WP 579). Revenge splits the world in two.

Indeed, according to Aristotle, metaphysics has as its object of study “being,” or “being qua being.” Such an object is fitting for Nietzsche, since it is metaphysics that needs and necessitates that reality be fixed and permanent vis-à-vis change and movement. Furthermore, reality must



not only “be” but be self-same and identical, for such identity marks the essence of substance, and the essence of “essence” too for that matter, as well as the conditional relations between substances. In short, the concept of “being” enables substance and measurement, as well as causality, as the very faculties and categories of reason. It is being as a static, fixed reality that enables anything like “truth,” for truth is nothing more than “what is,” what is “actual” or real; and truth, as the “correctness” of the correspondence of an idea to reality, implies that reality is standing still, so to speak, for such correspondence to be possible. Without being, then, “reason” itself collapses.

There is a sense in which Nietzsche’s critique here is twofold, applying at once to Platonism and metaphysics, and even more broadly to reason and cognition in general. Nietzsche notes that whether the former or the latter, both as forms of “knowing” come out of the will to power as conditions for “life” and “survival.” For this reason, Nietzsche at times speaks more positively about such conditions for life. For example, Nietzsche writes,

The falseness of a judgment is to us not necessarily an objection to a judgment...the question is to what extent it is life-advancing, life-preserving, species-preserving...and our fundamental tendency is to assert that the falsest judgments ...are the most indispensable to us, that without granting as true the fictions of logic, without measuring reality against the purely invented world of unconditional and self-identical, without continual falsification of the world by means of numbers, mankind could not live –that to renounce false judgments would be to renounce life, would be to deny life. To recognize untruth as a condition for life.... (BGE 4)<sup>25</sup>

Here Nietzsche seems to conflate the “invented world” of metaphysics with the rational faculties themselves, arguing that regardless of their falsifications they, nevertheless, were employed as survival mechanisms of the will to life and power. That is, out of practical needs, even the practical needs of the weak, reason and logic were formed so as to order a fundamentally disordered world:

Not ‘to know’ but to schematize –to impose upon chaos as much regularity and form as our practical needs require. In formation of reason, logic, the categories, it was *need* that was authoritative: the need, not to ‘know,’ but to subsume, to schematize, for the purpose of intelligibility and calculation ... No pre-existing “idea” was here at work, but the utilitarian fact

that only when we see things coarsely and made equal do they become calculable and usable to us... The categories are “truths” only in the sense that they are conditions of life for us.... (WP 515)

The world itself is ultimately then not *intelligible*, but unintelligible; intelligibility comes from the human being’s need to schematize so as to secure. Intelligibility is a *useful* fiction. Earlier, I spoke of Nietzsche as primarily a Darwinian, yet what Nietzsche strikes against in Darwin is precisely Darwin’s failure to see that the weak overpower the “fit” by the employment of cleverness (reason, religion, logic, science, etc.). In *Twilight of the Idols*, in a section entitled *Anti-Darwin*, Nietzsche chides Darwin for his failure to recognize such cleverness, namely that

Species do *not* grow more perfect: the weak dominate the strong again and again – the reason being they are the great majority, and they are also *cleverer*... Darwin forgot the mind...*the weak possess more mind*...To acquire mind one must need mind...<sup>26</sup>

Thus, reason and its metaphysics are the result of the weak cleverly overpowering not only those more powerful than they, but also overpowering reality (qua becoming) itself!

Now it is precisely this revenge against life and its creation of being and truth, that also gives rise to “God,” for God is nothing more than a mythical stand-in for the supersensible, true world of being. Indeed, the God of metaphysics is precisely being itself as the *ens causa sui* or the *ens realissimum*, that is, the self-caused being or the most real being. God is moreover that which metes out “justice” (another form of revenge) for the oppressed, and grants a life beyond temporality in eternity. Therefore, being, truth, and God are one and the same for Nietzsche, not only conceptually, but also in origin, insofar as they all arise out of the spirit of revenge, revenge against time, becoming, and reality itself. Such marks the essence of the ascetic ideal. The spirit of revenge, for Nietzsche, has until now been the human being’s “best thought” (*bestes Nachdenken*), for it is, in a sense, the origin of “thought” itself (Z 2:20).

It is the revolt against becoming and its creation of being then that makes God and the truth ultimately the same value, at least in origin, and it is precisely for this reason that the modern atheist, with his faith in the truth of science, remains a theist, a Christian Platonist even. Modern

atheism is, therefore, just as theistic as the theism it denies. Thus we arrive at Nietzsche's "fundamental metaphysical position."

Strangely, this nihilistic ascetic ideal, itself nihilism qua the denial of life, is the very cause of the current, cultural nihilism that results from the death of God. Nietzsche, in announcing the death of God, announces the current climate of nihilism. The highest values—God, truth, morality, etc.—have collapsed. "What does nihilism mean? *That the highest values devalue themselves*" (WP 1). Precisely, as we saw earlier, the will to truth destroys itself in and through its own search for truth. Nietzsche, as an untimely man, however, is the only one who seems to be aware of this nihilism, as the champions of modern science seem most oblivious to it. The will to truth has effectively "unchained the earth from the sun" without even realizing it (GS 125).

As this nihilism sets in, recourse to the truth will become more and more impossible. God will become more and more unbelievable. This is Nietzsche's diagnosis. What then is his cure? It is here, concerning Nietzsche's "cure" for nihilism, that we can begin to discuss explicitly Heidegger's reading. In a lecture course entitled *Was Heisst Denken?* ("What is Called Thinking?" 1951–1952), Heidegger attempts to distill Nietzsche's entire thinking into one thought: *the overcoming of revenge*. Heidegger cites a passage from *Zarathustra*,

*For that man be released from revenge: this is for me the bridge to the highest hope, and a rainbow after long storms. (Z 2:7)*

This thought, for Heidegger, marks the summation of Nietzsche's entire philosophy and, therefore, his entire metaphysical position concerning the being of beings. This thought, that of overcoming or being released from revenge, is for Heidegger Nietzsche's "true one and only thought, which he thought even if he did not announce on every occasion or always in the same way."<sup>27</sup> If revenge, *ressentiment*, against time and becoming, is the very source of metaphysics, then to overcome such revenge would be at the same time to overcome metaphysics. Nietzsche's fundamental *metaphysical* position is, therefore, at the same time an attempt to overcome *metaphysics*, to overcome Platonism. Such overcoming of metaphysics represents then an all out assault on "being" insofar as "being" is that which is posited, vis-à-vis becoming, in and through the spirit of revenge. We place being over and against becoming due to the revulsion we feel toward becoming qua time and its transitory

nature, namely the “it was.” Therefore, for Nietzsche, to overcome revenge, being must be replaced (and overcome) with becoming. This replacement is *ipso facto* the overcoming of revenge, for it is revenge that enables the *meta* in metaphysics.<sup>28</sup> That is to say, revenge motivates the transcendence from the physical, sensible world of becoming to the metaphysical, supersensible world of being. So then, to overcome revenge is to overcome being, and vice versa.

Yet how is such an overcoming possible? Where even to begin? According to Heidegger’s Nietzsche, the key to this overcoming resides in Nietzsche’s doctrine of the Eternal Return of the Same. This doctrine for Heidegger is no mere psychological doctrine, but an absolute doctrine concerning the being of beings, and, therefore, the content of Nietzsche’s fundamental metaphysical position. Nevertheless, the doctrine of the Eternal Return contains, for Heidegger, a psychological component, albeit one that is contingent upon the deeper, metaphysical ground. Therefore, in order to fully understand Heidegger’s conception of this doctrine in Nietzsche, we must first explore its psychological dimension, so as to necessitate a fuller exploration of its deeper, metaphysical ground.

If revenge is the will’s “revulsion” or “repugnance” against time and time’s “it was,” then deliverance from revenge means a transition from the will’s ill will and denial of time to an affirmation of it. It means “unchaining” the will from the “it was.” This occurs in and through the “it was” not only continuously passing by (in the past), but also by continually coming again (in the future), i.e., by the willing affirmation of the “it was” continuously in that one wants and desires such “it was” to occur again and again, to eternally occur and reoccur. The past no longer freezes in the “it was,” and thus the will can be liberated from its being chained to it. “The will becomes free from what is revolting in the ‘it was’ when it wills the constant recurrence of every ‘it was’”<sup>29</sup> (WCT 105). In willing the eternal recurrence of the “it was,” of the same, the will then can finally will in reverse. As such, the will is free to be itself, to will what it essentially *is*, namely, the will itself. Thus, for Heidegger, in the Eternal Return of the Same the will wills itself as will, as the being of beings, which is itself becoming. This “metaphysics” of the will and of the Eternal Return requires some unpacking. That is, it requires a discussion of Heidegger’s understanding of Nietzsche’s fundamental metaphysical position concerning being.

## HEIDEGGER'S NIETZSCHE AND BEING

Earlier we noted the peculiarity of Heidegger's reading(s) of Nietzsche, namely that for Heidegger Nietzsche is fundamentally a thinker of being, and as such, maintains a fundamental metaphysical position concerning the being of beings. Nietzsche, for Heidegger, is a metaphysician *par excellence*. In order then to fully understand Nietzsche, we must think through his metaphysics. What then is Nietzsche's metaphysics? We saw that according to Heidegger Nietzsche has one basic thought, overcoming revenge, and yet this one thought is still not in itself his fundamental metaphysical position. However, behind this one thought and within this one thought is contained his deeper thinking of being: the will to power and the Eternal Return. These are for Heidegger Nietzsche's fundamental thoughts on being, and they are the *same* thought, albeit expressed in slightly different ways. It is the task of Heidegger, one could argue (and I, in fact, will), to sublimate and reconcile, in a Hegelian manner, these two concepts into one. Indeed, if the four volumes of Heidegger's Nietzsche lectures contain any underlying, systemic theme, it is precisely this reconciliation between will to power and Eternal Return. Moreover, not only does Heidegger seek to unite will to power and Eternal Return in Nietzsche's metaphysics, but he seeks to do so such that both, as one, name becoming over against being. Such a task is not easy, even for Heidegger. Nevertheless, we will attempt to follow Heidegger's thought along the way toward this sublation into becoming.

For Heidegger, Nietzsche's metaphysics, like all metaphysics, employs two basic categories concerning the being of beings, namely essence (*essentia*) and existence (*existentia*), or whatness and thatness. Will to power says *what* essentially beings *are*, as to their essence.<sup>30</sup> Eternal Return says *how* beings are (as a whole, thus corresponding to *thatness*), in their existence. That is, "what is" is essentially will to power, as the fundamental ground or substrate of reality. Yet beings are in such a way *that* they exist in the cycle of eternal return. How is this possible? Moreover, what does it mean to say that "what is" is will to power, since Nietzsche's whole philosophy, according to Heidegger and Nietzsche himself, is an assault on "what is," on being itself? How can this "be"? These questions necessitate first a further inquiry into what is thought in the idea of the "will to power," and secondly how such thinking relates to the becoming of the Eternal Return.

What is the will to power? Why not simply power, rather than *will* to power? What is power? What is power's end? It is nothing more than power. Power "wants" more power. Power "wants" control, and thus "wants" and wills its own will, for control is nothing other than dominance of the will. Power is the exercise of the will over something, and such exercising is domination, control. Thus, power is will, that is, to want power is to want to exercise your will, to will over. Power is, therefore, *will to power*, will is, therefore, *will to power*. Power and will are inextricably linked such that they are the same, namely, will to power. How does will to power do this? How does the will to power *will* toward power? Essential for Heidegger's reading is a quote from Nietzsche's *Will to Power*:

The standpoint of 'value' is the standpoint of conditions of preservation and enhancement for complex forms of relative life-duration within the flux of becoming. (WP 715)

We have seen earlier that will to power operates fundamentally by positing and stabilizing reality insofar as this promotes life. Will to power schematizes reality so as to live and thrive. In other words, will to power posits values. Yet these values are posited only so as to be overcome. They are challenges, resistances, to be overcome for the preservation and enhancement of life. The feeling of overcoming these values qua resistances is the feeling of life, of more power. So will to power wants more power and challenges itself toward ever more power by positing values as resistances in order to overcome them. Will to power then stabilizes so as to destroy and increase its power. There is no *telos* to will to power's drive toward enhancement; the only *telos* is simply more power. Heidegger likely also has in mind Nietzsche's *Anti-Christ*:

What is good? –All that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man. What is bad? –All that proceeds from weakness. What is happiness? –the feeling that power *increases* – that a resistance is overcome.<sup>31</sup>

Values are posited so as to be overcome; they are posited *in order to* be overcome. This itself is the will to power, namely the positing of values as resistances to be overcome for the preserving and enhancing of life. They are posited for life's preserving and then overcome for life's enhancing.

This is the activity of will to power itself. Will to power is the movement through ossification and petrification of reality to its destruction and deconstruction so as to feel power. This activity is named by Nietzsche: “To stamp becoming with the character of being –that is the supreme will to power” (WP 617).

Heidegger asks, vis-à-vis the aforementioned quotation, why is such the *supreme* will to power? Precisely because the meaning of will to power is to bring becoming to presence, and to bring becoming to presence is the creation of value. It is the creation of art itself, namely to stabilize becoming as presence, to bring becoming to a standstill in presence. Yet for Heidegger, the stamping of becoming as being goes beyond mere value creation and destruction as the preserving and enhancing of life, but rather pertains to the very essence of Nietzsche’s philosophy, namely the overcoming of metaphysics, or in this case, the inversion of metaphysics. That is, when “becoming” is stamped as “being,” Platonism itself is fundamentally overturned by an inversion from the ground up. Being now *becomes* becoming. “What is” is what becomes; being is itself becoming. There is no “being,” but rather paradoxically only “becoming” *is*. To say then that becoming “is” is to stamp becoming as a whole with being, and not merely aspects or “perspectives” of becoming as in the value creation of preservation and enhancement. No, the ultimate “value” to be created was created by Nietzsche in the very stamping of becoming itself, writ large, as being. Being is becoming; becoming is being. The true world becomes the apparent world, and vice versa. In other words, the metaphysical world of Platonism collapses in this very stamping of becoming with being, for such stamping proves to be the very flipping of Platonism upon its head. This inversion of Platonism is for Heidegger the very essence of Nietzsche’s philosophy.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, this inversion of Platonism remains precisely the reason why, for Heidegger, Nietzsche cannot escape the very essence of Platonism.

Yet, for Heidegger, something more occurs when becoming as a whole is stamped as being: the fundamental character of will to power is revealed. It is revealed in this very activity. That is, in the naming of being as becoming the supreme activity of will to power occurs, and at the same time, will to power itself is revealed to be what it *truly is*: becoming itself. The point here then is twofold. Will to power is becoming, but it is revealed as such in the very naming of being *as* becoming. Will to power is becoming itself; becoming is will to power. Moreover,

the being of beings is revealed—as the will to power, as becoming. Becoming and will to power then share an identity, for they name being itself. The essence of being, of “what is,” is becoming; what is becomes, and precisely because it becomes, it is will to power.

Yet how exactly is will to power becoming itself? How is this identity constituted? Furthermore, how is the naming of this identity the supreme activity of the will to power? Will to power’s identification with becoming occurs for Heidegger by way of a quasi-Hegelian dialectical movement whereby will to power, upon reflection upon its essence, passes over into becoming, conceptually and actually. That is, when one thinks will to power, as the essence of beings, in its own essence, one inevitably thinks becoming itself in its very essence.

Will to power’s essence is the wanting of more and more power, that is, “power is only power only if and as long as it is enhancement of power...”<sup>33</sup> The essence of will to power is power that seeks to overpower the previous stages of posited values for the enhancing of life. Will to power is the overpowering of power, yet without a goal. It is rather the continual ossification and destruction of various stages posited by the will to power. Thus, the will to power is advancement through sundry stages of power, toward no goal, and is, therefore, *ipso facto* the very definition of becoming. Heidegger writes,

For Nietzsche, the pallid term *Becoming* is replete with a content that proves to be the essence of will to power. Will to power is the overpowering of power. *Becoming* does not mean the indefinite flux of an amorphous alternation of fortuitously occurring states. But neither does *Becoming* mean “development” toward a goal. Becoming is the power advancement through sundry stages of power. In Nietzsche’s language, *Becoming* means animation—holding sway on its own terms—of will to power as the fundamental trait of beings. Hence all Being is “Becoming.”<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, being is becoming, insofar as being is will to power, and will to power is the process of becoming as the “advancement” toward more and more power, albeit devoid of any *telos*. Becoming is change, as opposed to being as permanence, presence; becoming is “organized” change and not mere chaos, but organized in such a way as to be without a goal. One is tasked with imagining Aristotelian change, as the reduction from potency to act, in a being’s entelechy, as it becomes itself guided and caused by its *telos* as its teleological cause. Becoming is



precisely this change without the guidance of a teleological cause, but rather merely the advancement of power as the sole causal motivation. Thus, becoming is not mere chaotic randomness, but has a kind of non-teleological organization to it, namely the advancement of power itself toward no goal other than more power.<sup>35</sup> Becoming is then the process of overpowering power, and as such, is the will to power itself. Becoming is the essence of will to power, and will to power is the essence of becoming, for both name the process of the overpowering of power, of power's advancement toward no goal other than more power. Therefore, in a dialectical manner, to think will to power in its essence necessarily leads to thinking becoming. They are the same thought, for they name the same reality.

Becoming then is the continual process, not of randomness, but of stabilization and destabilization, of petrification and destruction. Becoming is will to power stamping becoming with the character of being as it continually seeks to enhance itself. Being then is a mere "vapor" grounded in the temporary ossification of becoming wrought by the will to power. Being has no ontological status of its own, but rather takes its "life" from the will to power's own becoming. Nietzsche's stripping of being of any ontological status marks again, for Heidegger, Nietzsche's overturning of Platonism, for being has now been made becoming; "what is" is "what becomes," i.e., will to power. As Nietzsche himself writes, "[t]hat *everything recurs* is the closest *approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being*" (WP 617). Time (becoming) is a flat circle.<sup>36</sup>

However, the will to power as becoming names only one side of Nietzsche's fundamental metaphysical position, namely the *essentia* of being. The *existentia* or the *how* of beings as a whole, for Heidegger's Nietzsche, is the Eternal Return of the Same. Thus, in the will to power's passing over into becoming, we find that it has really disclosed itself as the Eternal Return; thus we could say, in Hegelian terms, the Eternal Return appears to be the "truth" of will to power. In a lecture entitled "The Five Major Rubrics of Nietzsche's Thought," Heidegger presents this dialectical thought quite succinctly:

Every being, insofar as it *is*, and is *as* it is, is 'will to power'... But power is power only as enhancement of power. To that extent that it is truly power, alone determining all beings, power does not recognize the worth or value of anything outside of itself. [Will to power] ...tolerates no end outside

of beings as a whole. Now, because all being as will to power –that is, as incessant self-overpowering –must be a *continual “becoming,”* and because such “becoming” cannot move “toward an end” *outside* its own “farther and farther,” but is ceaselessly caught up in the cyclical increase of power to which it reverts, then being as a whole too, as this power-conforming becoming, must itself always recur again and bring back the same.<sup>37</sup>

Heidegger sublates the apparent contradiction in Nietzsche’s metaphysics between the will to power and the eternal return as the “essence” of the being of beings in and through the mediation of becoming, thereby turning Platonic metaphysics upon its head. That is, in and through Nietzsche’s inversion of Platonism where the true world of being becomes the apparent world of becoming and vice versa, becoming itself is named as “what is,” is stamped as a whole with the character of being. To say that “what is” is “what becomes” is to say, at the same time, that becoming “is.” In doing so, the supreme activity of the will to power is reached in the very naming of becoming as being! This process of stamping is then to name becoming as “what is,” and name it as that which recurs over and over again. Therefore, the supreme activity of the will to power is the activity of the discovery of the Eternal Return, for it is the Eternal Return that names the ultimate activity of stamping becoming with the character of being. What is the doctrine of Eternal Return then? To stamp becoming with the character of being—this is the supreme will to power, will to power itself. Will to power *is* becoming’s eternal recurrence as the *same*.

There are, therefore, two points Heidegger has made here, one explicit, the other implicit. First, to stamp becoming with being makes becoming “be” permanent, and such permanentizing of becoming is the eternal return as the supreme act of will to power. Second, implicitly Heidegger attempts to mediate the psychological and metaphysical meanings of Eternal Return by arguing that only in the Eternal Return can the psychological element of revenge be quelled; that is, the will’s ill will toward time is removed by stamping becoming with being; the permanentizing of becoming destroys any revenge against reality (becoming, time) by making all becoming “be.” Therefore, in understanding Eternal Return metaphysically, Heidegger simultaneously grounds the psychological element of it by allowing the metaphysical doctrine to be *that which* is responsible for quelling revenge. In other words, revenge can only be quelled by an understanding of being *as* becoming, as

eternally recurring. This brings us to the place where an answer can finally be given as to *why* the stamping of becoming with being marks the “supreme will to power.”

The *how* of beings as a whole, in their *existentia*, then *is* as eternally recurring. Beings *are* as the eternal reoccurring of themselves. The stamping of becoming with being in the Eternal Return is the supreme will to power. Yet such “stamping” implies a “stamper,” i.e., a subject, a value-poser, who from a certain perspective evaluates being or “what is” in such a way as to name it becoming, and paradoxically, in naming being becoming, the subject stamps becoming with “being.” There exists here a strange reflexivity, which can only be mediated by way of reference to the subject as the one who posits values in and through the will to power and *as* will to power. The subject then, and Nietzsche’s subjectivism, comes to the fore as the ground for all value positing in the will to power, and, therefore, as the ground of the very metaphysics of the will to power as Eternal Return. In other words, Nietzsche’s perspectivism is revealed as subjectivism. It must be the *subject*, in the end, who evaluates—value posits—being *as* becoming, and thus becoming *as* being in the Eternal Return. As such, Nietzsche’s metaphysics is dependent then upon this subject, for it is the subject who posits values. Nietzsche operates under a “metaphysics of the subject.” For this reason, for Heidegger, Nietzsche’s overcoming of metaphysics is as metaphysical as the metaphysics it attempts to overcome.<sup>38</sup>

Nietzsche still remains within metaphysics despite his attempts to overcome it. Just when one had thought Nietzsche was attempting an objective, metaphysical project, one that would be “true” vis-à-vis all other falsities, he notes that the *stamping* by the subject of becoming with being is the supreme will to power, that is, the supreme rush of life, the supreme feeling that a resistance has been overcome. Recall, that in *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche named the “good” as that which increases power, and happiness as that feeling that occurs when a resistance is overcome. Power overcoming power is then the feeling one gets in the supreme act of will to power, namely willing the Eternal Return as the stamping of becoming with being. The Eternal Return then marks the supreme act of the metaphysical subject; it is the supreme *subjective* act, which thereby grants the ultimate feeling of life, of will to power. All depends upon the subject and its positing of being as value, and it is precisely Nietzsche’s conceiving of being (and of truth) as values that Heidegger resists.

