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FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE
The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols

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FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings

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Introduction

In Turin, on 3 January 1889, Nietzsche suffered an irrevocable mental collapse. By the time of his death, in 1900, he had become wholly physically incapacitated as well.[1] It seems probable that the cause was syphilis. It is apparently common for syphilitics to experience a period of uplift, a remarkable sense of well-being, in the months preceding the final collapse. Certainly this was so in Nietzsche's case. In the year before his breakdown his letters are increasingly touched with euphoria. His health, extremely poor for well over a decade, seems to him to be on the mend: 'I have just looked at myself in a mirror – I have never before appeared as I do now: in exemplary good spirits, well-nourished, and looking ten years younger than I ought to';[2] 'my health, like the weather, appears every day with irrepressible brightness and gaiety'.[3] He feels more equal than he has ever felt to the most demanding of intellectual tasks: 'it is my great *harvest-time*. Everything comes easily to me, everything I try succeeds, notwithstanding that no one has yet had such great matters in hand as I have';[4] 'the heaviest tasks, for which no man has yet been sufficiently strong, come easily'.[5] His estimate of himself and of his abilities acquires a megalomanic tinge: 'in two months I shall be the first name on earth'; 'What is remarkable here in Turin is the fascination I exercise on people . . . every face changes; women gaze after me in the street';[6]

[1] For a sensitive account of Nietzsche's decline, see R. J. Hollingdale, *Nietzsche: The Man and his Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). The letters cited in nn. 2–7 are taken from Hollingdale. See also Lesley Chamberlain, *Nietzsche in Turin* (London: Quartet, 1996).
[2] To Peter Gast, 30 October 1888. [3] To Carl Fuchs, 18 December 1888.
[4] To Franz Overbeck, 18 October 1888. [5] To his mother, 21 December 1888.
[6] To Franz Overbeck, 25 December 1888.

'there are no longer any accidents in my life'.[7] And these remarks – and there are many like them – inevitably raise a preliminary question. Are the philosophical works that Nietzsche produced in this final year, the works collected here in this volume, the products of an already-deranged mind?

Nietzsche's sanity

The 1888 texts are certainly very diverse. One – *Twilight of the Idols* – proceeds in a distilled version of Nietzsche's established aphoristic manner. Two – *The Anti-Christ* and *The Case of Wagner* – are sustained polemics, directed, respectively, against institutionalized Christianity and Richard Wagner's music dramas. One – *Ecce Homo* – is a strange sort of autobiography. And the remaining work – *Nietzsche contra Wagner* – is an anthology of aphorisms culled, sometimes with minor alterations, from Nietzsche's other books.[8] But variety is hardly a sign of madness.

It used to be common to say that 1888 marked a falling-off of Nietzsche's creativity as a thinker, and to link this to a decline in his mental capacities. So, for example, *Twilight of the Idols* was often said to be little more than a noisy résumé of some of his more strongly held opinions. And there is a measure of truth in this. It is true that comparatively few of the ideas that Nietzsche committed to paper in that book had not been expressed by him before. But this is entirely to overlook the kind of expression that they receive there. *Twilight* represents a pinnacle of aphoristic economy and wit, an example of Nietzsche's mature style at its very best. And this is hard to square with the suspicion of mental decline.

I think that this conclusion is now generally accepted, certainly as far as *Twilight* is concerned. Elsewhere matters may be less clear-cut. *The Case of Wagner*, for instance, has been very widely ignored, presumably for two main reasons. First, not many Nietzsche scholars regard Nietzsche's attitude towards Wagner as the most interesting thing about him; and second, he'd been going on about Wagner in broadly similar terms for years, as the passages assembled in *Nietzsche contra Wagner* attest.[9]

[7] To August Strindberg, 7 December 1888.

[8] There is in fact a sixth work from 1888, *Dionysian Dithyrambs*, not included here. This is a collection of poems whose absence is not to be regretted.

[9] Indeed, this was probably the point of *Nietzsche contra Wagner. The Case of Wagner*, when it was published, went down badly. Wagner had died in 1883, and the book was taken as a rather graceless posthumous attack on him by an erstwhile devotee. *Nietzsche contra Wagner* demonstrated that Nietzsche had been being nasty about Wagner since at least 1878.

But – again – this latter fact is no mark of mental decline. *The Case of Wagner* is an exhilarating read, fully the equal of *Twilight* in the pithiness of its delivery, and if anything even funnier. And although it is true that much of what he says there he had said before, it would be a mistake to imagine that he says nothing new. *The Case of Wagner* would repay more attention than it has received.