Thus, Nietzsche's overturning of metaphysics remains just as metaphysical as the metaphysics it attempted to overturn, precisely because the distinction between the split world maintains itself in the subject vis-à-vis the world, and *despite* Nietzsche's attempt to fuse becoming with being. What determines the world is still a metaphysical, supersensuous ground: the subject acting in and through the will to power. Heidegger writes,

Despite all his overturnings and revaluings of metaphysics, Nietzsche remains in the unbroken line of the metaphysical tradition when he calls that which is established and made fast in the will to power for its own preservation purely and simply being, or what is in being, or truth. Accordingly, truth is a condition posited in the essence of the will to power, namely, the condition of the preservation of power. Truth is, as this condition, a value. But because the will can will only from out of its disposal over something steadily constant, truth is a necessary value precisely from out of the essence of the will to power, for that will... Truth is now... that which –making stably constant –makes secure the constant reserve, belonging to the sphere from out of which the will to power wills itself.<sup>39</sup>

In essence, Nietzsche is the very product of the underlying metaphysics of modernity, namely modern science and technology, and not the creator of it. Nietzsche's philosophy is the *effect* and not the cause of the metaphysics of the subject. Nietzsche is nothing more than a Cartesian, albeit an atheistic Cartesian for whom God as the link between the mind and world is removed. Thus knowledge, and intelligibility as such, without God to "guarantee" them, become nothing more than movements of the will to power, that is, of domination and mastery. Nietzscheanism is then atheistic Cartesianism. Atheistic Cartesianism is the radicalization of Descartes's original goal that sought to "master and possess" nature. In Nietzsche, the gloves are off, and knowledge in the Cartesian sense is shown to be what it always and truly was, namely will to power. Knowledge truly is now nothing but power.

The idea that "knowledge is power" is quite simply, for Heidegger, the underlying metaphysics of scientific modernity, which is both atheistic and technological. Nietzsche devolves into a relativism that enables the will to power in scientific and technological modernity as the only "meaning" of being. Heidegger attempts to think through Nietzsche's fundamental metaphysical position precisely because it is the

fundamental metaphysics of our time. That is, Heidegger thinks through Nietzsche's conception of being, in its essence (will to power) and existence (Eternal Return), and then inquires into the conditions for the possibility of such a conception of being. Heidegger as always is doing *meta*-metaphysics, that is, the condition for the possibility of a certain kind of metaphysics, a certain kind of conceiving of being. Heidegger's question then is simply: what is the historical reason for the upsurge of this metaphysics, this understanding of the being of beings and beings as a whole? In Nietzsche's case, it is the radicalization of the subjectivism of Descartes, coupled with (necessarily so) the birth of modern science's "subjectivism," which is nothing more than the death of God, and consequently the death of truth itself. Therefore, Nietzsche's metaphysics is the true mouthpiece for what is happening in the West concerning modern science and technology. Indeed, Nietzsche's metaphysics *is* the underlying metaphysics of science and technology.

To put the matter in a slightly different way: Nietzsche's subjectivism is really a form of relativized and unhinged Kantianism, insofar as the subject imposes a schema upon the world in order to "know" (i.e., master) the world. But, for Heidegger, such Kantianism is rooted ultimately in the metaphysics of a radicalized Cartesianism, which thinks the human being as a subject who thinks, i.e., as an "I" who represents. In Descartes, the turn toward the subject occurs when the subject displaces the metaphysical, supersensuous world of truth and being; the metaphysical world is internalized in the subject who represents. The subject becomes the author of truth, of course not in Cartesianism proper, but in a Cartesianism after the death of God.

Heidegger's logic concerning Nietzsche's metaphysical tie to Descartes at first may seem like a stretch. However, Heidegger is merely noting that Descartes' own thinking flirted dangerously close with subjective relativism, and avoided it only on the basis of recourse to God. Thus, a Cartesianism without God necessities Nietzscheanism, as truth becomes not objectively true, but rather a mere value posited by the subject; being becomes a mere ossification of the subject's value positing. Truth and being become a function of the will. Knowledge becomes not knowledge, but power, for I know not what I control (e.g., if my scientific experiments are true) but merely that I can control it. There remains no God to guarantee that my cognitions are anything more than mere mastery and control of the world.

The question as to how the subject relates truly to the world, and thus knows the world is not a question that seems particularly urgent for the modern scientist. Rather, he or she only cares about “what works.” Truth then is implicitly thought as tantamount to what works, what can be controlled or predicted. Modern science works according to the hypothetical-deductive model, which tests and experiments based upon a hypothesis, a model. Whether or not I have a false or true model is irrelevant so long as the model makes accurate predictions. That is, as long as the predictions in the model match up to the data from the experiment, the model is “true.” The question of truth is assumed, for the model works, that is, predicts, or we could say, masters, controls. This, for Heidegger, is the essence of the metaphysics of will to power’s eclipse of truth at work in modern science. Truth, and thus being, are forgotten, in that they are ultimately irrelevant.

Moreover, because of this eclipse and forgetting of being and truth, modern science is the mere slave of modern technology and its essence of imposition upon the world in attempts to control the world, to stock-pile beings into standing-reserves (*Bestände*). This marks the nihilism of modernity for Heidegger, which Nietzsche’s metaphysics announced. Nietzsche remains then the voice for modernity’s metaphysics, that is, the understanding of “being” and “beings” underlying modern science and technology, namely the will to power.

Nietzsche, therefore, remained within the same logic of Platonism, despite his efforts to escape it, and as such remained within the very logic of nihilism as well. Heidegger, therefore, writes,

Nietzsche’s metaphysics is not an overcoming of nihilism. It is the ultimate entanglement in nihilism. Through value thinking in terms of will to power, it of course continues to acknowledge beings as such. But, by tying itself to an interpretation of being as value, it simultaneously binds itself to the impossibility of even casting an inquiring glance at being as being. By means of the entanglement of nihilism in itself, nihilism first becomes thoroughly complete in what it is. Such utterly completed, perfect nihilism is the fulfillment of nihilism proper [*eigentlichen Nihilismus*].<sup>40</sup>

Heidegger’s implication here is that Nietzsche’s attempt to overcome nihilism amounted to nothing more than simply the dissolution of the meaning and intelligibility of the objective world in favor of a subject who imposes, via will to power, such meaning and intelligibility upon

a meaningless world. For Heidegger, this is tantamount to an all out assault on being and truth, for Nietzsche's attempt to salvage meaning and intelligibility, i.e., truth itself, by value positing, ultimately failed and inevitably destroyed any possibility of objective meaning or truth. Meaninglessness is the very presupposition now of Nietzsche.

Meaninglessness, for Heidegger, is the flipside of the will to power's value positing, i.e., the will to power's implicit subjectivism. If will to power must posit value in order for there to be meaning, then presumably meaninglessness is the a priori state of things. Once total meaninglessness reigns in apposition of subjectivity, will to power, in the guise of global technology, seeks to dominate the earth. If Nietzsche's philosophy is indeed the metaphysics of modernity, then relativism is what is running modern science, but more a pernicious relativism than mere philosophic relativism that one might "think up" while in one's armchair; no, this kind of relativism, a relativism of value, knows no other "value" than power, and thus devolves into a metaphysics of power, and thus a mastery and domination over the world. In other words, once being and truth are abolished in favor of the value-positing subject, power remains all that is left as a fundamental "ground" through which to understand the world. This ground nevertheless remains within the purview and logic of metaphysics, even the utmost entanglement in the nihilism of metaphysics, for its own metaphysics remains concealed to itself. That is, modern metaphysics mistakenly thinks itself as "free" from any metaphysical or Platonic hangover from a bygone theistic era. As Nietzsche pointed out to science that it remains theistic, so too does Heidegger point out to Nietzsche that he remains metaphysical, for he fails to see that his metaphysics of the will to power as the ground and fundamental understanding of the being of beings is just as metaphysical as the metaphysics it sought to destroy. Nietzsche's metaphysics of the subject represents the final exhaustion of metaphysical possibilities, and thus the complete inversion of Platonism, to the point of utmost saturation. Nietzsche is, therefore, for Heidegger the *last* metaphysician.

### ART AND ITS FAILED COUNTERMOVEMENT TO NIHILISM

For Heidegger, Nietzsche's failure to wrest free of metaphysics and Platonism extends to areas beyond the philosophical and scientific, in particular, into the realm of art. Art, for Nietzsche, is the countermovement to nihilism. Art alone is where salvation could be found, for art

represents the very activity of will to power in its creative and life altering force. That is, art *is* the very activity of will to power's creation qua the stamping of becoming with being. It is in and through art and artistic formation that will to power names and shapes becoming and gives meaning to an otherwise meaningless canvas. Indeed, as Nietzsche writes, "we have art so as not to perish from the truth" (WP 822), for art is "worth more than the truth" (WP 853). The reason art proves salvific for Nietzsche concerns then not only its relation to will to power but its relation precisely to the degraded form of will to power, namely "the truth."

Will to power is to be thought as the creative process of stamping becoming with the character of being, of painting meaning upon the meaningless canvas of becoming. Art is this very process of the originary creation and formation of the activity of will to power. Truth, however, represents a secondary, degraded form of will to power in that truth represents reality as *already* formed, shaped, and stamped; that is, truth is becoming petrified and ossified into something to which we take a secondary relation, namely "correctness." Naming something as "true," as we saw earlier, requires that an idea adequately corresponds to "reality." For Nietzsche, this means that we do not form or create reality but merely abstract and reflect upon a reality already formed; this abstraction and reflection is always vis-à-vis the true. But if this is the nature of the true, then art, as a creative forming, is always then a *lie*. Art is a lie, insofar as the truth is what remains ossified, whereas art pertains to what becomes. Art as lying then represents a countermovement to "truth," a countermovement to the denial of life present in metaphysics, insofar as metaphysics in and through the ascetic ideal "denies life." Furthermore, art, as divorced from the truth, concerns itself not with the supersensuous world of truth, but rather with the sensuous world of mere appearance. In other words, art as such is concerned not with being, but becoming, and as such represents the liberation from metaphysical constraints, particularly constraints of the truth.

Art is a lie, but truth is also a lie, for there is no "truth." However, truth is a twofold lie in that it is forgets that it is a lie—a lie about becoming as being—and, therefore, mistakes itself as true. Art, on the other hand, remains conscious of its deception, i.e., its creation of becoming as being. While art remains conscious of its petrification of becoming, truth mistakes this petrification for being and forgets becoming. There is, as we shall see, an analogue here in Nietzsche



between such forgetting of becoming and Heidegger's notion of the forgetting of being.

Nevertheless, through art one can overcome the twofold lie that is the truth, and thus overcome metaphysics by affirming the sensuous world of becoming, thereby displacing the "other world" by simply inverting it. Art is then quite simply the inversion of Platonism. Art overturns Platonism by affirming precisely what Platonism denied, namely becoming vis-à-vis being. Art affirms becoming, and the supreme work of art then pertains to the supreme act of will to power: the absolute and unconditional stamping of becoming with the character of being in the Eternal Return. The Eternal Return then marks Nietzsche's ultimate aesthetic creation. It is not "true" but rather a "lie," for it marks the height of the activity of willing and affirming life, of overcoming revenge, and thus of the will to power itself. Will to power is becoming, which is an artistic creation in and through the will to power's identification of becoming in the aesthetic of the Eternal Return of the Same. Heidegger summarizes this point in Nietzsche quite nicely in his first volume on Nietzsche entitled *The Will to Power as Art*:

Art as a will to semblance is the supreme configuration of will to power. But the latter, as the basic character of beings, as the essence of reality, is in itself that Being which wills itself by willing to be Becoming. In that way Nietzsche in will to power attempts to think the original unity of the ancient opposition of Being and Becoming. Being, as permanence, is to let Becoming *be* as Becoming. The origin of the thought of "eternal recurrence" is thereby indicated.<sup>41</sup>

According to Heidegger, this activity, of transferring being into becoming and of thereby stamping becoming with the character of being in the supreme aesthetic act of will to power—Eternal Return of the Same—marks an even deeper philosophical move for Nietzsche, namely the subsuming of all knowledge (philosophy, science, etc.) into the subjective realm of art. That is, Nietzsche attempts, for Heidegger, "to see science under the optics of the artist..." i.e., under the auspices of the subjective. This subsumption of all knowledge under the domain of art, for Heidegger, represents even more so Nietzsche's tethering to the subjective, and thus to the Cartesian.

Moreover, Nietzsche's critique of truth in favor of art may be a hasty oversimplification of Platonism, or at least of Plato. Indeed, this

attempt to divorce art from truth, and thus overturn Platonic metaphysics proves problematic when art is considered with respect to the beautiful. Nietzsche, in *The Will to Power*, stresses a fairly straightforward Darwinian conception of the beautiful, namely that it represents, again, the biological “value” of life and power, i.e., in this context, health. That which is beautiful and experienced as beautiful indicates a heightened sense of life, of health, and consequently, of rapture and intoxication. In short, the beautiful indicates an increase in our will to life and power. The ugly, by contrast, indicates a decrease or depression in power and life. Beauty is felt as strength, ugliness as weakness. “Thus the beautiful and the ugly are recognized as *relative* to our most fundamental values of preservation” (WP 804). In other words, that which increases will to power is experienced as pleasing, as beautiful, and that which decreases will to power is experienced as painful, as repulsive and ugly. However, does such a conception of the beautiful—that is dependent upon and relative to will to power—suffice to act as a countermovement to Platonism and overturn it?

In one sense, we can answer this question in the affirmative, insofar as Platonism represents a revenge and *ressentiment* against life (becoming). That is, art, conscious of itself as a lie, and, therefore, as a creative act whereby will to power is increased, amounts to an affirmation of life, rather than a revolting denial. In art, one is forced to face the world of becoming and remain conscious of the will to power’s activity of lying and ossifying of becoming into being, whereas, in metaphysics—or, we can now say, philosophy writ large—one posits such being *over and against* becoming as a means of escaping becoming, as a means of denial and revulsion against becoming. Only in and through art then can the unconditional affirmation of life, and thus the heightening of the intoxication of will to power take place. Only through art can the will to revenge be overcome by way of becoming conscious of the will itself in its ossifications as fictions, rather than truths. Art then makes us honest, for we face the fact that we are fundamentally liars.

Nietzsche’s countermovement to Platonism then certainly succeeds insofar as it runs counter to the Platonic understanding of art as a kind of *mimesis*, thrice removed from “true being,” as presented by Plato’s *Republic*. That is, in *Republic X*, art as kind of *mimesis*, is nothing more than a copy of a copy, a copy of a sensible object, which in turn copies the truth, the Idea. In this kind of Platonism, there remains a great gulf and distance between truth and art; art is a lesser representation,

the least and worst representation even, of the truth. Thus Nietzsche's radical divorce of art from the truth understood in this Platonic sense indeed accomplishes the inversion of Platonism that Nietzsche sought. However, Plato presents a slightly different take on the relationship between art and truth, or at least *beauty* and truth, in his *Phaedrus* (250c–d). Here the beautiful resists Nietzsche's critique. That is, in the *Phaedrus*, beauty and truth enter into a role much different than the hierarchical one presented in *Republic X* (Heidegger's first volume of *Nietzsche* devotes two chapters to this difference).<sup>42</sup> In the *Phaedrus*, beauty is thought as that which provokes and incites the very possibility of movement toward the truth; beauty conditions the very possibility of metaphysics as *meta ta phusika*. Plato writes,

Now beauty, as we said, shone bright amidst these visions, and in this world below we apprehend it through the clearest of our senses, clear and resplendent. For sight is the keenest mode of perception vouchsafed us through the body; wisdom, indeed, we cannot see thereby...nor yet any other of those beloved objects, save only beauty; for beauty alone this has been ordained, to be most manifest to sense and most lovely of them all (250c–e).<sup>43</sup>

The form of the beautiful is thought by Plato as a *sui generis* form, at least insofar as it is the beautiful itself which not only gathers together many beautiful things into and under one Idea, but also gleams in such a way as to show itself among sensible things themselves, indeed *as* sensible things themselves. John Sallis summarizes this point quite nicely within a Heideggerian register:

It is not simply a matter of its [the beautiful's] shining more or less brilliantly but rather a matter of its shining in a radically different way. To men the beautiful itself shines, not simply by itself, not immediately, but only through beautiful things, only through its "earthly" images. What distinguishes the beautiful is that it shines in the region of the visible, the "earthly," and thus renders being accessible to man in his condition of being bound to the visible through his body...the beautiful is that *eidōs* [form] which is most manifest to man in his embodied condition, that *eidōs* which shows itself as such, which shines forth, in the midst of the visible. The beautiful is that "original" which shines amidst images in such a way as to open up and make manifest for man the difference separating image from "original." Still more fundamentally regarded, "the beautiful"

names the way in which being itself shines forth in the midst of the visible. An openness to this shining forth belongs among the most basic conditions pertaining to the beginning of philosophy.<sup>44</sup>

The beautiful, beauty itself, is the only form that actually appears sensibly. The beautiful is the form that is “most radiant,” and thus shines amidst the sensible realm of becoming. Being then actually appears *as* becoming, or at least amidst becoming in such a way as to mark itself different from all other Ideas which in no way can subject themselves to becoming in this way. Insofar then as the beautiful appears in the realm of becoming, as a being, and yet nevertheless remains the being of such a being in the true realm of being, the beautiful shows itself both as it *is* and as it *is not*. Furthermore, and most importantly such a bivalent showing occasions the very possibility of philosophy as metaphysics, insofar as this bivalency allows the *difference* to open up between a form and its appearance, and thus between being and becoming. The beautiful then in showing itself in a twofold way shows also the very difference between being and becoming, and thus offers a standard and measure for being itself. As such, it then allows and allures one “up the line” so to speak into the other world. In short, beauty provokes an *eros* for the truth. The relationship between art and truth then remains further complicated, not only due to beauty’s provocation toward truth, but furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, beauty’s necessitating of truth’s—and thus being’s—admixture with becoming. Indeed it is this admixture of being and becoming in the artwork, as we shall see, that will later preoccupy Heidegger.

We are now in a position to inquire again as to whether or not Nietzsche’s philosophy, at least in part, overcomes, or at least comes close to overcoming, Platonism. Does it even have to, since Plato himself presents a much more complicated relationship between art and truth (and thus being and becoming) than originally thought? That is, if being, truth, can be *as* becoming, as is the case with the beautiful, has this Platonic understanding of truth and beauty named the very thing Nietzsche sought in his inversion, namely the rebalancing of truth and art? Certainty not, insofar as the hierarchy of the split world remains, for to admit of admixture between being and becoming in such a way as to say that being shows itself as becoming would leave one with the question as to which of the two—being or becoming—takes ontological priority. For Plato, certainly being, in the end, must be prioritized, and for

Nietzsche, becoming. This question, the question of “ontological priority” between being and becoming, then ultimately determines the difference between Platonism and Nietzscheanism, even if both philosophers admit to an admixture.

Nevertheless, within Plato, Heidegger finds a path toward rethinking the relationship between the visible and invisible worlds, a path that he thinks Nietzsche nearly broached prior to his madness. This path would rethink the relationship between art and truth in such a way as to configure the hierarchy between truth and beauty to allow for the beautiful to be, for Heidegger, the process of truth or truthing itself, as *aletheia*, or unconcealment. Regardless, it is Heidegger’s contention that Nietzsche’s thinking never quite reaches this reconfiguration precisely because of its all too radical commitment to the value positing of the will to power, and thus to subjectivism.

Nietzsche’s thinking concerning the overcoming of nihilism in the form of Platonism certainly does present a response to Platonic thinking, albeit only one aspect of Platonic thinking, namely the view that art and the truth are sundered by a great distance, as presented in the *Republic*. It is not clear how Nietzsche’s critique of the ascetic ideal would bode vis-à-vis the conception of the relationship between art and truth in Plato’s *Phaedrus*. However, Nietzsche did not remain naively unaware of this conception of beauty in Plato, for in his *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche offers Plato a nod of praise for exposing this “erotic element” of philosophy caused by beauty. Nietzsche initially praises Plato for contradicting Schopenhauer’s ideal that beauty would divest one of the will and of sexuality. Nietzsche then writes,

Fortunately a philosopher also contradicts him [Schopenhauer]. No less an authority than the divine Plato maintains a different thesis: that all beauty incites to procreation – that precisely this is the *proprium* of its effect, from the most sensual regions up into the most spiritual... Plato goes further. He says, with an innocence for which one must be Greek and not ‘Christian,’ that there would be no Platonic philosophy at all if Athens had not possessed such beautiful youths: it was the sight of them which first plunged the philosopher’s soul into an erotic whirl and allowed it no rest until it had implanted the seed of all high things into so beautiful a soil... Philosophy [then] in the manner of Plato should be rather defined as an erotic contest.... (T 91–92)

Thus, Nietzsche remained well aware of this erotic element to Platonic philosophy, and thus praised it, only taking issue, we could imagine, with the flights of fancy to the other world of being over and against the world of becoming. Yet the idea that the sensuous world would provoke the very desire for truth seems to run contrary to Nietzsche's argument that the will to truth arises from will to power's revulsion against becoming. Indeed, here we are presented with a Platonic conception of truth that Nietzsche seems to tacitly consent to as, at the very least, not life-denying, and at the most, perhaps, life affirming, so far as *eros* and not revenge proves to be the motivation for philosophical truth.

### NIETZSCHE'S ATHEISM

In summary, we could say that Nietzsche's entire philosophical endeavor is an attempt honestly and truly to "think" atheism at its core, that is, to follow the "hypothesis of atheism" to its inevitable conclusions, which include overcoming truth itself as the last remnant of Platonism, and thus of Christian theism. That is, Nietzsche realizes he must rid himself of any and all semblances of Platonism, and thus must overcome the fundamental elements of Platonism that trickle down in all of Platonism's various configurations, in order to truly think atheistically. The fundamental element of Platonism is, of course, being, or truth, for as we have seen earlier, both being and truth are interrelated concepts, contingent upon each other. To keep one is to retain the other; to destroy one is to abolish the other. Nietzsche's atheism drives his entire philosophic mission against Platonism, Christianity, and any subsequent versions of metaphysics that include the terms "truth" and "being" in any meaningful, objective sense. But why? Why does Nietzsche go through such great pangs to rid himself of truth? Quite simply, because Nietzsche recognizes that to allow for truth (or being) in any sense would inevitably lead again to theism. He realizes that if he allows for any objective intelligibility, that is, any truth that is both universal and necessary, he, in turn, welcomes theism in through the back door—the very crime of which he believes modern science still remains guilty. For this reason, then Nietzsche argues that modern science, with its faith in the truth and its faith in the objective "intelligibility" of the cosmos, still remains within the orbit of theism, for it believes in being, in truth. In a word, modern science still believes, whether knowingly or not, in the objective (i.e., nonsubjective) ontological independence of intelligibility. For

modern science, the world is intelligible, ordered, and thus still able to be thought and *known* by the human intellect. Thinking and knowing still then apply objectively to the world. Science still reveals truth as an absolute good, and insofar as it does so, it still remains Platonic, meta-physical, and thus theistic.

In other words, once one admits of intelligibility, of truths that are universal and necessary, one admits of the stability being and of the independence of intelligible truth that simply cannot be contingently reduced to materiality. For example, mathematical and logical truths (the truths upon which natural science is based), *if* they exist, are *ipso facto* non-physical, *meta*-physical, truths, and moreover, noncontingent. For what would it mean to say that they were contingent? Could “ $2 + 2 = 4$ ” or *modus ponens* be merely contingent truths? Was there a time at which they were not true? Will there be a time in the future when they will no longer be true? These truths—the very truths that govern scientific reasoning, if *true*, must, therefore, be timeless, eternal and the world must again be Platonically split in two. In a passage from *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche cites an earlier passage from his *The Gay Science* (showing just how important this passage is for Nietzsche):

The truthful man, in the audacious and ultimate sense presupposed by faith in science, *thereby affirms another world* than that of life, nature and history; and insofar as he affirms this ‘other world,’ does this not mean that he has to deny its antithesis, this world, *our* world... It is still a *meta-physical faith* that underlies our faith in science – and we men of knowledge of today, we godless men and anti-metaphysicians, we, too, still derive *our* flame from the fire ignited by a faith millennia old, the Christian faith, which was also Plato’s, that God is truth, that truth is *divine*. (GS 344, GM 3:24)

Science rests upon the *metaphysical* faith in the other world (a world, we could say, of mathematics, of logic, of rationality, etc.), a faith in *truth* itself, which makes science utterly Platonic and, thus utterly theistic. For these reasons then Nietzsche sought and fought for a philosophy that would reduce all truth, being, intelligibility, meaning, etc. to the will to power, thereby eliminating any possible recourse to God. It is a question then as to whether one simply has the courage to face Nietzsche’s kind of atheism, an honest or “true” atheism that would follow the atheist

hypothesis wherever it would lead, even if it were to lead to nihilism, absurdity, and ultimately madness.

Heidegger too acknowledges that Platonism—and all metaphysics for that matter—is *eo ipso* onto-theo-logical, as all metaphysics inevitably leads to theology, as Aristotle originally suggested, due to the specific way in which “being” is conceived in any metaphysical system, namely as “ground,” “essence,” or “cause.” Being, as the being of beings, is the ground of beings, the essence of beings, and thus the cause of beings, and beings (*die Seienden*) are, therefore, conceived conditionally, i.e., grounded upon a condition. Things must be grounded, explained, by their conditions, and yet, their conditions must further be explained and grounded, leading to a regress that eventually must have a *terminus* so as to ensure the system’s completion. This *terminus*, functioning as the “unconditioned condition” or *causa sui*, occurs under the guise of the deity, who is both a being and the ground and condition for all other beings. God, thus enters the metaphysical system, every metaphysical system, in precisely this same way, namely as the highest and final explanation for beings as a whole. For Heidegger then a “cosmological argument” for God is necessarily implied once beings are conceived in a certain way, a Platonic or metaphysical way, which seeks being’s ground or essence in the Platonic sense.

In Plato, we see various versions of such onto-theology crop up depending on the particular discussion of being. For example, in *Republic VII*, Plato presents his theory of the forms in the famous “Sun Analogy,” where the forms constitute the supersensible truth and being of things that serve to gather and unify the manifold of particular sense objects. Thus the forms gather the “many” into “one” by grounding the many upon the invisible essence that is the form. And yet, a manifold breaks out even among the forms, which then requires a further grounding and unification. This unification occurs in the “form of all forms,” or the essence of all essences, namely the form of the Good. The Good then functions as the ultimate reality, the unconditioned condition, which is, even for Plato, “beyond being,” in that it dispenses truth/being so as to illuminate each form. Nevertheless, we see here Heidegger’s point concerning onto-theology, in that a metaphysical system will always terminate in a highest reality that is the functional equivalent of God.

In *Republic X* (596–597), concerning the discussion of *mimesis* (copying) noted earlier, *mimesis* is thought vis-à-vis production (*techne*). There are three kinds of productions corresponding to the three levels



of truth or illumination: the Idea, the sensible object, and the mimetic copy of that object; and to each production there corresponds a producer: God, the craftsman, and the artists (597b). The craftsman, when making an object, fixes his intellect upon the form and instantiates it in the matter. It is thus a copy of the “truth” that is the form. Art, as a depiction of a perspective of the sensible object, is a copy of a copy; the artist is then a producer of copies, of the craftsman’s products as copies of the form. Yet, Plato strangely suggests that it is God who is the producer of the forms themselves, the producer of “real being” (597d). God “by and in nature” (*phusis*) has produced each form (597d). Plato then seems to suggest that it is God who is responsible for the very creation in “nature” of the forms, which would mean that “nature” must be taken in the sense of nature qua essence. Recourse to God then proves necessary for Plato in order to justify his theory of *techne* as the production of things that *are* or *are true* to a greater or lesser degree. It is worth noting that Heidegger reads these passages quite carefully in his first volume of *Nietzsche* and argues that the greater and lesser degrees of being and truth stand simply for greater or less degrees of illumination, of *aletheia*. That is, for Heidegger, beings show themselves as illuminated in their being to a greater or lesser extent depending on the way in which they presence. John Sallis’s famous *Being and Logos* attempts, quite successfully, to read the entire Platonic corpus in this way. We shall return to this topic later when discussing Heidegger’s *Origin of the Work of Art*.

Again then Platonism has led to God, this time as the producer of the nature of the Ideas themselves, but again as the “ground” or “cause” of what is most real or true (and thus in keeping with Heidegger’s notion of onto-theology). Thus, all begins from a theory of reality, a metaphysics, which understands being and truth to be objective and mind independent. That is, the forms are extra-mental beings that serve to make the world objectively intelligible (i.e., able to be thought and known) and objectively ordered. Consequently, such order necessitates an Orderer; such intelligibility necessitates a Mind to think, know, and conceive it. In other words, mind, on the subjective side, and intelligibility, on the objective side, prove to be the higher order of reality from the sensible and changeable. This is the very essence of Platonism, which Aristotle too found himself unable to escape. Aristotle also posits an ultimate, unchangeable being, a being that is pure actuality, as an immaterial substance, which serves to explain and ground the causal relations understood in terms of potency and act in a final end, God, who moreover

is synonymous with thought or mind itself (*nous*).<sup>45</sup> In both cases, the world is again split in two.

Therefore, Nietzsche understood quite well that if one allows for *any* theory of reality, *any* metaphysics, that makes truth objective, and thus allows for being to be real, theism inevitably eventuates. Nietzsche's atheism remains, therefore, the most consistent kind of atheism one could envision, for such atheism holds true to the ultimate unintelligibility of reality and the absolute nonexistence of truth itself. These "truths" for Nietzsche are precisely what science has not the courage to face. However, Nietzsche's commitment to the impossibility of truth and being leads him to a radical position, perhaps the most radical position possible, namely a self-referentially inconsistent "metaphysics." Was this perhaps Nietzsche's intention from the beginning? That is, to show that a reduction of truth to will to power leads to a freeing from the shackles of truth, one that would allow for art to be "worth more" than the truth (WP 853)? Indeed, this valuing of art over and against the truth would allow Nietzsche to be saved by art "so as not to perish from the truth."

John Sallis rightly describes the relation between Plato and Nietzsche as "a battle in which being is at stake."<sup>46</sup> These stakes are not new to modernity, but rather resurrect an ancient quarrel that Plato termed in his *Sophist* a "battle between giants and gods" (246a–c). This battle is between the giants of materialism, who seek "to drag everything down to earth out of heaven and the unseen....and affirm that real being belongs only to that which can be handled..." and the "gods" who are friends of the forms, who maintain that "true being consists in certain intelligible and bodiless forms" (246a–b). According to Plato, this battle is unending. Thus, it is not surprising that we again find ourselves in the midst of this battle, this time the two camps reconfigured as Nietzsche and Plato. Modern science then remains "stuck" halfway between Nietzsche and Plato, insofar as science wants to dispense with God and the other world altogether, while nevertheless seeking to save truth and intelligibility. For Nietzsche, modern science need only be honest with itself and with the courage of its convictions and finally shrug off the burdensome value of truth, the "long storm" that, according to Zarathustra, so plagued humanity. Whereas, for Platonists, modern science must repent and embrace its philosophical and theological foundations and anchor itself firmly in a metaphysics that would seek to ground metaphysical "values" of truth and being that it employs.

Heidegger, however, seeks a third way, another alternative to the two camps in the ancient battle that would circumvent the Nietzschean-Platonic polarity. Heidegger names this original battle “metaphysics,” which he distances himself from and attempts to overcome by a middle or third way. Is such a third way possible? That is, is it possible to “twist free” of metaphysical thinking in such a way as to transcend the categories of Nietzscheanism and Platonism?

## NOTES

1. See Gianni Vattimo, *Introduzione a Nietzsche* (Rome: Editori Laterza, 1985) 3–7.
2. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1989) chapter 3, section 24 (Further references to this work will be indicated by GM and chapter and section number).
3. Nietzsche’s philosophical relationship to Darwin is quite complicated, as it includes both an obvious influence, as well as an explicit critique. Regardless of the precise nature of Nietzsche’s “Darwinism,” the point here remains the same: once truth is grounded not upon intelligibility, but upon power, life, survival, etc., reason itself becomes susceptible to an immanent critique (See GM 3:25). Darwin famously recognized this very problematic in a letter to W. Graham, “...with me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of a man’s mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey’s mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?” Charles Darwin, “To W. Graham.” 3 July 1881. *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*. Ed. Francis Darwin. Vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton, 1896) 285. Furthermore, John Richardson has recently argued that Nietzsche, despite his harsh criticisms of Darwin, nevertheless remained a Darwinian. See John Richardson, *Nietzsche’s New Darwinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
4. Peter Poellner considers in detail the strong elements of Nietzsche’s Darwinian or “evolutionary epistemology” vis-à-vis utility and life. He concludes, as do I, that ultimately Nietzsche’s reliance on such epistemology results in metaphysical incoherence. See Peter Poellner *Nietzsche and Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 137–149, 288–305.
5. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1968) paragraph 493. Further references to this text will be indicated by WP and paragraph number.

6. This text proves contentious for a number of reasons, one of which being the manner in which the text itself was compiled and edited, namely by Nietzsche's sister Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche and Peter Gast from Nietzsche's posthumous journals. The question of the authenticity of the text remains disputed by some Nietzsche scholars as to whether it represents the "authentic Nietzsche." As noted, for our purposes, the question of "what Nietzsche actually believed" is irrelevant and may in fact be impossible to ultimately determine. Moreover, Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche heavily engaged *The Will to Power*, as Heidegger considered this text, and Nietzsche's posthumous fragments, to be the place for an original encounter with Nietzsche as a "metaphysical thinker." See Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche. Volume 1: The Will to Power as Art*. Edited by David Farrell Krell (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1991) 7–17.
7. Alvin Plantinga has dubbed a version of this argument "the evolutionary argument against naturalism." See Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
8. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974) section 344. Further references to this text will be indicated by GS and section number.
9. As to be expected, Nietzsche scholarship does not take kindly to the idea that Nietzsche in the end is simply self-referentially incoherent. Alexander Nehamas argues that at least Nietzsche's own metaphysical "perspectivism" does not *ipso facto* exclude the possibility of some perspectives being true. See Alexander Nehamas *Nietzsche: Life As Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 65–67. Brian Leiter argues for a naturalist reading of Nietzsche that excludes, to an extent, scientific and empirical truths from Nietzsche's "metaphysical" critiques. See Brian Leiter, *The Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Nietzsche on Morality* (London: Routledge 2002) 264–279. Matthew Meyer also argues that Nietzsche avoids the charges of self-referential incoherence by way of discussion of the Protagorean *homo mensura* doctrine in the Theaetetus, first vindicating Protagorean relativism from the self-referential paradox, and then doing the same for Nietzsche. Meyer's claim essentially is that the *homo mensura* claim ought to be limited in scope such that there could be at least one thing that man was not the measure of, namely the *homo mensura* doctrine itself. Such limitations allow for Meyer to argue that Nietzsche's "ontology" (the negation of substances in favor of the mere play of forces, for Meyer) also escapes the problem of self-reference. See Matthew Meyer, *Reading Nietzsche Through the Ancients* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014) 199–200.

10. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Translated by R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Book, 1995) section 14. Further textual references will be indicated by BGE and section number.
11. Translation by R.J. Hollingdale from Friedrich Nietzsche, *A Nietzsche Reader* (London: Penguin Books, 1977) 61–62.
12. The debate about how to understand Nietzsche’s so called “naturalism” takes many sides, and has many forms. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter stand on one side of the debate arguing for a strict naturalism in Nietzsche, which would preserve the “truths” of modern science over and against more metaphysical truths like truth or goodness itself. See Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Other readers, e.g., Alexander Nehamas and Richard Rorty, align more with a postmodern and “aesthetic” reading of Nietzsche that focuses on his critique of truth, or his aesthetics at the expense of truth. See Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Finally, readers like Matthew Meyer hold to a more moderate position between the two sides. See Matthew Meyer “Nietzsche’s Naturalized Aestheticism” in *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 23:1 (2015): 138–160.
13. Concerning Nietzsche’s critique of causality, See Justin Remhof “Naturalism, Causality, and Nietzsche’s Conception of Science” in *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 46:1 (Spring 2015): 110–119, and Joshua Rayman “Nietzsche on Causation” in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 28:3 (2014): 327–334.
14. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, translated by Marion Faber, with Stephen Lehmann (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996) section 11. Further textual references will be indicated by HA and section number.
15. Against this reading, and in order to preserve some truths of natural science, Matthew Meyer has argued for a reading of Nietzsche that embraces a Heraclitian view of the world by way of Nietzsche’s engagement with contemporary physics of his time. In particular, Meyer conceives of Nietzsche’s “metaphysics” as one of substanceless forces, that is, forces devoid of and that precede substances, which continually interact in a perpetual state of becoming and flux. See Meyer, *Reading Nietzsche Through the Ancients*.
16. Translation by Hollingdale from Nietzsche, *A Nietzsche Reader*, 56–57.
17. Leiter, *Nietzsche*, 14.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., 22.

20. Yirmiyahu Yovel, whom I regard as a leading Continental thinker, makes explicit mention of Nietzsche's problematic relationship with truth, namely Nietzsche's apparent self-referential inconsistency. Yovel writes, "Nietzsche's notion of truth, however, is one of the most difficult issues in his writings. Given the lack of objective truth and a disinterested 'will to truth,' all modes of knowledge are only perspectives, which are subject to certain kinds of life preferences. Yet, like any sweeping skeptical claim, this one too refers back to itself. What then is the status of Nietzsche's own view? Apparently he takes it to be another perspective on the world which is linked (as its necessary condition) to the Dionysian way of living." Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Dark Riddle: Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Jews* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998) 113.
21. David Storey, *Naturalizing Heidegger* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2015) 208.
22. *Ibid.*, 163, 209.
23. For these reasons, it is fair to point out that Storey's concerns are not mine. Storey's concerns lie with developing a nonreductive naturalism within the purview of an environmental ethics that can avoid metaphysical as well as naturalistic pitfalls. My concerns are with the absolute ground of values, whether they actually exist independently of the human being. Indeed, Storey finds what he needs in Nietzsche (and Heidegger) in order to develop a nonreductive naturalistic ethics, but in doing so, he avoids, though acknowledges, the major metaphysical and epistemological objections in Nietzsche to his own project, namely the radical perspectivism (in this sense relativism) to which Nietzsche remains committed. For a more "spiritual" reading of Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics, see Bruce Ellis Benson, *Pious Nietzsche* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008). It is worth noting that while Benson's concerns are not mine, and that while I do not agree with any spiritual reading of Nietzsche that makes him favorable in anyway toward theism, nevertheless highlighting Nietzsche's hostility toward "scientism" and "reductionism" is indeed an essential aspect of my thesis concerning Nietzsche's naturalism (d)evolving into postmodernism.
24. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 1995) chapter 2, section 20. Further references will be indicated by Z and chapter and section.
25. Trans. by Hollingdale from Nietzsche, *A Nietzsche Reader*, 63.
26. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*. Translated by R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Books, 1990) 87. Further references will be indicated by T and page number.
27. Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968) 85.

28. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche. Volume II: The Eternal Recurrence of the Same* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1984) 221. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, 98.
29. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, 105.
30. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche. Volume III: The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics*. Edited by David Farrell Krell (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1987). 170, 189; See Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Translated by William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) 82.
31. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, 127 (*The Anti-Christ*, section 2).
32. Heidegger, *Nietzsche I*, 154.
33. Heidegger, *Nietzsche III*, 195.
34. Heidegger, *Nietzsche III*, 197.
35. Heidegger, *Nietzsche III*, 214 concerning Chaos.
36. For Nietzsche's referring to time as a "circle" without goal, see WP 1067: "[T]his my Dionysian world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my 'beyond good and evil,' without goal, unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal' without will, unless a ring feels good will toward itself – do you want a *name* for this world? A *solution* for all its riddles? A *light* for you, too, you best-concealed, strongest, most intrepid, most midnightly men? – *This world is the will to power—and nothing besides!* And you yourselves are also this will to power – and nothing besides" (WP 1067).
37. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche. Volume IV: Nihilism* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1982) 7.
38. Didier Franck, against Heidegger's reading, boldly argues that it is impossible to consider Nietzsche's thinking as a mere reversal of Platonism that remains with its same logic. Franck argues this point by noting that for Nietzsche there remains an explicit distinction between Greek thinking and Roman thinking, and that Nietzsche clearly favored the latter over the former. Yet Franck thinks that since Heidegger argued that the Romanization of Greek thinking was simply another step along the Platonic path of the metaphysics of presence, any separation between Roman and Greek thinking, for Nietzsche, amounts to a misreading of Nietzsche on Heidegger's part. I disagree with Franck's argument for several reasons: (1) Heidegger's point is that despite whatever Nietzsche may think he thinks, he nevertheless cannot see his blind spot that Heidegger's own "hermeneutics of suspicion" has unearthed, namely Nietzsche's fidelity to the inner logic of Platonism (i.e., the metaphysics of ground). (2) Moreover, Nietzsche himself in the *Genealogy* (3:24) acknowledges himself as a "pale atheist" and, therefore, just

- as “pious” and theistic as the theism he attempts to overcome precisely because he, as well as other atheists of the time, still has faith in the “value of truth.” Moreover, and most importantly, (3) Franck simply brushes off Nietzsche’s own acknowledgement that his philosophy is “inverted Platonism.” Franck’s theses are bold and interesting. However, Franck’s concerns are not mine, as I do not intend to call into question the authenticity of Heidegger’s “Nietzsche,” but rather situate both Heidegger and Nietzsche in the context of the larger concern of the Gigantomachy. See Didier Franck, *Nietzsche and the Shadow of God* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011).
39. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 84.
  40. “Nietzsches Metaphysik ist demnach keine Überwindung des Nihilismus. Sie ist die letzte Verstrickung in den Nihilismus. Durch das Wertdenken aus dem Willen zur Macht hält sie sich zwar daran, das Seiende als solches anzuerkennen, aber zugleich fesselt sie sich mit dem Strick der Deutung des Seins als Wert in die Unmöglichkeit, das Sein als das Sein auch nur in den fragenden Blick zu bekommen. Durch diese Verstrickung des Nihilismus in sich selbst wird er erst durch und durch in dem, was er ist, fertig. Der so durch-fertigte perfekte Nihilismus ist die Vollendung des eigentlichen Nihilismus.” Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 6.2: *Nietzsche II* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997) 340–341; Heidegger, *Nietzsche IV*, 203.
  41. Heidegger, *Nietzsche I*, 218
  42. See Heidegger, *Nietzsche I*, chapters 22–23.
  43. Translation by R. Hackforth from Plato, *The Collected Dialogues*, 497.
  44. John Sallis, *Being and Logos* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996) 156.
  45. Lloyd Gerson argues that Aristotle’s defining of God as seemingly contentless thought of thought is Aristotle’s last attempt at distancing himself from Plato, as Aristotle is well aware that if God as thought thinks anything other than himself as pure thought, e.g., the Ideas, then Ideas gain ontological independence in precisely the same way as for Plato. See Lloyd Gerson, *Aristotle and Other Platonists* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005) 188–200.
  46. Sallis, *Platonic Legacies*, 7.

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## Heidegger's Gigantomachy

**Abstract** This chapter is devoted to a consideration of the philosophy of Martin Heidegger in the context of the Gigantomachy, in particular, Heidegger's attempt at a "third way" between materialism and idealism. The chapter highlights specifically three major essays of Heidegger: *What is Metaphysics?* (1929), *The Question Concerning Technology* (1954), and *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1935). I argue that Heidegger's middle position in the Gigantomachy concerns a reconsideration by Heidegger of Platonic *methexis* (participation), but ultimately fails as a viable alternative to either position in the Gigantomachy.

**Keywords** Heidegger · Metaphysics · Philosophy of technology  
Philosophy of art

### HEIDEGGER AND THE GREAT QUARREL

Heidegger's philosophical project, I argue, ought to be viewed within the light of the aforementioned Platonic quarrel between the "giants and gods" of materialism and rationalism, anti-realism and realism, Nietzscheanism and Platonism. This quarrel, between competing metaphysical views about truth and being, Heidegger argues, is the very nature of metaphysics itself. Heidegger's project, similar to Nietzsche's (albeit in name only), is then one of "overcoming of metaphysics" and metaphysical thinking altogether. In order to do so, Heidegger argues

that we must completely rethink the object of this ancient quarrel, namely being (truth). What is the meaning of being? What is the meaning of truth? Is the traditional employment of this word spanning the metaphysical history of the west from Plato to Nietzsche accurate? Or is there something forgotten, some forgotten element to the words “being” and “truth” that needs to be reexamined, such that a twisting free out of the very nature of metaphysical thinking would become possible? Heidegger’s contention is indeed that “being” has been largely misunderstood and mistaken in the past historical systems of Western metaphysics. Thus, Heidegger’s *Seinsfrage* is an attempt to rethink being (and truth) as the object of philosophical inquiry, so as to *escape* the ancient quarrel between Plato and Nietzsche and perhaps avoid the problematic altogether by disclosing another aspect to the nature and meaning of being, and of truth.

Heidegger’s *Seinsfrage* represents the attempt then to rethink the meaning of being, initially vis-à-vis temporality (e.g., circa *Being and Time*) and later vis-à-vis history (e.g., the *Beiträge*). In each case, the reexamination of being has as its end the overcoming of metaphysics. Yet the overcoming of metaphysics, for Heidegger, is a twofold process that involves first, in the same vein as Nietzsche’s hermeneutics of suspicion, unearthing metaphysics’ concealed grounds or conditions for possibility, and then and only then an attempt to reconfigure and, therefore, reengage in the thinking of being, in a radically new way that avoids the pitfalls of all metaphysics prior. The scope of Heidegger’s project is indeed brazen, and yet Heidegger did forever change the way in which philosophical thinking engages with being. Like Nietzsche, not only does Heidegger attempt to overcome metaphysics by first understanding metaphysics’ conditions, but Heidegger’s solution to the problem (of metaphysics) also involves a rethinking of art vis-à-vis truth.

### OVERCOMING METAPHYSICS: *DASEIN* AND *SEIN*

In order to overcome metaphysics and metaphysics’ pitfalls, particularly the oscillations between the “gods and giants,” between Plato and Nietzsche, Heidegger proposes a solution that undercuts the problem by simply reframing the question, the question of being. That is, no longer is the question to be thought in terms of the reality and truth of beings as “what is” most real about them, but rather Heidegger seeks to phenomenologically disclose being by first disclosing metaphysics itself. Yet,

such phenomenological disclosure takes place “beyond” metaphysics, for “metaphysics,” as an object of inquiry, remains outside of its own purview. Thus, metaphysics qua metaphysics remains concealed from metaphysics itself.

What is it that lies concealed from metaphysics and concealed in such a way as to constitute its very essence, and thus conditions for possibility? Heidegger’s answer is quite simple: being (*das Sein*, *das Seyn*). The real meaning of being, therefore, remained concealed from metaphysics, whose purported object of investigation was ostensibly being itself. This “forgetting of being” (*Vergessenheit des Seins*) constitutes the true nature of metaphysics, metaphysics proper. It is true that metaphysics thinks itself as seeking the being of beings, the truth of beings, as to their “essence” or “whatness,” i.e., what they essentially *are*. Yet in limiting being to essence, whatness, cause, etc. metaphysics unintentionally reduced the meaning of being to one meaning and thereby closed off other possibilities through which being could disclose itself. Similar again to Nietzsche is thus Heidegger’s notion of a perspectival understanding of being, albeit objectively and not subjectively. That is, being for Heidegger, as for Aristotle, is “said in many ways,” and yet none of these ways are reducible merely to the human subject or to the human perspective. Rather, being discloses itself perspectivally, and thus can be thought from a myriad of perspectives, and yet is not somehow reducible to a mere perspective. This reductionism—a reductionism of being—remains for Heidegger at the heart of the failure of metaphysics, from Plato to Nietzsche, to think being itself, and not being under the guise of some disclosure of itself. The “god” Plato as well as the “giant” Nietzsche cannot break free from this reductionism, the latter being the mere inverse of the former. It is Heidegger’s task to free thinking from this reductionism without, however, reducing being’s meaning to a mere subjective perspectivalism. Heidegger’s attempt then is to find a middle position between the two thinkers, without collapsing one into the other.

Heidegger’s project, we could say, is an effort to think being and becoming, as the split “worlds” of metaphysics, without collapsing one into the other. It is a project that seeks to think the ways in which being *is* as becoming, and thus the way being shows itself *as* becoming. In short, it is an attempt to rethink the original problem of Platonic *methexis* or participation, as to how a form participates and, therefore, discloses itself in a particular. It is for this reason that Heidegger reconfigures or reappropriates what he considers to be the original meaning of truth

according to the Greek etymology of *a-letheia*, namely unconcealment or disclosure. Truth then, synonymous with being, is an illuminative disclosure of beings in their being, i.e., their intelligibility (e.g., essence, ground, cause, etc.). Truth and being name the same process, the process that illuminates intelligibility so that such can be thought. It is precisely this notion of truth and being that metaphysics failed to recognize, but rather concealed itself from itself. An explicit recovery of truth and being, meditated in this sense, constitutes then for Heidegger the beginning of a proper overcoming of metaphysics, not then to leave metaphysics behind, but rather to understand fully its conditions for possibility. Any less would constitute a reductionism and exclusivism of the polyvalency of being and truth, the very reductionism operative, as we shall see, in the Nietzschean metaphysics of modern science and technology. Overcoming metaphysics is then tantamount to thinking the being question, the question of truth, for it seeks to overcome the eclipse of being and of truth and to rethink being/truth itself as the condition for the possibility of intelligibility, the very question that science and metaphysics each presuppose but cannot themselves think.

### WHAT IS METAPHYSICS?

One of the often overlooked but clearest essays of Heidegger's thought in general concerning metaphysics and being occurs earlier in Heidegger's career in a lecture entitled (quite appropriately) "What is Metaphysics?" (1929). As the title suggests, the essay deals with the essence of metaphysics in terms of its conditions for possibility. It begins by inquiring into metaphysics proper, as the philosophic discipline, but quickly leads to a meditation on the human being as Dasein, who is metaphysical, and thus *metaphysics itself* for Heidegger.

What is metaphysics? Metaphysics, as *meta ta phusika*, is the philosophic discipline that passes beyond beings to their being, and thus studies, according to Aristotle, being qua being, or beings insofar as they are intelligible. Such studying of a being's *being* requires, as we saw for Plato, as well as for Nietzsche, that beings be transcended and "passed beyond" from the fact *that* they *are* to *what* they *are*. In other words, metaphysics splits the world in two by transcending beings to their being, to their essence, or intelligibility, and ultimately to their *why*. Metaphysics quite simply then asks the *why* question and in doing so inquires into the essence of beings.

Indeed at the start of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Aristotle himself describes the nature of knowing as knowing the *why*, or the cause, of something, as distinguished from mere experience (*empeiria*), which only knows *that* something is and not *why* something is. *Metaphysics*, as Aristotle suggests, seeks the *why* of beings; metaphysics asks the *why* as to their reason and explanation *for* being (*Meta.* 1:1). Yet Heidegger, in a *meta*-metaphysical move, wishes to seek the conditions for the *why*, or the *how* of the *why*. That is, how is it that the *why* question is even ever asked? What must occur for the *why* of beings to be broached in the first place? It is in asking this question, this fundamental question, that metaphysics is already in some sense overcome. For the overcoming of metaphysics is *metametaphysics*, insofar as it asks the *how* of the *why*.

Yet the question as to the *how* of the *why* cannot be asked metaphysically, for such metaphysical inquiry always and only seeks the *why*, and never the *how*, at least in the sense Heidegger means. Rather, Heidegger must approach the question phenomenologically, in terms of disclosure. That is, Heidegger must allow for the conditions for the possibility of the *why* to disclose themselves. Heidegger's phenomenological method is then nothing more than an *allowing for* disclosure, a seeking after a being's truth, where truth is understood in the original Greek sense, according to Heidegger, as *a-letheia*, or unconcealment, disclosure. Heidegger's phenomenological method is simply then to allow for something to disclose itself in its truth. Yet, how then does the disclosure of metaphysics, and thus the conditions for metaphysics, occur? How can the *how* of the *why* show itself?

Notice Heidegger's affinity for and yet distance from Nietzsche. Unlike Nietzsche, who thought the split world of metaphysical thinking ultimately originated in *ressentiment*, Heidegger seeks another origin to the metaphysical impulse, precisely because he does not, like Nietzsche, think metaphysics is merely a coping mechanism of the will to power. That is, for Heidegger, even Nietzsche's grounding of metaphysics in a fundamental mood like *ressentiment* still fails to inquire ultimately into the origin of metaphysics' conditions. Rather, Heidegger inquires as to what enables the very possibility of the movement from the visible, sensible world to the invisible, supersensible world. How is it that the world is "split in two" such that a human being is able to transcend the physical to the metaphysical?

The answer to the question as to how metaphysics gets under way, for Heidegger, is simply *nothing*. Nothing conditions metaphysics. That

is, for Heidegger, in order for the human being to transcend the apparent world of becoming to the true world of being, a space of nothing or *difference* must open up between the two worlds. This nothing or difference acts in such a way as to open up a space for the *transcendence* of beings (to their being) to become possible. Nothing is quite simply the condition for the possibility of metaphysics. The space of nothing must open up between beings and their being in order for transcendence, and thus thinking itself to be possible. Nothing then is the condition for asking the *why*. Heidegger writes,

Only on the ground of wonder –the revelation of the nothing –does the “why” loom before us. Only because the “why” is possible as such can we in a definite way inquire into grounds, and ground them...Human existence can relate to beings only if it holds itself out into the nothing.<sup>1</sup> (BW 109)

Nothing then, and awareness of this “nothing,” enables the very possibility for the “why” to arise in us, and thus question beings as to their grounds, causes, essences, etc. In other words, nothing enables the thinking of beings in their intelligibility. *How* then is metaphysics possible? It is possible by way of “nothing.”

For Heidegger, furthermore, the nothing is constitutive of the very essence of the human being, who by his awareness of nothing is able to transcend beings. The human being then, as constituted by nothing, is by nature metaphysical; indeed, the human being is *metaphysics* itself. Nothing is thus manifest in the ground of the human being; it is the very nature of the human being as Da-sein, or the place or space (*Da*) where being (*Sein*), under the guise of nothing, can happen. Heidegger thus writes,

Human existence can relate to beings only if it holds itself out into the nothing. Going beyond beings occurs in the essence of Dasein. But this going beyond is metaphysics itself. This implies that metaphysics belongs to the ‘nature of man.’ It is neither a division of academic philosophy nor a field of arbitrary notions. Metaphysics is the basic occurrence of Dasein. It is Dasein itself. (BW 109)

Heidegger’s famous lecture “What is Metaphysics?” which seeks to uncover metaphysics’ conditions for possibility, leads to an unexpected



conclusion, namely that it is the human being who is metaphysical, even metaphysics itself. Metaphysics is then not, as it was for Nietzsche, an extrinsic conceptual framework that could simply be “overcome” by discovering its origins. Rather, for Heidegger, metaphysics proves to be what the human being essentially *is* at its core. Thus, an attempt to overcome metaphysics, at least insofar as metaphysics means a transcendence of beings to their being, remains an impossibility, for such would be an assault upon the very nature of the human being.

Heidegger concludes his lecture on the nature of metaphysics with the following:

So long as man exists, philosophizing of some sort occurs. Philosophy – what we call philosophy – is metaphysics getting under way, in which philosophy comes to itself and to its explicit tasks. Philosophy gets under way only by a peculiar insertion of our own existence into the fundamental possibilities of Dasein as a whole. For this insertion it is of decisive importance, first, that we allow space for beings as a whole, second, that we release ourselves into the nothing, which is to say, that we liberate ourselves from those idols everyone has and to which they are wont to go cringing; and finally, that we let the sweep of our suspense take its full course, so that it swings back into the basic question of metaphysics which the nothing itself compels: Why are there beings at all, and why not rather nothing. (BW 110)

As long as we exist, we cannot help but be metaphysical, for we are always transcending beings in favor of their being, their intelligibility. Moreover, metaphysics as such contains within itself a fundamental or basic question: why is there anything at all and not nothing? What is the ultimate *why* of existence? Metaphysics’ most basic question is the question as to the ultimate ground or *why* of existence—why is there anything and not just nothing? Yet, nothing is connected to the question of being as a way of buttressing this question, as a way of more clearly defining it. That is, nothing and being share in an intricate relation insofar as, metaphysically, both serve to identify and distinguish the other. For in order to ask the question of the being of beings, nothing must be present as well so as to enable the question by distinguishing the being or essence of beings, as the ground of beings, from sheer nothingness. Thus, when the human being, in wonder, asks the *why* of existence itself,

it can only do so vis-à-vis an awareness of nothing, for otherwise, the question would never get underway.

Yet, there remains an equivocation between metaphysics as the being that we ourselves are, namely *Dasein*, as the being who transcends beings, by way of the nothing, and then metaphysics as the reduction of the meaning of being to one meaning. The human being is metaphysics insofar as it transcends beings by way of the nothing, and yet “metaphysics” as a historical philosophical discipline has served not simply to transcend beings, but to transcend beings in such a way as to reduce their intelligibility to one sense. Because we are the beings that transcend beings to their being, to their meaning, there is a tendency in us, and in being itself, for us to mistake the meaning of being for a singular meaning, and thus for us to mistake a singular *showing* of being for its only meaning, as in the Western metaphysical tradition, which mistook the meaning of being to be essence, cause, and ground. Nietzsche’s inversion and overturning of metaphysics then are, thus only the inversion of a particular way of transcending beings.

Thus, Heidegger’s project of overcoming metaphysics must be understood in a particular sense, namely as the overcoming of metaphysics’ tendency of reducing the meaning of the being of beings to one meaning, and not the overcoming of the human being as a metaphysical being, as the being that transcends beings to their being. Heidegger then seeks to overcome the idea that there is simply one “truth,” and not rather many truths. However, again, this is not to say that truth (or being) is merely relative to the subjective that perceives it, but rather that the way in which being discloses itself is manifold in terms of its truth.

Heidegger’s attempts at overcoming metaphysics then first involve a proper delimitation of the essence of metaphysics both as the beings that we ourselves are (*Dasein*) as well as the Western metaphysical tradition. Only because *Dasein* is metaphysical can anything like metaphysics as a philosophical discourse take place. Only because human beings by nature transcend beings can a systematic investigation into the being of those beings occur. Thus, that the human being is metaphysical is, therefore, the ground of the discipline of metaphysics, which Heidegger also agrees is Platonism. Yet, it is only metaphysics in this latter sense that needs to be overcome, for to overcome *Dasein*’s very nature as metaphysical would be not only an impossibility, but would result in an assault on not only the human being but on being itself. It is precisely this assault that Heidegger argues takes place in Nietzsche and in modern science and

technology, for which Nietzsche's "metaphysics" serves to ground and articulate.

Heidegger's great concern is that if the metaphysical, and thus transcendental nature of the human being is eclipsed, the very essence of the human being as *free* will also be eclipsed. For it is the fact that human beings are metaphysical that makes them free; that human beings transcend because of their awareness of nothing not only conditions thinking, but also freedom, for awareness of nothing allows the human self to divide itself, just as it allows for the world to be divided metaphysically. The human being, aware of the nothing, can split himself and represent himself to himself, and thus "choose" various possible ways to be. The idea of the human being then, as *Dasein*, who runs ahead to the future, to future possibilities and possible selves, is conditioned and made possible also by awareness of nothing. A reductionism of being, as a concealment of nothing, thus threatens not only our thinking, but our very freedom as well.

### MODERN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Heidegger's famous essay on technology ("The Question Concerning Technology," 1954) is as much about metaphysics as it is about technology. Heidegger seeks in the essay to articulate the current metaphysics of modernity and of modern technology, as well as to propose a solution. The essence and metaphysics of modern technology are, as we have seen, quite simply Nietzschean. That is, the essence of modern technology and of modernity itself is will to power. However, recall that for Heidegger, Nietzsche's overcoming of metaphysics remained as metaphysical as the metaphysics it sought to overcome precisely because it remained within the same logic of Platonism, namely the split world's reduction of being's meaning. It is the split world's reduction of being's meaning then, and not simply splitting the world, that makes Nietzsche a metaphysician in the Platonic sense. Furthermore, Nietzsche's metaphysical reductionism occurs precisely in its denial of the human being as metaphysical; that is, our metaphysical nature is thought by Nietzsche to be merely a falsification of the world wrought by the will to power and not a real transcendence of beings to their meaning or intelligibility, i.e., to their being. Such a philosophy not only presupposes but leads to absolute meaninglessness, and thus nihilism. This nihilism is precisely

the undercurrent of metaphysics present within modern technology and modernity in general.

The nihilistic essence of modern technology is the will to power due to modern technology's will to master and control beings. Beings, the earth as a whole, are viewed in modern technology in not only an instrumental way, i.e., as means to ends, but more perniciously as merely raw material to be mastered and stockpiled as reserves on standby (*die Bestände*). Modern technology, with its metaphysics of mastery, operates, for Heidegger, by way of a "framework" (*Gestell*) through which it views beings so as to control, manipulate, and dominate them. It is within this framework where precisely modern technology's reductionism lies, for the framework in its metaphysical essence "crowds out" other ways in which beings can disclose themselves. The framework crowds out other "truths", and thus other ways in which things can be thought. The only way things can be thought, or rather *truly* thought as to what they *actually are*, is according to the projected framework of modern technology. Of course, beings can be thought and considered in different ways in modernity, for example poetically or religiously. But these other ways of thinking are always relegated to a lesser form of subjectivism or perspectivism, and considered as "values," which ultimately contain no meaning within themselves, but merely from the subject who posits them, i.e., fastens meaning onto a meaningless world. It is precisely this relegation of the poetic (which includes the mythic and the religious) to the subjective sphere that lies at the heart of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics and technology. Poetry, art, religion, etc. are seen as subjective values that are relative to each individual subject, but "what reality truly is" (notice even the metaphysical language) is ultimately what science and technology say (i.e., disclose) it is.

Yet for Heidegger, as for Nietzsche, what modern science (and modern technology) fail to realize is that "what" reality "truly is" is really nothing more than what can be controlled and manipulated. That is, according to modern science (*scientia*), which purports not only to control and predict, but also to "know" (*scire*), knowing really only occurs when science can adequately control or predict the objects, the beings, it is attempting to know. Knowledge then becomes completely dependent upon mastery. Knowledge, *scientia*, becomes completely *technological*. In other words, Heidegger's point is that modern science is no longer a science, but a technology, and as such, it seeks not inquiry into a being's being, but merely power over a being, and over being itself. In other

words, knowledge is wholly subsumed by mastery, and thus by power; knowledge is power, will to power over beings.

Strangely for Heidegger, however, is that the onus of this technological reduction is not on the human being, but rather on *being*. That is, it is being that determines the ways in which it will be understood. Being gives or “sends itself” (sich *schicken*, *Schicksal*) to human beings as able to be thought and understood in the ways in which it *is*. It is not then human beings who project and posit understandings of being upon beings, but rather being which discloses itself as such, as able to be thought in a particular way. Being, in modernity then, is sending itself, and thus disclosing itself, in its truth, *as Gestell*, and *as* will to power. It is not Nietzsche or even Plato, therefore, who thought being as whatness, essence, will to power, etc., but rather being which gave itself to be thought in such a way (BW 323). Moreover, it is being then that is responsible for its own concealment, its own reduction. But how? Precisely because being is truth, as the process of revealing and concealing, and as being discloses or reveals itself in one way, according to one mode of understanding or possibility, other modes or possibilities are concealed. Being is, thus *phenomenologically perspectival*. Yet, in metaphysics, this perspectival nature of being is concealed, which is tantamount to concealment itself being concealed, a concealing of concealment. In metaphysics then concealment is concealed, and thus truth as *aletheia* is concealed and being is forgotten as this process, precisely because being is not understood in its perspectival nature. Metaphysics then amounts to the reduction of the meaning of truth and being to one meaning, and thus a forgetting of nothing, which makes possible the metaphysical (transcendental) process as such. This applies to all metaphysics and not simply the metaphysics of modernity. For this reason, namely the reductionism implicit in any metaphysics, Platonism (not necessarily Plato) struggled with the competing perspectives of truth in art and in philosophy, where ultimately art was relegated to an inferior position, not unlike art’s relegation by modern science today.

Heidegger, like Nietzsche, seeks to combat the problem of the nihilism of metaphysics with art. That is, the only solution to this radical technological reduction of the will to power for Heidegger is art. Heidegger famously quotes Hölderlin that “where the danger is, grows the saving power also” (BW 340). Art is this “saving power.” Yet in order for art to prove salvific, Heidegger must reconsider and reconstruct a new “metaphysics,” in which art has a proper place, a place

at least equal to that of science and technology. Of course, Heidegger does not attempt to construct a new metaphysics, but rather overcome the first and only metaphysics—Platonism—by understanding its conditions as lying within being as the process of truth, *aletheia*, and in turn, understanding being itself as perspectival. However, being's perspectival essence is, again, of course, not to be confused with any kind of Nietzscheanism as a subjective perspectivalism; rather it is being itself that shows itself in many ways.

### HEIDEGGER AND ART: CIRCUMVENTING THE BATTLE

Heidegger's essay *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1935, 1937)<sup>2</sup> is arguably his crowning achievement in terms of developing a language with which to overcome metaphysics by reconfiguring the relationship between art and truth. Not only does this essay then attempt a transcendental sketch of metaphysics' conditions for possibility, but it furthermore attempts to enact a radically new ontology. That is, in a very real sense, and despite the chronology, the *Artwork* essay picks up where the *Question Concerning Technology* left off, namely with an ontology of truth and beauty that can prove salvific in the current cultural climate of Nietzschean nihilism. The task of the *Artwork* essay is to explore the *origin* of art as a *work* so as to name the ways in which art, through artworks, can serve to reconfigure a *world*, or context of meaning. Moreover, the *Artwork* attempts such a reconfiguration in response to Nietzsche and his metaphysics that sought to set up art over and above truth in a metaphysics of becoming, where truth proved to be a staticization, and thus degradation of the original activity of the will to power *as* art. Yet Heidegger here wishes to take seriously, albeit from a certain distance, the Nietzschean projection of being *as* becoming.

Recall that the summation of Nietzsche's metaphysics is found for Heidegger in the ultimate and highest activity of the will to power in stamping becoming with the character of being as the Eternal Return of the Same. Being then *becomes* becoming, as becoming is named as "what is," and metaphysics is presumably overthrown. Heidegger's project is similar in this essay insofar as he seeks to unite becoming and being, without, however, collapsing the two into each other. That is, Heidegger attempts to meditate the way in which being and becoming *participate* in one another while at the same time remaining distinct. How does becoming reveal being? How can being show itself in becoming, *as*

becoming? Earlier it was suggested that Heidegger caught glimpses of such participation in Plato's *Phaedrus*, where the beautiful proved to be that unique form that actually shined in the midst of the visible world. The beautiful shined not only in and with becoming, but also *as* becoming. Thus, the beautiful was that which—through art, through beautiful humans, etc.—enabled an ascent to true being. Heidegger's rethinking of this relationship between truth and art in the *Phaedrus*—occurs simultaneously along with a rethinking of art as *mimesis* in the context of both Plato and Nietzsche.

For Heidegger, art in the artwork is the happening of truth as disclosure; art discloses meaning, art discloses beings, and art discloses beings in their meaning, and as such is *that through which* truth can occur. In other words, art offers us insight into the truth of things, for it allows things to show themselves *as they are*, and in a way differently than they appear to us through perception. Thus, Heidegger here is clearly reworking the Platonic notion of *mimesis* present in *Republic X* as well as Nietzsche's inversion of it. Art does not simply copy a copy of beings, and is thus not something that is thrice removed from a being's truth, as in Platonism. Yet, neither is art standing simply over and above the truth, where the truth is merely an ossified form of an original act of power, as for Nietzsche. Rather for Heidegger, art and truth occur simultaneously, the former being the site and locus for the latter's occurrence, and beauty is simply the happening of truth, the shining of truth as disclosure (BW 181). That is, beauty occurs precisely in and through the activity of being's illumination, being's truth. As being is disclosed, as beings are disclosed in their meaning and intelligibility, beings come into their "truth," and this occurs primarily as beauty. Thus, we could say, in the activity of *mimesis*, of representing, e.g., a pair of shoes, as in Van Gogh's peasant shoes,<sup>3</sup> something new, a new aspect, a new perspective or meaning of these shoes is disclosed. This new aspect could not have been seen otherwise than in the activity of representation in *mimesis*. A "world," therefore, opens up and is disclosed in art's mimetic activity. Art reveals a truth of things that could not otherwise have been seen by perception and certainly not by a scientific or technological comportment. Art is, thus not an imitative act that shows less of a thing's truth, but more, and, furthermore, is the activity of truth, of being itself.

Artworks then in being beautiful reveal a world and reveal beings in their truth. Art is this happening of truth *as* the beautiful. Art and truth are, thus not separate but part of the same activity, namely the happening

of the truth (qua disclosure) of being itself. Heidegger writes in the epilogue to the essay,

Truth is the disclosure of beings as beings. Truth is the truth of being. Beauty does not occur apart from this truth. When truth sets itself into the work, it appears. Appearance –as this being of truth in the work and as work –is beauty. Thus the beautiful belongs to truth’s appropriating event (BW 206).

Art then has as much to do with truth as it does with beauty. Art *is* truth, and as such is beautiful. This amounts to Heidegger’s quasi “inversion” of Platonism, or at least Platonism as traditionally understood. However, Heidegger’s “inversion” is one that seeks to avoid Nietzsche’s problematic inversion that remained within the very same logic of Platonism. Heidegger’s inversion is then not simply an “inversion,” but a reconfiguration, a proper overcoming or “twisting free.”

Heidegger, however, does give a strange nod to Nietzsche in his understanding of art as fundamentally a creative act of *naming*. Art is primarily and fundamentally a poetic act of nomination, of naming beings, which in turn illuminates beings in their being. Art, and thus beauty and truth, occurs in and through language, the poetic language of naming. So, like Nietzsche, beings are “given being” in and through the activity of art, except for Heidegger it is not merely a subjective activity of stabilizing becoming, but rather a poetic act of bringing forth and illuminating that which remained concealed. And yet it is not as though a being’s being preexisted Platonically in another world, and thus the activity of naming merely allowed it to appear, rather naming names beings into appearance so as to *be*. As Heidegger writes,

Language alone brings beings as beings into the open for the first time... Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance. Only this naming nominates beings to their Being *from out of* their Being. Such saying is a projecting of the illumination [*Lichtung*], in which announcement is made of what it is that beings come into the open *as*. Projecting is the release of a throw by which unconcealment infuses itself into beings as such. This projective announcement forthwith becomes a renunciation of all the dim confusion in which a being veils and withdraws itself. Projective saying is poetry...Poetry is the saying of the unconcealment of beings. (BW 198)



Art, as poetry, is a *logos*, as the happening of truth, where being can occur *as* becoming, that is, as the *hen panta*, the one and the many. *Logos*, from its Greek root *legein*, is a gathering of manys into ones, of becoming into being, where becoming can show itself *as* being, and being *as* becoming. Being is then, for Heidegger, quite simply *logos* as the activity of gathering many into one. *Logos* then allows for being to show itself as both one (being) and as many (becoming). It is *logos* which mediates being from its showing in becoming, thereby solving the Platonic problem of *methexis*. As Socrates says earlier in the *Republic* (476a),

the same *logos* also applies then to the just and the unjust, the good and the bad, and all the *eide*; each is itself one, but by showing themselves everywhere in a community with actions, bodies, and one another, each looks like many.<sup>4</sup>

Sallis summarizes this matter of showing quite nicely: "It is a distinction between a showing in which an *eidos* shows itself as it itself is (as one) *and* a showing in which an *eidos* shows itself as it is not (as many)."<sup>5</sup> In other words being shows itself as the "true being" of something, namely its form, and thus appears as one and as it "is," or being shows itself as becoming, as it "is not," and thus appears as many. There must be then a difference between the being that shows itself in and through *logos* as "true being," as *eidos*, and being itself that is held back in the showing, as the showing itself. Thus, being as the "true being" or "one" is not the same as the final meaning of being proper for Heidegger, and thus Heidegger sometimes writes this deeper and more concealed notion of being as "beyng" (*das Seyn*). Beyng is that which appears in and through *logos* as both one and many; beyng can show itself as one, as "true being" or *as* many, as becoming. In this sense then we could identify beyng with the beautiful itself, for it is the beautiful which can shine as both true being and as becoming.

Returning then to the motif from the *Phaedrus*, namely that the radical divide between being and becoming is sublated by beauty, which, as a form, and thus as true being, can nevertheless appear as becoming, and appear as becoming in such a way as to incite philosophical thinking toward true being. In short, Heideggerian "beyng" as the beautiful, as the revelation of truth, is none other than the condition for metaphysics. Moreover, as such a condition, the beautiful as beyng is precisely

the polyvalent and anti-reductionist meaning of being that Heidegger sought all along, namely a meaning of being that would allow for being to be “said in many ways,” and condition the very appearances of intelligibility and meaning, while simultaneously concealing other appearances and possibilities. Thus, when beauty shines in and through the artwork so as to light up beings in their truth, beyng simultaneously reveals itself as that which *both* reveals *and* conceals itself, thus showing that being itself is perspectival in its possibilities, in its possible ways of being.

Heidegger’s move then in the battle between “the gods and giants,” between Plato and Nietzsche, where Plato is on the side of the “one” and “being,” and Nietzsche on the side of the “many” and “becoming,” is to circumvent the entire dichotomy by positing *logos* as more primordial than either the one or the many. It is *logos* where beyng can occur as the *hen panta*, the one and the many, as being and becoming. Beyng thus shines in and through *logos* as being and becoming, and such happens most fundamentally in art through the beautiful. Thus, art and truth are ingeniously reconciled, as are being and becoming and the one and the many.

Again, Sallis finds this notion of being as beyng already in Plato. In the sun analogy (507d–508b), physical sight is likened by analogy to intellectual seeing of the forms, and the light, which illuminates objects in the physical world, is likened to “truth and being” (*aletheia te kai ton on*) which illuminates the forms so that the mind can intellect them. Sallis writes,

So, the analogue of the eye is the soul, and the analogue of the light is ‘truth and being’...It is of utmost importance to observe, in particular, what this says about the meaning of truth and being. It says that being is not an *idea* nor even the totality of such – that it is, rather, that in which what is known can be manifest to the knower. But that in which something (an *idea*) becomes manifest to a knower is just a *showing* in which that thing shows itself to the knower. Being is a name for (self-) showing. Furthermore, what Socrates says suggests that “being” and “truth” virtually name the same matter. Certainly it is clear that here truth does not mean some formal “correspondence” between intelligence and intellect; on the contrary, it is the yoke which firsts brings this pair together and, hence, is what first makes possible anything like a correspondence. “Truth” and “being” are two names for the *self-showing in which something comes into the open*, into manifestness – for the self-showing in which it becomes, as the word [*“aletheia”*] hints, unhidden, unconcealed.<sup>6</sup>

Being and truth then are names for the very showing and illumination that makes possible things to appear as one and as many, as they *are* and as they *are-not*. Heidegger's discovery of beyng is then a rediscovery of an element already present within Plato, even if not in Platonism. Heidegger's "twisting free" of metaphysics is tantamount then to a recovery of the sacramental notion of being, where being, as an original, appears in and through images. Being (or beyng) images itself forth and appears as many, as it is-not, and yet, nevertheless, is still an appearance of being. Being is *as* becoming.

Metaphysics, as Platonism, as the split world, is reintegrated and sublated via *logos*, through which beyng acts to show itself as one and as many. Heidegger's critique of metaphysics then would seek to further ground metaphysics on the activity of being (beyng) as *logos*, which allows for a non-reductionist understanding of being and truth, and one which would allow for art and truth to remain coequal discourses that speak being. Modern scientific reductionism, with its metaphysics of will to power as *Gestell*, is immediately undercut by perspectivalizing such a discourse as simply that, namely *a* discourse among many others. It is not that modern science then for Heidegger does not reveal truth about reality; indeed Heidegger explicitly says it is a *mode of revealing* (BW 318, 332–333). However, Heidegger's reconfiguring of metaphysics allows for such discourse not to "crowd out" other discourses, such as art, politics, and religion. Heidegger's philosophy is then anti-reductionist *par excellence*.

Moreover, Heidegger's "beyng" certainly undercuts the Nietzschean problematic of reducing being to meaningless becoming, where the subject and its value positing remain all that is left to provide a semblance of being. Heidegger thus remains a type of "realist" insofar as being is indeed not a fiction produced by the subject's will to power, but that which is rather merely uncovered by the human being, not as a value positer who freezes becoming, but rather as Dasein, who is the place and space where beyng qua illumination (truth) can occur. Art then overcomes the framework of reductionism in modern technology by relativizing the discourses, not to the subject, but to *being*. In Nietzsche, truth was relative to the subject, as the one who posited it, whereas, for Heidegger, truth is relative to being's occurrence as truth itself in and through art. This is not a subjective relativism, but a realism that seeks to undercut the subject–object polarity itself. This undercutting nevertheless remains a realism, since being is not dependent upon Dasein for

its meaning, even if it is Dasein who must uncover and disclose being in order for it *to be*.

Truth and being as metaphysical objects are dependent upon Dasein and *logos*, Dasein *as logos*, but nevertheless transcend them insofar as the world is, indeed, for lack of a better word, *objectively* intelligible and meaningful. Meaning and intelligibility are not inventions of the human being, but are ontological independent realities that reside outside of the human subject's will. Heidegger quotes the artist Albrecht Dürer concerning the objectivity of truth, "For in truth, art lies hidden within nature; he who can wrest it from her, has it" (BW 195). In other words, Heidegger is a "realist" (as opposed to an "anti-realist") precisely because he grants ontological status to intelligibility and meaning and, therefore, disavows Nietzschean subjectivism. Regardless then if Heidegger is not a traditional Platonist, he remains a Platonist nevertheless, yet *only* insofar as he grants such ontological status to being and truth, and not insofar as being and truth remain in a hierarchical position. For Heidegger then intelligibility and meaning are *real* and retain ontological status. Intelligibility *is*, but needs Dasein to uncover it.

Does Heidegger then overcome and twist free of the battle between the gods and giants? If so, how? In one sense Heidegger does indeed twist free of the battle, by contending that the battle itself is a forgetting of the battle's own conditions for possibility; that is, the battle forgets that which makes possible the very bifurcation between being and appearance, namely being or *logos*. Nevertheless, Heidegger remains more "right of center," a quasi-Platonist, insofar as being is indeed real, and not subjectively dependent, as it was for Nietzsche. However, although being is real and appears, it always holds back, conceals itself in every disclosure. Being reveals itself, but at the same time conceals itself, and thus conceals other possibilities in the very revealing of possibilities. In this sense, being can never be fully equated with any one of its epochs, nor any of its showings. Rather each epoch must be seen in a sacramental way, as a showing of being that, nevertheless, always holds back. Thus, art is a way in which being shows itself in its truth but, nevertheless, conceals other truths. Science too is a showing of being, and yet not a totalizing truth, for in its showing other possible ways to be are concealed. So long as this concealment is not concealed, unlike what happened in Western metaphysics, the nihilism of metaphysics and reductionism can be avoided. In this way then, as a thinker of concealment, Heidegger

seeks to illuminate the concealment *as* concealment, so as to save being and the meaning of being from reduction to one meaning.

Heidegger's "Platonism" then is one where *logos* is privileged prior to *eidos*. That is, *logos* as that which makes possible the one's disclosure of itself as many, and the many's gathering into the one, is, in a sense, ontologically prior to the activity of the one and the many, for *logos* happens as the *hen panta*. It is not as though the one exists prior to the *logos*, but rather *logos* enables the many to show themselves as one. Furthermore, the many themselves do not "exist" prior to their being named by *logos*, but rather only come to be, to show themselves as many, by way of *logos*. This ontological priority of *logos* is hinted at in Plato himself. In the *Sophist*, the Stranger notes, "To rob us of *logos* is to rob us of philosophy...[which] would be the most serious consequence" (260a). And again in the *Parmenides*, Parmenides notes that,

[if] a man refuses to admit that forms of things exist or to distinguish a definite form in every case, he will have nothing on which to fix his thought, so long as he will not allow that each thing has a character which is always the same, and in doing so he will completely destroy the significance of all *logos*. (135c)<sup>7</sup>

In both dialogues, we see a privileging of *logos*, as *logos* functions as a kind of "check" against the possibility of pseudo-philosophy. For Plato then any philosophy that destroys the possibility of *logos* or, we could say, "reason," must *ipso facto* be discarded. *Logos* is then the fundamental "axiom" of Plato, without which philosophy would not be possible.

The final question that remains is whether or not recourse to the *logos* as prior to the *eidos* does not simply beg the question as to whether intelligibility and meaning are objective and real. That is, interweaving being with *logos* can or cannot skirt the issue as to the ontological status of being and truth. So long as Heidegger remains anti-Nietzschean, and thus anti-subjectivistic/relativistic, then *logos* qua intelligibility is indeed real and objective, as it depends on being. It comes down to the ontological status of being itself, and whether being (and thus truth) is merely subjective or actually real and objective. Insofar as Heidegger believes the latter, he has to be a Platonist, insofar as being exists, independent of the mind. Any less would be to suppose that the human being is master over being, the very element in modernity that Heidegger thinks most pernicious, and thus seeks to combat.

Heidegger writes concerning the idea of the human being thinking that he is “lord of the earth,”

In this way the illusion comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct. This illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion: it seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself. (BW 332)

Markus Gabriel offers an insightful analysis of Heidegger’s flirtations with both anti-realism (circa *Being and Time*) and realism (post-*Kehre*) and concludes that, while Heidegger contains both realist and anti-realist strands in his thinking, he ultimately fails to attain the realism he sought post-*Kehre* due to being’s dependence upon Dasein in order to *be*.<sup>8</sup> Gabriel may indeed be right concerning Heidegger’s overall project, but regardless, Gabriel concedes that Heidegger fought adamantly against any form of explicit subjectivist or constructivist understanding of being (i.e., Nietzscheanism), as such would quickly devolve into the ontology of *Gestell*.<sup>9</sup> The upshot of Gabriel’s account is that Heidegger cannot seem to shake anti-realism, despite his best efforts, and yet cannot simply commit to it either. For example, Heidegger writes of truth that it cannot “pre-exist somewhere beforehand amongst the stars, only to descend afterward to beings” (BW 186), but also that one cannot simply ground such “unconcealment” wholly in Dasein, since Dasein ultimately has no control over unconcealment, which remains independent of Dasein and to which Dasein, as a thinker, merely “responds.” Gabriel notes a remark from *The Question Concerning Technology*:

But man does not have control over unconcealment itself, in which at any given time the actual shows itself or withdraws. The fact that it has been showing itself in light of Ideas ever since the time of Plato, Plato did not bring about. The thinker only responded to what addressed itself to him. (BW 323)

Thinking merely responds to what being qua unconcealment brings to pass, which would, according to Gabriel, “pre-exist” independently of any interaction with Dasein. And yet, placed side by side with the passage above that condemns any notion of preexistence of originals, Heidegger’s position remains seemingly impossible to discern.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Heidegger oscillates between both realism and anti-realism and simply

cannot commit to one or the other, precisely because his project is one of attempting to twist free of the very binary, the binary of “gods and giants.” Nevertheless, again, even if Heidegger isn’t simplistically a Platonic realist, he is certainly not the opposite, namely a Nietzschean constructivist.

Heidegger’s seeking to find an alternative to this binary between the gods and giants goes back originally, at least in part, to his seeking to understand the conditions for the possibility of Husserl’s critique of psychologism, namely the doctrine that logical laws are reducible to empirical, mental processes. In his course from 1925–1926 entitled *Logic: The Question of Truth*, Heidegger discusses Husserl’s critique of psychologism from Husserl’s *Prolegomena* to the *Logical Investigations*, where Husserl attacks psychologism on the grounds that such a reduction leads to a subjective relativism. Husserl’s contention is simply that to deny objective validity (universality and necessity) to logic in the end grounds logic on the subject, and *ipso facto* denies any validity to logic whatsoever. That is, to reduce logic to the subjective is obviously to deny its objectivity, but to deny logic’s objectivity itself requires logic, and thus results in contradiction, similar to Plato’s critique of Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*. The claim that all logical truth is based upon the subject is self-referentially incoherent, and thus leads Husserl to a quasi-Platonism concerning logic and its laws. Psychologism ultimately denies the objectivity of logical truth, yet (presumably) supposes that at least its claim to the denial of logical truth is true, which, of course, is contradictory.

Heidegger’s implicit critique of Husserl in these lectures on logic and psychologism is to note that both psychologism and anti-psychologism presuppose the distinction between real and ideal being.<sup>11</sup> This distinction, however, is nothing more than the basic Platonic distinction between the apparent and the true, the empirical and the intellectual, that is, the distinction between the “giants” and the “gods.” Heidegger, therefore, sidesteps the question concerning truth’s objectivity by refocusing his investigation toward the conditions for the possibility of this basic Platonic, metaphysical distinction, which in the end requires the human mind to be *intentional* so as to be transcendent, that is, capable of transcending the apparent world to the true world, the real to the ideal, as we saw in the later lecture *What is Metaphysics?* Heidegger writes,

The basic feature of the mind is intentionality. This means that the mind in and of itself is... a relation of the real to the ideal. Husserl doesn't deal with this question in itself.<sup>12</sup>

The human being must be constituted in such a way as to allow for a traversing from the real to the ideal. As these lectures were given in 1925, Heidegger does not yet use the term *Dasein* to define this aspect of the human mind, but this is what he means. Moreover, Heidegger has not yet worked out his understanding of "being" (*beyng*) that would condition not only *Dasein*'s transcendence, but also the very Platonic distinction here thought under the terms "real" and "ideal." Nevertheless, Heidegger seems to anticipate such an understanding of being even in this lecture course. Heidegger writes,

Basically we are in a situation where we have to see these two separate orders or fields or spheres or regions as coming together in unity: that which has being and that which has validity, the sensible and the non-sensible, the real and the ideal, the historical and the transhistorical. We have not yet apprehended an original kind of being in terms of which we could understand these two fields as possible and as belonging *to* that being. Philosophers don't even ask questions about such being.... But what about the entity that does not, as it were, cast a bridge over the gap between these two regions, but instead ...renders possible these two regions of being in their original unity?<sup>13</sup>

Heidegger here then begins to anticipate his attempts to overcome metaphysics by digging deeper into metaphysics' conditions. These conditions, as we have seen, are none other than *Dasein* and being (*beyng*, nothing, etc.). Strangely, however, Heidegger's "critique" of Husserl is only that Husserl, like all metaphysicians, remains blind to the conditions for the distinction he employs. One can only assume this means a tacit acceptance on Heidegger's part of the ontological status of the "ideal" world. Later in *Being and Time*, Heidegger dismisses as pseudo-problems contemporary Cartesian questions concerning the existence of the external world vis-à-vis the human mind. Could it be that Heidegger too considers the question concerning the ontological status of the world of ideas a pseudo-problem?

Given that Heidegger explicitly understood his contemporary context in a similar vein as Nietzsche, namely the rise of nihilism wrought by



the death of God and the dominance of modern science and technology, it would be odd for Heidegger to dismiss the ontological status of the metaphysics as merely a pseudo question. Indeed, Heidegger's refusal to concede "being" to Nietzschean becoming attests to Heidegger's commitments concerning truth as ontologically independent of the subject's perspective. Yet, why does Heidegger then ignore the question as to the ontological status of the metaphysical world at the expense of the question concerning metaphysics' conditions? For one, Heidegger thought that metaphysics led to the very problem of Nietzsche and modern science, and thus was not in itself sufficient to combat the nihilism of modernity. Moreover, in unearthing metaphysics' conditions, there seems to be an implicit consent to the split world, at least insofar as the grounds of metaphysics do not lead Heidegger to Nietzschean subjective relativism, but rather to "being" as beyond the human subject.

However, does then Heidegger's project of overcoming metaphysics succeed in a way other than merely grounding metaphysics? That is, is the overcoming of metaphysics simply its grounding, in being and in Dasein? Or does an actual overcoming occur, where the very distinction between worlds, between giants and gods, is left behind? In Heidegger's *Beiträge*, Heidegger does refer to a new way of thinking, what he terms "the other beginning," that would presumably leave behind the "first beginning" of metaphysical Platonism. Nevertheless, there remains a nuance to this position, in that Heidegger notes that to inquire into the conditions for the first beginning, namely beyng, is already to gain a foothold in the "other" beginning, the philosophical beginning that would remain free of metaphysics. Heidegger writes,

*The question*, what is metaphysics? [i.e. what are its conditions for possibility?], already inquires into what is essential to 'metaphysics' in the sense of gaining an initial footing in crossing to the other beginning. In other words, *the question already asks from within this other beginning* [emphasis mine]. What it makes visible in its determination of 'metaphysics' is already no longer metaphysics, but, rather its overcoming.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the "determination" of metaphysics, as arising out of the truth(ing) of being, is no longer metaphysics but its overcoming. In this sense then, merely awakening the question of being amounts to the overcoming of metaphysics. "Overcoming" then means not a jettisoning, but rather a deeper understanding. Thus, the "other beginning"

would be merely to upset the hierarchy of the supersensible, ideal world, and not necessarily to dissolve it, as did Nietzsche. The other beginning would amount to then grounding beings not upon their beingness, but upon their truth, i.e., the disclosive process that is being itself.

This new and other grounding of beings upon being attempts to think the relation between the two worlds, such that the question of participation (*methexis*) is reconsidered. This rethinking of participation appears in the works of John Sallis as “re-inscription of the invisible within the visible,” and in the works of some Christian thinkers, e.g., Karl Rahner, as a sacramental ontology, which discloses the ways in which being (God for Rahner) appears amidst the visible. “Being,” then, for Heidegger means not merely the intelligible world, but rather the way in which the intelligible relates to the sensible so as to enable beings to *be*. Thus, even if Heidegger remains a quasi-Platonist insofar as he has realist or idealist commitments (depending on the contextual use of the word), he nevertheless considers the question of the split world’s relation more important than the intelligible realm itself.

In a much later lecture entitled *On Time and Being* (1962), this emphasis upon relation is made even more explicit as Heidegger attempts precisely to think being (as the intelligible realm) together with time (as the realm of becoming) through the event (*Ereignis*), or as he puts it, “to think being without beings”<sup>15</sup>. The event (*Er-eignis*) names the appropriation (*eignen*) that occurs between being and becoming, and thus Heidegger here attempts, through the event, to think being *as* becoming. Moreover, this thinking that would mediate between the split also finally clarifies the ambiguity of Heidegger’s project of “overcoming” metaphysics. Heidegger writes,

To think being without beings means: to think being without regard to metaphysics. Yet a regard for metaphysics still prevails even in the intention to overcome metaphysics. Therefore, our task is to cease all overcoming, and leave metaphysics to itself.<sup>16</sup>

Heidegger here notes that metaphysics remains impossible to overcome without remaining within it in some sense, and thus we must instead leave metaphysics to itself and focus upon the mediation between being and becoming without regard for beings. That is, “to trace being to its own from the event –by way of looking through true time without regard to the relation of being to beings.”<sup>17</sup> Metaphysics, the split world,

is not to be overcome; in fact, it *cannot* be overcome. Rather then, it seems, we are only to shift our emphasis to no longer being vis-à-vis beings, but being vis-à-vis time (becoming), or, again, as in *Being and Time*, being *as* time.

However, we are now in a position to ask whether or not Heidegger's "Platonism" leads to theism, in any form. In the *Artwork* essay and the *Beiträge*, as well as other works following his *Kehre* in the 1930s, Heidegger seems unable to think the "being/truth process" without recourse to God in some sense. That is, God (or "the gods") remains at the center of being's disclosure as the *worlding of the world*, i.e., the coming to be of meaning and intelligibility. This opening up of a context of meaning, a world, is synonymous with being, truth(ing), and the event (*Er-eignis*). This event, where being and the human are appropriated (*eignen*) to each other, occurs only and ultimately with the passing of God, i.e., when God comes to have meaning in a world. In the artwork, to be fully "world forming" (e.g., in a Greek temple), and not merely world disclosing (e.g., Van Gogh's shoes), the holy has to disclose and delimit the *ethos* of a world and of a people. In the *Beiträge*'s penultimate chapter, Heidegger discusses his conception of God or the holy as the last God (*der letzte Gott*), which is the ultimate showing of God in and through the current nihilism of modernity. Here God shows himself, out of the event of being/truth, in particular out of the concealed dimension of truth (being), *as* concealed, and as such, as the holy itself. Thus, Heidegger's ontological commitments do then, in a strange way, lead to a kind of theism, albeit one that attempts to overcome "onto-theology." Nevertheless, a theism of sorts remains, a phenomenological theism perhaps.

Indeed, Heidegger's entire attempt to think being as the ground of metaphysics, especially the metaphysics of modernity in the will to power of modern science and technology, could be thought as a way to recover theological thinking and experience. By allowing for being to be manifold in meaning and for this manifold character to be eclipsed by nihilistic reductionism, Heidegger has reopened a place for God within his thinking, namely a place where God can appear when and only when the concealment of being is recovered as such. Recovering concealment allows for things to remain polyvalent in meaning and not reduced only to their scientific, and thus technological understanding as controllable. If beings are thought in other ways, ways beyond merely control, then things can recover their significance vis-à-vis God and the holy, and, in

particular, things can appear as sacred, mysterious, and ultimately sacramental. In other words, when things can be experienced in many ways, one of those ways can be sacred; things, beings, including the human being and his language, can mediate sacramentally the presence of God. The human being and language can be, and indeed are originally, for Heidegger, “sacraments” that mediate the holy and sacred, and thus uncover the sacred dimension of being, of existence itself, a dimension that had been wiped clean and consigned to concealment with the uprising of modern science and technology.

All depends, for Heidegger, upon the thinking of beyng, that is, the thinking and, therefore, disclosure of the concealed, and thus forgotten dimension of reality. By thinking beyng and concealment then, the death of God, as the concealment of the holy, can be transformed into a way by and through which human beings can recover the sacred, sacramental experience of being and the human being. This sacramental view of reality precisely explains Heidegger’s continual emphasis on poetry and language as his career pressed on. In a later essay entitled *Poetically Man Dwells*, Heidegger discusses the nature of the human being as an *image* of God, where an image is here understood sacramentally as that which makes something present.<sup>18</sup> Here Da-sein, as the Da or place where being happens, becomes the Da of God, the space where God can image-forth himself in and through the human being. Yet, how does the human being image, and thus make God present? Heidegger answers, again quoting Hölderlin: with kindness (*Freundlichkeit*). It is kindness that allows for the human being to image God and moreover measure himself against God. This imaging of God is what it means, in the end, for Heidegger, for the human being to “dwell poetically.” Poetically dwelling, measuring oneself against God, is a dwelling that makes God present sacramentally in and through human kindness. Heidegger concludes,

As long as this arrival of kindness endures, so long does man succeed in measuring himself not unhappily against the godhead. When this measuring appropriately comes to light, man creates poetry from the very nature of the poetic.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, for Heidegger poetry occurs as a sacramental imaging forth of God by way of human kindness. It need not then necessarily be “artistic,” but simply the beautiful occurring through kindness. Such

kindness then, as the happening of truth/being, discloses beings in their being, and in turn discloses Dasein as the image of God and allows Dasein to dwell poetically.

## NOTES

1. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*. Edited by David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Collins, 1993) 109. Further textual references will be indicated by BW.
2. The essay was drafted in 1935 and 1937 and finally reworked and published in 1950.
3. The idea that Heidegger “mistakes” Van Gogh’s shoes as peasant shoes precisely misses the point as to the revelatory aspect of mimetic activity in art; that is, art’s mimesis discloses possibilities that are not necessarily tied to the original work or the author’s intention, but rather disclose “worlds” and, thus possibilities of being.
4. Translation by John Sallis in Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 384.
5. Ibid. 385
6. Ibid. 406.
7. Translation amended slightly from Cornford. See Plato, *The Collected Dialogues*, 929.
8. Markus Gabriel, “Is Heidegger’s “Turn” a Realist Project?” in *Meta: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy*, Special Issue (2014): 63.
9. Ibid. 59.
10. Ibid. 57. It is worth noting that perhaps Heidegger, at times, equivocates “truth.” When speaking about truth not preexisting among the stars, he largely has in mind truth as *aletheia* (unconcealment), which obviously, according to his philosophy, as unconcealment to Dasein in this world, does not preexist. The question as to the kind of truth that is unconcealed in unconcealment (truth) is another matter.
11. Martin Heidegger, *Logic: The Question of Truth*. Translated by Thomas Sheehan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016) 45–48.
12. Ibid. 81–82
13. Ibid. 77.
14. “Die Frage: Was ist Metaphysik?, im Bereich des Übergangs zum anderen Anfang gestellt..., erfragt das Wesen der “Metaphysik” bereits im Sinne einer ersten Gewinnung der Vorfeldstellung zum Übergang in den anderen Anfang. Mit anderen Worten, sie fragt schon aus diesem her. Was sie als Bestimmung der “Metaphysik” sichtbar macht, das ist schon nicht mehr die Metaphysik, sondern ihre Überwindung.” Martin Heidegger,

- Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 65: *Beitraege zur Philosophie* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989) 171–172 (translation mine). I have consulted both the Emad and Maly translation as well as the Rojcewicz and Vallega-Neu translation. See Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, translated by Parvis Emad and Ken Maly (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 121; Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 135.
15. Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) 24.
  16. Ibid.
  17. Ibid.
  18. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Translated by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) 223.
  19. Ibid. 227.

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## Kierkegaard, Nagel, Conclusions

**Abstract** This chapter discusses the philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard and Thomas Nagel, and provides the conclusion to the book. First, Kierkegaard's philosophy is reconsidered in the context of the Gigantomachy, in particular, as another thinker, alongside Heidegger, of Platonic *methexis* (participation). Second, Nagel's critique of scientific reductionism and arguments for Platonism and Cartesianism are discussed in light of the Gigantomachy. I conclude in agreement with Nagel, and against Heidegger and Nietzsche, in favor of traditional metaphysics (Platonism) and elements of Cartesianism.

**Keywords** Nagel · Heidegger · Kierkegaard · Nietzsche

### KIERKEGAARDIAN MEDIATION AND THE ABSURD

I would like to begin this chapter with a brief foray into the philosophical backbone of Kierkegaard's philosophy, namely his conception of truth vis-à-vis the human being, as they both relate to the question of participation. In Kierkegaard, one sees a philosophical system that manages both sides of the equation at once, so to speak, in that Kierkegaard holds fast to the notion of truth's objectivity, and yet rethinks the question of participation such that the question speaks again of the real problem of the subject's *relation to* the truth, the object of truth. Without compromising truth's objectivity, Kierkegaard nevertheless transmutes the entire

question of participation or relation itself into one of a relation *to* a relation in a way that allows for the question of the relation to truth, and to its participation in the truth, to become alive again. The question as to the relation between being and becoming is rethought by Kierkegaard in such an innovative manner that it deserves attention with regard to the larger scope of our project, even if this attention functions somewhat as a digression.

Heidegger's emphasis, not upon the other world as such, but upon the relation between the two worlds is nothing new in Heidegger, but was previously taken up as a problematic, as we have seen, already by Plato with the problem of *methexis*, but also by Søren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard sought to undermine what he thought was an all too clean mediation (*Aufhebung*) in Hegel that favored the rational over the religious. Indeed, mediation, one could argue, is Kierkegaard's primary philosophical concern, namely to rethink the mediation of the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the temporal, or, quite simply, being and becoming. As such then, Kierkegaard too, like Nietzsche and Heidegger, seeks a way of rethinking the relation of being to becoming, and rethinks this relation in such a way that, again, being is *as* becoming, yet not in a way that reduces being to becoming, as Nietzsche does. Rather Kierkegaard's effort is to problematize the very *problem of the relation* itself, which in turn leads to a recognition of the limits of rational thinking, without reducing reason, as does Nietzsche, to the subjective. Kierkegaard's effort leads him, as we shall see, to a kind fideism, albeit a fideism that nevertheless retains the objective or realist element of truth. Nevertheless, the *relation* to truth remains prioritized.

Kierkegaard's endeavor reaches its zenith in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, where he begins a discussion of truth, not as objectivity, but as *subjectivity*. "Truth as subjectivity" means, not that truth is relative or "subjective," but rather that the subject's *relation* to the object is more important, or at least *as* important, as the object itself. In other words, truth in this Kierkegaardian sense denotes the subject's inward appropriation or owning of an objective truth, in this case, the eternal truth, namely being or God. Kierkegaard writes,

When subjectivity is truth, the definition of truth must also contain in itself an expression of the antithesis to objectivity.... Here is such a definition of truth: *An objective uncertainty, held fast through appropriation with the*



*most passionate inwardness, is the truth*, the highest truth there is for an *existing* person.<sup>1</sup>

Truth is an *appropriation* of the objective, emphasizing the *inwardness* of such an appropriation, that is, the *passion* of owning the truth. Only in light of such passionate appropriation can truth therefore be said to be the “antithesis” of objectivity, meaning not that the objectivity is irrelevant, but rather the passionate reception and owning of it remains the more important focus.

In his discussions of truth as subjectivity, Kierkegaard distinguishes between the Socratic and the Religious as ways of being “in truth.” Furthermore, Kierkegaard is careful to distinguish Socrates from Plato in his claims about the Socratic sphere of existence. That is, Socrates, for Kierkegaard, affirmed his own ignorance vis-à-vis the eternal truth (presumably the forms), and thus accentuated his inwardness in existence; Socrates intensified his existential existence as a temporal being in the sphere of becoming. Whereas Plato, for Kierkegaard, represents a later distortion of the Socratic that sought to elevate oneself out of this existential intensification in temporality and becoming in favor of recollecting the eternal. Thus, the Socratic represents an affirmation of one’s existential situation in time, as becoming, whereas the Platonic represents an attempt to rapt oneself out of this sphere in favor of the eternal objective truth, particularly through the recollection of a prior disembodied existence free from the constraints of the existential. For Kierkegaard then this Platonic exemption from existence characterizes a demotion in the sphere of truth as subjectivity. It is only Socrates who understood himself as an existing being, in time, in becoming, and thus intensified the paradoxical relation he had toward the eternal truth, namely that he could not know it; Socrates is wise precisely because “he knows that he does not know.” Plato, on the other hand, attempted to deal with this paradoxical state of the finite, temporal human being vis-à-vis the infinite, eternal truth by taking the human being out of existence through the “back door of recollection” (CUP 208). Both the Socratic and the Platonic then, for Kierkegaard, represent ways of dealing with the individual in relation to the eternal truth; and, as such, both deal with the *relation* between being and becoming. Note that the question as to truth’s objectivity never becomes an issue for Kierkegaard, but rather is merely presupposed. That is, while Kierkegaard may critique Plato for his failure to understand the human being’s temporal existence

and how that existence relates to the truth, he never chides Plato for his "Platonism," and therefore always remains steadfastly committed to truth's objectivity. It is again merely a question as to *how* the existing person relates to the truth, how becoming relates to being, rather than merely the truth by itself.

This relation between becoming (human existing) and being (the eternal truth) is what Kierkegaard refers to as the "paradox." "The paradox emerges when the eternal truth and existing are placed together, but each time existing is accentuated, the paradox becomes clearer and clearer" (CUP 208). This paradox ought to be accentuated and pressed in order for truth to be subjectivity, in order for truth to be appropriated and *felt* by the existing individual. "When subjectivity, inwardness, is truth, then truth, objectively defined, is a paradox" (CUP 204). Truth must become a passion. It must become the angst-ridden passion of faith. However, the Socratic cannot reach faith, but rather merely remains in the heightened state of ignorance vis-à-vis the truth. This is as far as the non-Christian can go, in a sense, for Kierkegaard. Nevertheless the Socratic inwardness can act as an analogue to faith; however, the inwardness of faith is always infinitely deeper (CUP 205).

The paradox for Kierkegaard represents the inability to unite becoming with being, under the guises here of the finite, existing individual in time and the infinite, eternal truth that is God. The closest the Socratic can arrive at is the *recognition* of the infinite gulf between the two, and thus the impossibility of reconciliation. No doubt Kierkegaard has in mind here Socrates' in the *Symposium*, where this recognition is described as *eros*, which longs and desires, in a kind of madness (*mania*), for the "other world" and yet cannot reach it due to one's existential situation. Indeed, Socrates says, "the only thing I know is the 'art of love' [ta erotica]" (177d 8–9). *Eros*, or love, is that passion that compels one up the "divided line" to the realm of Ideas, so much so that without *eros*, philosophy, as the intuiting of forms, would prove impossible. Thus, for Kierkegaard, Socrates gets as far as the recognition, in *eros*, of the paradox between himself as *becoming* and his longing for the truth (the Ideas) as *being*. Such *eros* is moreover heightened by the uncertainty, unattainability, and risk of the irrelation between being and becoming. This Socratic problem is a problem then of mediation, of the mediation between the human as temporal-becoming and the truth as being. It is important to note that this "mediation" is nothing of the sort, at least not conceptually; rather this meditation is a feeling of the

very impossibility of such a mediation, and hence a failed reconciliation, in objective *uncertainty*.

Ultimately, this passion of the objectively uncertain that serves to “mediate” the spheres of being and becoming reaches its fulfillment in faith, that is, Christian faith. In faith, truth as subjectivity reaches the height of *eros* within the paradox precisely because the eternal truth itself *becomes* the paradox. That is, the paradox of being and becoming becomes the very object to which one seeks reconciliation; the *relation* itself becomes the object, the truth, to which one relates. Kierkegaard has in mind here the incarnation, where the truth becomes the paradoxical God-man. Kierkegaard writes,

Let us now go further; let us assume that the eternal, essential truth is itself the paradox. How does the paradox emerge? By placing the eternal, essential truth together with the existing. Consequently, if we place it together in the truth itself, the truth becomes a paradox. The eternal truth has come into existence in time. That is the paradox. (CUP 209)

The human being can thus properly mediate (i.e., have faith in such a way that truth becomes fully “subjectivity”) the eternal truth if and only if this truth becomes paradoxical. Thus, faith is the paradoxical relation of the existing individual (becoming) to the eternal truth (being), in which the eternal truth (being) has now itself become the paradoxical relation of being and becoming. Faith is then a paradoxical relation *to* a paradox. This paradoxical relation to a paradox is, as such, *absurd*. In other words, the very *problem of mediation* now becomes the truth that faith qua *eros* “mediates;” the paradoxically absurd relation becomes that to which one relates. This truth becoming a paradox, becoming absurd, is, again, the incarnation:

What, then, is the absurd? The absurd is that the eternal truth has come into existence in time, that God has come into existence, has been born, has grown up, etc., has come into existence exactly as an individual human being, indistinguishable from any other human being.... (CUP 210)

Kierkegaard’s attempt at mediating the ancient problem between being and becoming is thus quite unique, for he proposes, *mutatis mutandis*, transforming the object related to—“being”—into “being *as* becoming,”

such that becoming—the human being—relates not to being, but to being *as* becoming (the God-man).

In sum, Kierkegaard makes the very *problem of relating* to the object the object itself; the problem becomes the object. It is a question then of relating *to the relation*, such that the paradox of the relation becomes the truth, and truth becomes absurd, and thus truth *is*, or is mediated by subjectivity. Being and becoming's impossible reconciliation becomes the truth itself, the object to which the existing individual relates in the inwardness of subjectivity that is faith. Faith names then the relation or irrelation of the subject qua becoming to *the* Paradox itself. Such amounts to an "overcoming" of metaphysics, and thus Kierkegaard stands first in the line, prior to Nietzsche and Heidegger, of those who would attempt such an overcoming.

Overcoming metaphysics for Kierkegaard means overcoming the speculative endeavor altogether in favor of faith, understood as a fully erotic longing, beyond that of the Socratic even, for an uncertain and unattainable object, namely the Absurd itself. Faith, as *eros*, is then an absurd relation to an absurdity, a paradoxical relation to a paradox. It seems Kierkegaard's attempts in thinking through being *as* becoming, and thus as paradox has gone largely unnoticed by both Nietzsche and Heidegger, especially concerning the topic of overcoming metaphysics. Thus, we can ask: does Kierkegaard offer an alternative to the problem of the battle between gods and giants? Or does he still remain within the split-world binary?

As noted above, Kierkegaard, despite his aconceptual mediation, nevertheless retains ontological commitments to truth and being, in that Kierkegaard is not in any way a Nietzschean subjectivist. Truth is *subjectivity* and not *subjective*, and while the subject's relation to the object is emphasized, it is never at the expense of the dissolution of the object altogether. The object rather must be kept in existence, albeit uncertain existence. However, if the object becomes the absurd, does this not result in a quasi-Nietzscheanism, or at least a kind of *fideism*, insofar as the absurd transcends rationality and logic, and thus speculative thinking altogether? In his journals, Kierkegaard flirts with a radical fideism with regard to the absurd. Kierkegaard writes,

Therefore, rightly understood, there is nothing at all frightening in the category of the absurd—no, it is the very category of courage and of enthusiasm. **Take an analogy. Love makes one blind.** Yes, but it is

nevertheless a cursed thing to become blind—well, then, you can **just diminish the blindness a little** so that one does not become entirely blind. But take care—for when you diminish the blindness, **you also diminish the love, because true love makes one entirely blind.**

And true faith breathes healthfully and blessedly in the absurd. The weaker faith must peer and speculate, just like the weaker love, which does not have the **courage to become entirely blind**, and for that very reason remains a weaker love, or, **because it is a weaker love, it does not become entirely blind**". (emphasis mine)<sup>2</sup>

Faith, for Kierkegaard, remains analogous to love (again, to *eros*), in that true faith, like true love, ought to make one *entirely* blind; if you diminish the blindness, you diminish the love, and by analogy, if you diminish the absurdity of faith, you diminish the faith! True faith, like true love, ought to be entirely blind, or entirely absurd. This passage is indicative of Kierkegaard's fideism concerning the mediation between God and the human being, and thus between being and becoming. Such mediation cannot resolve itself conceptually; rather recourse must be made to the passions, not as irrational appetites, but rather as *fundamental moods* that are disclosive of even more fundamental realities that cannot otherwise be "thought" with rational concepts. For example, Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety* devotes itself to anxiety as the "mood of freedom," since freedom, a suprarational, spontaneous causality, itself remains unable to be, strictly speaking, "thought." Those fundamental realities that defy conceptual cognition require recourse to moods in order to properly disclose them.<sup>3</sup> That is, Kierkegaard posits mood, passion, as that which *aconceptually* mediates the paradoxical/absurd relation between being and becoming, between God and the human being. Such mediation does not forego the object (being, God), but rather shows that rationality simply fails and recourse must be given to faith as a "blind passion" of inwardness, which somehow the individual subject knows to be truth. This truth then marks the mediation of truth as subjectivity. Thus, Kierkegaard is not a Nietzschean (or a quasi-Nietzschean) for the simple reason that a transcending of rationality is not at all synonymous with a destruction of rationality, even if such transcending is itself a deconstruction. Thus, while Kierkegaard does delimit reason and its scope, it is a far cry from an absolute dissolution of reason into the human subject. Truth remains *subjectivity*, and not *subjective* (or perspectival) as it is for Nietzsche.

However, the relationship of being to thinking, in Kierkegaard, anticipates in a way Nietzsche's understanding of "being" as a kind of distortion of reality, at least insofar as Kierkegaard acknowledges the finitude of our conceptual apparatus to grasp the whole of reality, most notably, its inability to grasp the individual as becoming, as existing in time. For this reason then a "system of existence" ultimately remains impossible for Kierkegaard. Only a "logical system," rather than an existential one, can be given, precisely because a system must always be complete and offer closure. Thus, insofar as human existence is always becoming, i.e., temporally making itself, making a "self," through freedom, it remains impossible to close the system completely. In other words, becoming, transition, change, freedom, etc., make any system ultimately unsystematic. A system cannot "think" becoming, for to do so would be to transmute and distort becoming into being. This distortion distorts precisely because thinking cannot "think becoming," but rather must always deny becoming in favor of being. Existential existence then can only be reconciled vis-à-vis an absurdity, a paradox, in and through the anxiety that is faith. This paradox, again, functions in a way parallel to the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, which seeks to mediate opposites, albeit conceptually. This conceptual mediation of Hegel marks for Kierkegaard the failure of metaphysics, in that it cannot understand that mediation precisely cannot be understood, but rather must be experienced, endured, in the aconceptual and fundamental mood of faith.

If becoming cannot be thought systematically without turning it into being, and being and becoming cannot be reconciled or mediated without removing the human being (as becoming) from the equation (as in Platonic recollection), then once again, for Kierkegaard, becoming cannot be thought without falsifying it into being. Existential existence, i.e., human becoming, remains just as problematic and paradoxical for Kierkegaard as does the paradox of relating human becoming to being as the eternal truth. The human being that longs to "be," but remains in time then represents another existential paradox that resists conceptual mediation. The human being longs to make a self, via its own freedom, yet every self it makes it transcends, for it must continue to choose. Human existence then remains "condemned to be free" insofar as it can never identify with the choices, and thus the self that it makes, since it must continue to freely exist and to freely choose. This condemnation marks "bad faith" for Sartre, and leads Sartre to define the human being as a mere "useless passion."<sup>4</sup> Yet, for Kierkegaard, this condemnation

remains nothing of the sort, but simply names another paradox that cannot be mediated conceptually, the paradox of being human. I want to *be*, yet I am always *becoming*. For Kierkegaard the only possible reconciliation lies in the self-resting, in faith, in “the power that posited it.”<sup>5</sup> The self nevertheless remains, at least conceptually, a paradoxical absurdity.

It seems then that there are ultimately three paradoxes, three absurdities, for Kierkegaard: the self, God, and their relation to each other in faith. The self is a paradox that, in faith, paradoxically relates to the Paradox that is God. The self in faith then mirrors the ultimate Paradox, the Absurd itself namely God. Faith too mirrors this absurdity, indeed it must become this absurdity for mediation to occur. This faith, as a paradox paradoxically relating to *the* Paradox, marks the essence of Kierkegaard’s fideism. Yet these absurd paradoxes are not nonsense. They are rather the absolute limits of reason itself; it is where reason recognizes its own end and shrinks back, where reason self-deconstructs by the sheer recognition of its inability to traverse a certain boundary. This recognition remains reason’s own self-delimitation, and as such is wholly other than nonsense. Yet each paradox proves resistant to thinking, systematic thinking, and thus can only be thought as an absurdity. Such “thought” is no longer thought, but faith.

It is *eros*, and not a concept of reason, that negatively “resolves” the paradox of faith, and thus negatively mediates or sublates the problem of the irrelation of being and becoming. Moreover, the sublation of *eros* extends to the paradox of the subject and the Paradox of God, as these paradoxes too find their resolution in *eros* as love. The self, as said above, only “rests” in God, through faith, as the “power that posits it.” The self then only rests in faith qua love (*eros*) for God. The paradox of the self, as the amalgam of being and becoming, resolves, or becomes full integrated, only in love. So also with God himself, as the ultimate Paradox of being and becoming, the God-man, resolves himself only as that which God is in God’s self, namely “love itself” (1 John 4:6, 16). Therefore the threefold paradox of the self, the self’s relation to God, and God, all rooted in the ultimate problematic paradox of being and becoming, all resolve in nothing other than love itself. Here lies the true essence of Kierkegaard’s Christian thinking, namely his solution to the Hegelian problem of mediating opposites (paradoxical absurdities), not through the conceptual *Aufhebung*, but rather through the absurd, erotic mania that is faith, but at the same time also love.

Kierkegaard's thinking then represents another attempt, in a truly novel manner, at rethinking the original problematic of being and becoming. While Kierkegaard undoubtedly retained commitments to realism or metaphysical idealism and believed that truth was objective, this truth, as the eternal truth, could not be, strictly speaking, thought, but only believed. Metaphysical reason is therefore retained, although radically delimited in such a way that reason, metaphysics, eventually must come upon the absolute abyss of the inability to conceptually mediate being and becoming. Thus, the human being is tasked to believe in the absurd, and to believe precisely *because* it is absurd: *credo quia absurdum est*.

### THOMAS NAGEL'S *CONTINENTAL* TURN

Thomas Nagel, a well-esteemed Analytic philosopher of science, has "gone rogue" in his recent publications (*The Last Word* and *Mind and Cosmos*) concerning the limitations of scientific reasoning. Of course, there are many theistic Analytic philosophers who have attempted to delimit science (e.g., Alvin Plantinga). However, what makes Nagel so unique are his radical commitments to atheism, and thus a reluctance to accept the conclusions of his own philosophy, namely that mind, particularly reason, ought to be privileged over matter. Such philosophical conclusions appear akin to traditionally theistic claims about the relationship between mind and matter and thus run contrary to a typical committed atheism, which usually endorses some version of reductive physicalism or naturalism. On the contrary, Nagel argues against reductive naturalist explanations of science and knowledge, for he claims that such reductionism winds up self-referentially incoherent and simply unable to account for itself; moreover, he claims that since reductive naturalism is largely false, objective realism, along the lines of Plato and Descartes, proves to be the only consistent epistemological and metaphysical framework through which to make sense of the world.

Nagel's argument follows closely our discussion of Nietzsche concerning the problems of reductive physicalism or naturalism as a metaphysics to account for rationality, except that for Nagel this proves problematic, since Nagel believes that truth and being are essential for any coherent view not only of science but also of morality and reality in general. Nagel refuses to fall happily into the self-referential inconsistency of Nietzsche, as such a fall leads inevitably to the denial of all truth claims whatsoever,



including one's own. Instead, Nagel seeks to explain *explanation* itself, that is, how one explains when one explains, with the assumption that explanation is not only possible but also necessary. The alternative would be to accept reductive naturalism and explain away our very ability to explain. Indeed, Nagel's earlier text *The Last Word* argues, as the title suggests, that reason, or mind and intelligibility, must receive the "last word" in terms of grounding epistemic and metaphysical truth claims. Otherwise, giving naturalism, through evolutionary processes, the "last word" as ground would reduce intelligibility, mind, and reason to a subjective relativism; that is, for Nagel, to argue that reason arises out of physical processes is inevitably to argue for a constructivist epistemology, where the mind constructs the truths it "perceives" rather than perceives such truths as objectively ideal intelligible objects.

Again, Nagel's argument runs similar to Nietzsche's except with anti-theoretical aim: the preservation of truth and reason. If our cognitive faculties are "just" the result of irrational selective processes, then these faculties are ultimately unreliable for the same reason given by Nietzsche, namely that utility—utility toward survival—would be their primary aim, and not truth over falsity. One could conceive of false judgments that could indeed be beneficial. Thus, either intelligibility is objective or it is not, in which case it would be subjectively constructed. Nagel's most compelling arguments concern the necessary intelligibility of mathematics and logic, which *eo ipso* are *necessary*, immaterial, and eternal and must, therefore, be objective. For example, in order to deny the truths of logic one must employ the very same truths one would deny. For this reason, Nagel remains a realist (idealist) and, even by his admission, a Platonist.<sup>6</sup> Since to deny the objectivity of the intelligible world of mathematics and logic would be to subjectivize it, and to subjectivize it would be to refute all rationality self-referentially, Nagel thus argues in favor of Platonism.

In other words, there is no position from which I can critique the truths of logic without using these very truths. Even if I were to say that, e.g., my mind was being scrambled by some external force that makes me believe the rules of logic were true, I would still have to use the rules of logic in order to articulate this problem. "There just isn't room for skepticism about basic logic, because there is no place to stand where we can formulate or think it without immediately contradicting ourselves by relying on it" (LW 62). Moreover, to argue that these logical rules are somehow "contingent" (upon psychology, natural selection, etc.) leads

to similar problems. That is, no claim to contingency can “get underneath,” e.g., the universality and necessity that claims such as *modus tollens* or “ $2 + 2 = 4$ ” make. There is simply no “meta-position” from which to argue for their contingency, since such a position would always be tethered, if not to them, to at least some logical, rational truths. Mathematics, logic, and thus reason, in general, are thus universal and necessary truths, eternal truths, that cannot be reduced or made contingent upon the human psyche or the natural world. It becomes impossible then to “ground” the rules of reason and logic upon anything other than themselves, for there remains no meta-position from which such a grounding could occur. Rational truths demand their own causal explanation.

In *Mind and Cosmos*, Nagel offers an analogy that helps explain the problem quite lucidly. If I were to ask for a reason why when I punch “ $3 + 5$ ” into a calculator the result “8” occurs, and then were to answer that the reason “8” appeared was simply due to the process of pushing “3” and then “+” and then finally “5,” this answer would prove ultimately unsatisfactory. That is, the material answer only accounts for one level of causality and not the essential or even the most interesting, kind of causality. It misses the most important explanation as to the fundamental reason *why* “ $3 + 5$ ” equals “8,” namely the question of the addition of quantities as an intelligible process. There are then two (or perhaps in other instances several) orders of causality, and reductive naturalism accounts for only one order of them. A fundamental explanation as to the essential intelligibility remains missing in such an account. By analogy, to say that knowledge is the result of chemical or neural processes in the brain precisely misses the point of explaining the intelligibility of those processes. There needs then, for Nagel, to be an explanation of the higher order explanatory function, which would explain *why*, e.g., adding “3” and “5” make “8.” Simply saying that this sum results from physical processes will not suffice. In the same way then to argue that rational cognition is the byproduct and effect of evolution by natural selection, begs the question and fails as an adequate account of why and how mind functions rationally. Logic and mathematical processes thus demand an explanation beyond the physical.

The same applies to questions of moral value. Nagel notes that moral realism is simply incompatible with the Darwinian account of morality.<sup>7</sup> That is, in the Darwinian picture, as in the Nietzschean, value judgments

have only utility as their primary aim, for such judgments arrive in order to enhance and promote life and fitness, and not to tell us what is or is not objectively good or bad. Good or bad are always relative to the person or to the culture, in terms of what best promotes life, order, etc. Thus, what I, or my culture, calls “good,” can never escape a subjective relativism. Nagel is, of course, unwilling to accept such subjectivism, as he believes morality to transcend mere opinion and sentiment. Thus, Nagel writes, “since moral realism is true, a Darwinian account of the motives underlying moral judgment must be false, in spite of the scientific consensus in its favor” (MC 105). Since moral values are transcendent, that is, beyond the subject’s beliefs about them, the question remains as to how to account for them in themselves, and also how to account for our ability to *know* and make *judgments* about them.

If a reductive (physicalist/naturalist) account cannot adequately explain objective truths in logic, mathematics, and ethics, and if a reduction of logic and mathematics to mere natural processes leads to a constructivist, crypto-subjective relativism, then Nagel’s only option is to conclude that (a) the Neo-Darwinian account of reality is radically incomplete, for it fails to explain mind/intelligibility, and moreover (b) a Platonic realist account that privileges mind, intelligibility, and as we shall see, teleology, is the only account that seems viable.

Nagel’s argument is on the one hand profoundly simple, in that it is merely the reverse of Nietzsche’s. That is, Nagel’s consideration of Darwinian physicalism leads to the same conclusions as Nietzsche, except Nagel is unwilling to remain in Nietzscheanism, but rather must turn toward a Platonic or quasi-Aristotelian account of reality in order to adequately explain intelligibility and mind, something a purely physical picture of the universe cannot do. Indeed, in *Mind and Cosmos*, Nagel’s arguments at times echo Heidegger’s in terms of seeking the proper conditions for the possibility of *transcendence*, and thus metaphysics. Nagel writes,

The problem that I want to take up now concerns mental functions such as thought, reasoning, and evaluation that are limited to humans...These are the functions that have enabled us to *transcend* the perspective of the immediate life-world given to us by our senses and instincts, and to explore the larger objective reality of nature and value. (emphasis mine, MC 71)

This transcendence is, Nagel argues, what is primarily in need of explanation. How is it we are able to be in touch with objective truth, beyond mere subjective perception and appearances? What is the condition for the possibility of such “seeing” of intelligible, immaterial truth? In other words, what enables the human being *as* transcendence, as metaphysical? According to Nagel,

Once we come to recognize the distinction between appearance and reality, and the existence of objective factual or practical truth that goes beyond what perception, appetite, and emotion tell us, the ability of creatures like us to arrive at such truth, or even to think about it, requires explanation. (MC 73)

Nagel, however, does not pretend to have the full answer to this question; all he “knows” is that reductionism will not suffice. He flirts with various possible forms of naturalistic teleology, where mind and intelligibility would be the end or *telos* of the universe, so to speak. Nagel seems to advocate for a universe in which the possibility and capacity for mind (reason) would be latent within the very structure of the universe, such that in any universe that unfolded, mind and reason would eventually ensue, as such would be the realization or actualization of latent, inevitable capacities within matter.

Nagel writes,

The development of value and moral understanding, like the development of knowledge and reason and the development of consciousness that underlies both of those higher-order functions, forms part of what a general conception of the cosmos must explain...the process seems to be one of the universe gradually waking up. (MC 117)

Regardless of Nagel’s inability to work out a compatible view of Platonic realism and Darwinism (to both of which he remains committed at least in part), it is clear that Nagel has taken a side in the battle between gods and giants: Nagel sides with Plato. But more importantly, Nagel sees precisely the problematic Plato described, namely the bifurcation of metaphysical accounts of reality into the *either/or* of Nietzscheanism and Platonism. Nagel’s ontological commitments keep him from Nietzscheanism, and yet he is not willing to concede to the theism that he is well aware eventuates from such Platonic commitments

to ideality. That is, Nagel is thus willing to conceive of the eternal existence of ideal entities—logic, mathematics, value, etc.—however he is unwilling to posit any form of theism as to their ground. Why? By Nagel's account: he quite simply does not *want* to believe. "I want atheism to be true...It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that" (LW 130).<sup>8</sup> However, Nagel is equally uncomfortable with Darwinian reductive positions that lead to an irrational bias against traditionally "theistic" conclusions. He sees this irrational bias as running rampant in the scientific community, a bias that would reject basic facts about the intelligibility of the universe based upon an obstinate prejudice against religion. "The thought that the relation between mind and the world is something fundamental makes many people in this day and age nervous. I believe this is one manifestation of the fear of religion which has large and often pernicious consequences for modern intellectual life" (LW 130). Thus, for Nagel, the question becomes how to account for reality in a way that would steer clear of prejudices on either side. Nagel's best hypothesis so far is to posit a kind of immanent teleology in nature, in which mind's realization is the "goal" of the universe.

Strangely, Nagel's conclusions are almost exactly the same as the conclusions arrived at by Husserl a century earlier. Husserl found the reductive psychology of psychologism extremely problematic concerning matters of objective truth (the objective and eternal truths of logic), and thus Husserl was led to posit ideal entities in a Platonic manner in order not only to save logic from subjective relativism, but also to put forward the "science" of phenomenology as a science of ideal essences. Husserl's critique of reductive naturalism in the form of psychologism thus led him to posit ideal entities for phenomenology to examine and disclose. Nagel, therefore, seems to end where phenomenology and dare I say Continental philosophy, began a century earlier.

Nevertheless, Nagel homes in on a contradiction at the base of modern science, namely science's inability to account for itself—its inability to explain how it explains. Nietzsche too was aware of this very problem and happily welcomed science's (and reason's) own self-annihilation. Science's own conclusions undermine science itself. That is, if the world is merely physical and human beings are merely animals, then the rational processes that make science possible undermine themselves, given the framework within which science works. Nietzsche refused to

allow for any further rational basis upon which to ground science and therefore remained within a philosophical system that eventually self-destructs. Nagel, on the other hand, is quite uncomfortable in and with such self-destructive system and therefore has recourse once again, like Socrates, to the *logos*, to rationality and intelligibility, as objective and mind-independent.<sup>9</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This argument began with a discussion of Nietzsche's "philosophy of science" vis-à-vis theism and theism's purported death. We saw how, for Nietzsche, without an absolute abolition of all reason, logic, and truth, theism inevitably ensues, regardless of any atheistic commitments. Nietzsche realizes, in a sense, an insight Heidegger later came to concerning the "onto-theological constitution of metaphysics," namely that rational categories and their schematization of reality in substance and cause/effect, inevitably lead back to God as their fundamental ground. That is, once reality is understood in terms of unified, self-same "substances" within a causal nexus, invariably reason demands that the succession of cause and effect have a *terminus*, so as to avoid an infinite regression. This *terminus*, as the end of the causal chain, must be *uncaused*, and thus an "uncaused cause," which is simultaneously substantive in the highest sense. Kant also notes this tendency of reason to demand an "unconditioned" to condition all other conditions, to ground all other grounds. This "unconditioned condition," or highest ground, is ultimately tantamount, for Kant, to God as a *regulative* idea, which reason itself necessitates in order for its own coherence and cohesion. Our reason demands God as preferable to an infinite causal series, which it simply cannot tolerate. Nietzsche, in other words, saw what Kant and later Heidegger would also see, namely that *ratio ipso facto* leads to a conception of God. Thus, insofar as one allows for *ratio* to hold sway, God too must remain. The very concept of rationality is inextricably bound up to the idea of God. Nietzsche, therefore, insists that in order for a genuine atheism to be possible, such atheism *must* forego reason altogether, including all of reason's claims to "truth" and a stable reality—being—that truth necessitates. Truth, in the end, must be subjected to an immanent and fatal critique.

For these reasons then, Nietzsche notices that the "death of God" is tantamount to the "death of science." That is, modern science's

“murder” of theism, due to the Darwinian explanation of the origins of human reason, as opposed to classic theistic explanation, is simultaneously modern science’s own suicide, since in destroying “God” science destroys not only rational cognition, but also truth itself, including truth as a “value” to be pursued. Science, in killing God, killed itself unknowingly. The death of God then leads to the death of reason and truth, and insofar as atheism makes a claim to employ reason and search for truth in the name of “science,” it fails to recognize its own hypocritical theism that it simply cannot shake. Modern science remains stuck therefore in what Nietzsche calls “pale atheism,” a hypocritical and utterly Christian endeavor to discover truth apart from God, failing to recognize that the very concept of truth and the rationality that pursues it are themselves theistic constructions.

Over and against this pale atheism of modern science, Nietzsche thus pursues a radical atheism, wholly devoid of truth, reason, and even “being.” That is, Nietzsche’s atheism launches a complete onslaught against the concepts of truth and being, such that Nietzsche’s own position leads to self-referential incoherence—for to argue “there is no truth” radically limits, destroys even, the ability to predicate at all. Nietzsche’s philosophic position, therefore, devolves into a kind of aestheticism, arguing that although nothing is “true,” there are perhaps more beautiful theories of reality, ones that do not deny, but rather affirm life. However, in a sense, Nietzsche’s atheism proves strangely consistent, despite its own self-referential incoherence, once reason and truth themselves are eliminated in favor of the will to power, as the will to power knowingly admits to its own “falsity.” Such a philosophical position that purports to transcend truth hinges, for Nietzsche, upon his “fundamental metaphysical position” concerning being.

For Nietzsche, “being” is a fiction of the subject’s value positing in the will to power, which seeks to ossify the flux of becoming in the creation of a “value,” whose creation is the very essence of art itself. For Nietzsche the ultimate value created, in the ultimate artistic act, is simultaneously the “supreme will to power,” namely the naming of becoming *as* being, and being *as* becoming, in the doctrine of the Eternal Return of the Same.

It is Nietzsche’s position that seeks to dismantle being in favor of becoming that I have argued, perfectly illustrates what follows from the materialist side of the Gigantomachy. A position that deconstructs being (and truth) in favor of power is precisely the same as materialism,

naturalism, physicalism, etc., since it cannot argue consistently for any intelligible “form” to materiality, and thus must forego intelligibility and essences, and therefore “being” altogether, in favor of becoming (*Sophist* 246c). A radical commitment to materiality leads inevitably to a critique of being and essence, since both being and essence presume immateriality, i.e., intelligibility. Thus, Nietzsche argues in favor of becoming over and against fictitious being. Such a position, of becoming over being, amounts to Nietzsche’s “inversion of Platonism.”

However, we saw that, for Heidegger, Nietzsche’s absolute inversion of Platonic metaphysics, in his fundamental metaphysical position, proves to be radically caught within the very same logic of the Platonism that it seeks to overturn. That is, according to Heidegger, Nietzsche’s reductionist materialism remains tightly bound to the same inner logic of Platonism, namely a version of the split world, for Heidegger argues that to remain within the binary of the battle between gods and giants is, in the end, simply to remain Platonic. Therefore Heidegger seeks to twist free of this binary altogether. Therefore, as a countermovement to Nietzsche, Heidegger wishes to reconfigure the quarrel concerning metaphysics into a question concerning metaphysics’ conditions for possibility, so as to eventuate an overcoming of metaphysics itself. Heidegger, following Husserl’s critique of psychologism, wants to rephrase, and thus reconsider the question of being—the *Seinsfrage*—in terms of being, nothing, *aletheia*, etc., as that process which allows for metaphysical transcendence to occur. Heidegger’s *Seinsfrage* opens up a reinvestigation into Platonic *methexis*, not so as to question being qua being, but rather to question being as it shows itself in and through becoming, as the process of truth, in the event, in the work of art, etc. Nevertheless, we saw that in changing the question to participation, Heidegger begs or avoids the question altogether as to the ontological status of “being” or “intelligibility.” In other words, Heidegger fails to indicate a commitment to realism/idealism; unlike Kierkegaard, who changes the question in a similar manner to Heidegger, and yet remains committed to truth’s eternity, and thus to a kind of Platonism.

Heidegger’s phenomenological-deconstructive method effectively takes apart Platonic metaphysics insofar as it unearths metaphysics’ conditions for possibility, which includes the conditions for the possibility of *ratio* itself as it employs substance, causality, essence, etc. However, the question remains for Heidegger as to whether or not essences (grounds, causes, etc.) are in fact real, that is, have an independent, ontological



status of their own. At times, Heidegger seems to suggest that “being” goes beyond Dasein’s mere plans and projects, and rather “sends itself” to be thought by Dasein. However, Heidegger never concludes clearly enough as to what it means to say that being or truth does not “pre-exist somewhere amongst the stars.” Does this mean that essences such as goodness, justice, causality, mathematics, etc., merely “emerge” into existence via the happening of *aletheia*? Possibly. Although, when Heidegger speaks against truth’s preexistence, in context, he means not truth qua essence, but rather *truth* qua *aletheia*. In other words, phenomenological disclosure does not preexist itself, a point that seems fairly obvious, once in context. Moreover, what would it mean for an essence, that is, an intelligible object that is both universal and necessary, to *emerge* into existence? Would such emergence not immediately discredit an intelligible object’s universality and necessity?

Thus, even though Heidegger unearths the conditions for the possibility of *logos* as the showing—*aletheia*—of essences, he fails to ever answer the question as to essence’s ontological status, rather, at times, dismissing such questions as cursory pseudo-questions compared to the importance of the question of *methexis*, namely how the essence, as the one, shows itself *as* many, how *being* is *as* becoming. Nevertheless, Heidegger still thought of his philosophy as taking a firm stand against Nietzschean subjectivism and its dissolution of being into becoming; Heidegger, unlike the many postmodern thinkers after him, still maintained that the question of being remained a worthy question to be pursued. “Being” remains the original behind its myriad images that show themselves in this history of Western thinking, one of which is essence. Thus, insofar as essence is indeed a showing of being, albeit *a* showing and not *the* showing, it is possible to understand Heidegger as a Platonic realist, certainly insofar as being transcends the mere human subject, and thus retains an ontological independence of its own. It is, in my estimation, then only the reductionist element in metaphysics that Heidegger truly rejects, and not metaphysics’ claims to the ontological independence of essence, and in the end, of being. Perhaps, for this reason, Heidegger thought the more pressing concern, rather than essence’s ontological status, was the phenomenological manifestation of essence, the *truth of essence*, that is, the fact that for every revealing of being there is at the same time a concealing. In other words, I find Heidegger’s deeper concern in “overcoming metaphysics” to be the overcoming of reductionism and its reduction of the meaning of being to a singular

meaning of essence and not the overcoming of essence itself. Rather essence (ground, cause, beingness, etc.) must be understood as merely one of the manifold ways in which being in fact *is*. It is for this reason that Heidegger's philosophy can be said to have a singular aim: to *think concealment*.

The question remains then whether or not anything like a "one" exists. In the *logos*' activity of unifying the *panta* into the *hen*, the many into the one, does anything like a one exist independent of this activity? If no, then intelligibility itself, the very essence of the one, is a mere phantom. If many things are not really unified by some one, some intelligible essence, then such unification is merely fictitious and a mere product of human subjectivity. That is, unless this unified intelligibility is "out there," so to speak, independent of the mind, then Nietzsche's metaphysic ensues. Yet if intelligibility is indeed mind-independent and out there in the world, having an ontological status of its own, then it must be immaterial, and thus *transcendental*. For what sense does it make to say, for example, that the "good" that unites all good acts is itself dependent upon such acts? How could "goodness" unify and yoke together manyness if it has no existence independent of such manyness. Even Aristotle, who supposedly argues for such "dependent essences," that is, substances that are inseparable from matter, still nevertheless believed essences (species) to be eternal (1033b10-19; 1039b20-1040a; 1043b). However, Aristotle's argument for the inseparability of form from matter is wholly dependent upon his belief in the eternity of the world, for Aristotle adamantly argues that essences and forms cannot at all be generated and therefore do not admit of change (1033b10-19). They are thus eternal. Thus, materially dependent essences make little sense without an eternal world that is both material and formal. Once the finitude of the universe is taken for granted then, if one is to keep the eternity of essence, the independence of essence from materiality must be posited. Moreover, even in the classic Aristotelian system, with the fixed eternity of the world, there nevertheless exists transcendental, immaterial substance—the unmoved mover, God. In other words, if Aristotle is not already a Platonist, he is forced into Platonism once one argues for a finite world. Thus, classical Aristotelianism can no longer be argued as a possible, viable alternative to Platonism when confronting the battle between the gods and giants. It seems even Aristotle must side with Plato if he is to keep the universality, necessity, and eternity of essence qua intelligibility.

Truth must extend beyond materiality and mere convention. Neither is truth reducible to nature or psychology. The idea that truth, or intelligibility, essence, etc., could “emerge” into existence remains problematic, for such emergence would mean that an ostensibly unchanging, universal, and necessary truth would indeed “change” by way of its emergence into existence. Such truth would not be necessary, but contingent, in particular, contingent upon materiality. Thus, to say that intelligible truths are mind-independent, yet contingent, makes little sense. The only other alternative (to that of Platonism) is to say that truth is simply subjective, and thus we return to Nietzsche. Given that Aristotle no longer remains a viable alternative to Plato (as shown above), since the world is not eternal, but finite, Platonism, therefore, remains the only possible philosophical system that “saves intelligibility.”

What then can be concluded from resurrecting of the ancient quarrel between gods and giants? It seems to me none other than, again, an argument for Platonism (metaphysics) as the only viable option vis-à-vis the nihilism of postmodernity. While Heidegger, and certainly Kierkegaard, offer ingenious ways of considering the relation between the “two worlds,” a question as to the relation between the worlds must presuppose another “world” to which to relate, and thus must, again, “split the world in two” in favor of a commitment to metaphysical transcendence as the only alternative to Nietzsche, naturalism, and reductionism. In a contra-contrarian manner then, I wish to advocate a position for classical Platonic theism insofar as such a position offers, it seems, the only “rational” alternative to irrationality and unintelligibility. As Nietzsche argues, if one preserves the “truth” of reason, or simply “being” itself, in any manner and register, then theism must follow. And since I think it is simply impossible to discard these truths—reason and intelligibility, as well as truth and being—without ultimately falling into unintelligibility, meaninglessness, and nihilism, I see theistic metaphysics as the most consistent philosophical position, and this, I argue, is by Nietzsche’s own logic.<sup>10</sup>

My argument is, therefore, a *reductio ad absurdum* in favor of Platonic theism. If the options (and these options are not mine, but Nietzsche’s) are either Plato or Nietzsche, and Nietzsche leads to an absurdity, then Platonic theism must be *true* (in every sense of that word).<sup>11</sup> Put more simply, as a tautological *reductio*: if it is a question between truth and non-truth, and non-truth cannot be true, truth clearly must be true. It is indeed, therefore, a battle concerning being, or truth as “what *is* the

case,” and the only possible resolution to this battle is one that retains the very thing over which the battle is being fought, namely *being* itself. That is, the only resolution can be in favor of those who argue for a stability to reality (“the gods”), which enables things to *be* and to be *true*. The “giants” of reductionist materialism, with Nietzsche as their representative, ultimately cannot account for a reality that is not continually in flux, continually becoming, for in seeking to “drag everything down” these giants forfeit the prospect of being. Moreover, in reducing all reality to mere becoming, intelligibility itself remains merely a construct of the human mind, and retains no objective, ontological status of its own; for indeed rationality and its categories would not exist independently of the human mind, “out there” in the world, so to speak, but rather would remain merely a subjective imposition upon chaos, having no stability outside that of the stabilizing subject. It remains therefore impossible for this position *to be*; and, if nothing “is,” but only becomes, then nothing “is” true, as Nietzsche correctly observes. Therefore the project of Nietzsche, of the giants, is quite simply self-refuting as it is an impossible position to hold, for its own position could not be “true” or “reasonable” without assuming that being had at least some independence from the human mind that would enable an accounting for reality as it “is.” Without being, therefore, the giants of materialism cannot *account* for their ability to give an *account*, or *explain* their ability to *explain*, but rather, like Nietzsche, explain away the very power of explanation, for explanation itself presupposes that reality *is*, i.e., that it stands still enough to assess and explain.

Moreover, any claim as to the contingency of reason—one that would seek to ground rationality upon the irrational, or reason (*Grund*) upon an abyss (*Abgrund*)—runs into a similar problem regarding self-reference. For one, it would remain impossible to articulate this position without employing reason in a universal and necessary sense. That is, to argue that reason is contingent would have to be argued in a universal way: “reason is contingent” would itself claim *not* to be a contingent statement, but rather a universal and necessary one. Furthermore, “knowledge” itself would be destroyed, since it would be impossible to make any general (universal, necessary) claims about how reality functions, especially claims as to reason’s contingency or necessity. In other words, a critique of reason precludes the ability to make pronouncements about reality, about the truths of reality.<sup>12</sup>

Now, at the outset, I noted that my attack on Nietzsche resulted in an argument in favor of not only Platonism, but Cartesianism as well. How then does an anti-Nietzschean position result in a favoring of Descartes? I believe it is precisely with regard to the question of the parameters set by reason itself with regard to self-referentiality that Cartesianism, or at least a fundamental axiom of Cartesianism, must remain a live option for any philosophical position opposed to reductive materialism.

It is Nagel who lauds Descartes for his straightforward philosophical insight that indeed some thoughts we simply “cannot get outside of” (LW 23). That is, the calling into question of the truths of reason has *limits*, to which even the reductionist giants, in any form, must submit lest they otherwise fall into irrationality. For Nagel then, Descartes’ *Cogito* reveals not so much the necessity of the self-existent “I,” but rather the more general point concerning rationality, namely that some truths cannot be doubted consistently and intelligibly. Descartes’ *Cogito* shows quite simply that doubting one’s own existence, one’s own “I think,” leads to an impossibility, since my “I think” is presupposed in the very activity of doubting. Thus, I assume and even prove the very thing I doubt, in the act of doubting it. There are limits then to my own doubts, for there are some truths that simply remain undoubtable and these truths concern the very rational faculties through which I am able to doubt, think, and reason. For Nagel then Descartes’ *Cogito* ultimately shows that I cannot “doubt reason” and reason’s capacities without employing them in order to doubt them. Reason then, for Nagel, remains the truth that I cannot “get outside of.”

It is interesting to note the radical difference between Heidegger and Nagel in their evaluation of the virtues, or vices, of Descartes’ thinking. For Heidegger, as we have seen, Descartes is the birth of the metaphysics of our age—modern subjective relativism—which inevitably eventuates into its “truth” of Nietzschean will to power in the guise of modern technology. This truth is its full realization, once the cultural death of God occurs. For Nagel, on the other hand, Descartes “holds the line,” so to speak, concerning the indestructibility of rationality, showing that an absolute reduction of reason to physical processes, cultural practices, sociology, biology, etc., results in contradiction and unintelligibility. For Nagel, in order to preserve the possibility of *thought* at all, a limit to a critique of reason must be axiomatically presupposed, for otherwise, one cannot explain how one’s own critique of reason would be possible. Thus, while Heidegger may account ontologically as to how

Descartes' thinking was later subjected to a misinterpretation resulting in Nietzschean subjectivism, such could only be, for Nagel, a *mis*interpretation of the fundamental essence of Cartesianism, namely the absolute irrefutability of rationality. Ironically then, Heidegger and Nagel could not take more opposite views when considering Descartes.

Nevertheless, it, therefore, seems that the resolution to the battle between gods and giants, between metaphysics and anti-metaphysics, between Platonism and Nietzscheanism, rests again upon the axioms of rationality and intelligibility, which are axioms to Cartesianism, as they are to all metaphysics. A full, robust anti-metaphysical position always destroys rationality, and thus the conditions for the possibility of its own critique of rationality, something of which Nietzsche is well aware. Plato, also aware of the consequences of dissolving the Ideas into materiality, knows that such dissolution would result in relativism (Protagoreanism, for Plato), which affirms what it denies, namely the objectivity of truth. Nagel writes that "[t]he familiar point that relativism is self-refuting remains valid in spite of its familiarity: We cannot criticize some of our own claims of reason without employing reason at some other point to formulate and support those criticisms" (LW 15). The evident inconsistency of relativism is perhaps so close that we often fail to notice it; nevertheless it remains, despite this familiarity, a fundamental philosophical insight, one of which Descartes, through his *Cogito*, reminds us, namely that any critique into the limits of reason must be led by reason itself, and thus must continually employ itself to critique itself. Thus, any critique of reason that fully extinguishes reason would immediately extinguish itself as a critique.

The question as to the resolution of the great "battle" hinges upon then this Cartesian insight. Descartes, through his *Cogito*, strangely enough (strangely, since Descartes is so vehemently rejected in the Continental tradition) provides the tools for an easy solution to the battle, a solution that favors the gods; and this is due precisely to the inability of the giants to offer an account of account, a reason for rationality, a *logos* for *logos*. Descartes' *Cogito* reveals that *any* and *every* critique of reason, rationality, and intelligibility eventually runs up against limits, which, if passed, lead to absurdity. Thus, any philosophy, in the end, must come to terms with *how* to account, i.e., *how* to reason, and therefore must choose whether reasoning *is* or *is not*. Reason either remains universal and necessary and thus immaterial and eternal, or contingent and thus materially dependent; however, if reason is contingent and materially

dependent, then it immediately ceases to be reason, for reason and its truths, e.g., logic and mathematics, must hold by necessity and universality. It remains then a choice between the gods or the giants, between Plato or Nietzsche, and between reason or unintelligibility. It is a choice between theism and atheism.

## NOTES

1. Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*. Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992) 203. Further references will be indicated by CUP.
2. Soren Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers, volume 1: A–E* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967) 7.
3. It is worth noting that Kierkegaard, with Heidegger following, is the first to posit that all concepts, including even science, are accompanied by “moods.” These moods do not cause these concepts, nor do the concepts cause the moods, but rather moods accompany or belong to certain concepts. Such a position stands only within an existential, i.e., nonabstract, framework, where inwardness remains the ultimate goal. Kierkegaard writes, “That science, just as much as poetry and art, presupposes a mood in the creation as well as in the observer...[has] been entirely forgotten in our time, when inwardness has been completely forgotten, and also the category of appropriation” Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981) 14.
4. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York, NY: Washington Square Press, 1956) 784.
5. Soren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980) 131.
6. Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 4. Further textual references will be indicated by LW.
7. Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 105. Further textual references will be indicated by MC.
8. Douglas Groothuis offers an excellent summary of why Nagel knows that he must accept theism and yet simply “will not” (something of which Nagel himself admits). Groothuis expands on Nagel’s argument and indicates that Nagel perhaps tacitly consented to “theism” being the “last word.” See Douglas Groothuis, “Thomas Nagel’s ‘Last Word’ on the Metaphysics of Rationality and Morality,” *Philosophia Christi* 1:1 (1999) 115–120.

9. Michael Lynch offers a counter argument to Nagel's *The Last Word* by criticizing Nagel's use of Descartes, particularly Nagel's disagreement with Descartes' theistic voluntarism concerning mathematics and reason. Nagel takes issue with Descartes' notion that God *could have* made the truths of mathematics and reason other than what they are, and thus God *could* deceive us, *in abstracto* at least. Thus Lynch thinks if one were to side wholly with Descartes, then Nagel's argument against perspectivism is not as iron clad as Nagel seems to think. That is, Lynch thinks this leads to the conclusion that it is possible that logical and mathematical truths are merely impossible to doubt *for us*, but not, therefore, necessary in themselves. Lynch thus commits himself, albeit without God, to a form of psychologism, the very kind that Husserl himself critiqued self-referentially. I find Lynch's critique unconvincing given that Nagel carefully and explicitly argues that this matter must concern not merely how humans "conceive" of truth, but truth itself, for if it were possible for the basic rules of logic to not be universal and necessary, then *necessarily* the rules of logic would lose their universality and necessity and therefore become merely contingent; but it is precisely these rules that must remain universal and necessity in order to rule as "rules" themselves. In other words, there is no position from which Lynch can critique Nagel, just as Nagel argues—"They cannot be put into question by an imaginative process that essentially relies on them" (LW 64). See Michael P. Lynch, "Beyond the Walls of Reason," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 49:197 (1999) 529–536.
10. As noted in Chap. 1, David Storey's *Naturalizing Heidegger* argues for a non-reductive naturalism in Heidegger and Nietzsche that would not reduce "being" (here thought as value) to the merely physical. Storey remains partial to Hans Jonas' teleological immanent naturalism, which argues for a kind of teleology that emerges through environmental interaction with nothing more than a "sketch" of the final end or *telos*, rather than a "top-down" teleology that requires a designer (Storey, *Naturalizing Heidegger*, 202). It is difficult for one to imagine such an immanent teleology without a doctrine of eternal essences, which immediately moves to the transcendent, insofar as any *telos*, as the actualization of the possible, requires an essence (as the what it was to be) to guide the actualization toward its end (as in the Aristotelian *entelechy*), otherwise what remains is a random organizational process and not a development toward an end. Thus Jonas' immanent, naturalistic teleology makes little sense to me.
11. Alasdair MacIntyre indeed also frames the contemporary problem of relativism (emotivism) vis-à-vis ethics and morals in a similar manner in terms of "Aristotle or Nietzsche." See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre



- Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007) 109–120. (MacIntyre 2007)
12. Furthermore, even Heidegger's own "deconstruction" of metaphysics, insofar as it seeks ultimately to ground reason, and reason's categories (e.g., cause, substance, etc.) upon the abyss (*Abgrund*) of the imagination and temporality of Dasein, as Heidegger sometimes indicates (e.g., in Heidegger's *Kantbuch*), runs the risk of deconstructing its own deconstruction. That is, Heidegger's own critique of metaphysics and metaphysics' logic may unwillingly and unknowingly be subject to the same criticisms leveled against Nietzsche, i.e., self-referential inconsistency, insofar as Heidegger employs the very same logic in his critique of logic, despite his phenomenological descriptive analysis. Thus any *deconstruction* of rationality would necessarily become a *destruction* of rationality, insofar as even phenomenological description presupposes the rational categories of "cause," "substance," etc., and other conceptual forms of rational predication, the very concepts that would remain dismantled according to Heidegger. In other words, to deconstruct reason, one must employ reason, at least to some extent, and thus any descriptive, phenomenological analysis would be indeed *eo ipso* an interpretive one, which assumes and employs the very categories of rationality one is attempting to dismantle. That is Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, insofar as it is a critique of reasoning itself, might run the risk, at times, of so strongly destabilizing reason that it may inevitably undermine the condition for the possibility of its very ability to deconstruct. See Duane Armitage, "Imagination as Groundless Ground: Reconsidering Heidegger's *Kantbuch*" *Epoche: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 20:2 (2016) 477–496.

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