The question mark looms largest over the remaining two works, *The Anti-Christ* and *Ecce Homo*. *The Anti-Christ* is Nietzsche's longest sustained discussion of a single topic since the mid 1870s, when he wrote the four *Untimely Meditations*. In tone it is quite unlike *Twilight* (with which it is often compared). Where *Twilight* is graceful, light, and even effervescent in its intensity, *The Anti-Christ* strikes one as over-emphatic and rather tiring. Nietzsche really *hates* Christianity, and he makes the reader feel it. He hectors; he insists. But it is surely the degree of his antipathy that has got the better of him here, rather than any diminution of his powers. He is sharp and incisive throughout; and much of his material – which is like a concrete, historically more rooted version of themes treated in *On the Genealogy of Morality* – is distinctive and new. *The Anti-Christ* should be read, I think, as the work of someone who finds Christianity genuinely maddening, not as the work of someone who is already mad.

Ecce Homo, Nietzsche's autobiography, is the hardest case of all. Even R. J. Hollingdale, Nietzsche's excellent and sympathetic biographer, has problems with this book. While he praises it as 'undoubtedly one of the most beautiful in German', and remarks that many 'passages are a *non plus ultra* of richness combined with economy',[10] he also picks out a current in the book that strikes him as insane. 'Where Nietzsche leaves philosophy and writes about himself', says Hollingdale, 'his sense of his own quality passes the bounds of reasonableness and lands in absurdity . . . Nietzsche quietly attributes to himself impossible abilities.'[11] What Hollingdale hears in the passages that bother him he takes to be symptomatic of Nietzsche's impending mental collapse: euphoria, megalomania.

He may be right about this: I don't know. Nor does it seem tremendously important to know. Incipient insanity may take the form of hyperbole, and what is exaggerated may be true, or interesting, even when pitched at a level that can seem deranged. And I think that there are good reasons to conclude that this is so with *Ecce Homo*. Precisely the kinds of passage

[10] Hollingdale, *Nietzsche*, p. 216. [11] *Ibid*., pp. 199–200.

that Hollingdale singles out as early signs of madness strike me as helpful dramatizations of a distinctive strand in Nietzsche's later philosophy, a strand having to do with freedom and self-realization – with what, in the subtitle to *Ecce Homo*, he calls becoming 'what you are'. Indeed, I propose to build the bulk of this introduction around just this aspect of Nietzsche's thought.

Overall, then, there would seem to be little reason to worry about the sanity of these final writings. It is true that Nietzsche's letters at this period reveal a state of mind that is almost certainly to be explained by the progress of his illness. But it appears that in his work he retained a focus and a kind of mastery over his material that insulated it from the effects of his condition. As Hollingdale puts it, 'The philosopher has not lost his grip on his material, he has tightened it . . . There is no intellectual degeneration: the mind is as sharp as ever.'[12] And, unlike Hollingdale, I am inclined to think that this verdict is as good as safe for the last works in their entirety – not just for those parts of them that Hollingdale identifies as 'philosophy'.

Becoming who you are

Nietzsche had first begun to take the idea of becoming 'who you are' seriously some years earlier. An aphorism in the 1882 edition of *The Gay Science* reads: '*What does your conscience say?* – "You shall become who you are"' (*GS* 270); and Nietzsche expands on the thought in a later section called '*Long live physics!*' It is important, he says, not to take the deliverances of conscience at face value, as if their source somehow guaranteed their truth: 'Your judgement "this is right" has a pre-history in your instincts, likes, dislikes, experiences and lack of experiences'; indeed, 'that you take this or that judgement for the voice of conscience . . . may be due to the fact that you have never thought much about yourself and have simply accepted blindly that what you had been *told* ever since your childhood was right' (*GS* 335).

What is needed to rectify this '*faith*', he claims, is 'an intellectual conscience', a 'conscience behind your "conscience"'(*GS* 335) – a determination, precisely, to think about yourself, 'to scrutinize [your]

[12] *Ibid*., pp. 199, 216.

experiences as severely as a scientific experiment – hour after hour, day after day' (*GS* 319). By these means we can

> *become who we are* – human beings who are new, unique . . . who give themselves laws, who create themselves! To that end we must become the best students and discoverers of everything lawful and necessary in the world: we must become *physicists* in order become creators in this sense . . . So, long live physics! And even more so that which *compels* us to turn to physics – our honesty! (*GS* 335)

Thus, it is our 'intellectual conscience', our 'honesty', that both says 'You shall become who you are' and also makes becoming who you are possible.

At one level, Nietzsche's thought here is straightforward. One becomes who one is by getting to know oneself, and by getting to know the conditions under which one operates ('everything lawful and necessary in the world'). One ceases, on the one hand, idly to accept falsehoods about oneself – for instance, that one has an infallible organ of judgment, one's 'conscience', whose deliverances are somehow independent of one's 'instincts, likes, dislikes, experiences' etc. – and one ceases, on the other hand, to accept falsehoods about the world – for instance, that it is governed by 'providential reason and goodness' (*GS* 277), or that it is somehow organized with human purposes in mind, or indeed with any purpose at all.[13] At this level, then, one becomes who one is by honestly acknowledging, first, that one is essentially just an animal, rather than a creature with supernatural capacities, and second, that the world in which one has one's being, in which one must act and try to make sense of oneself, is a world without God. We necessarily misunderstand ourselves, Nietzsche holds, if we fail to acknowledge either kind of truth.

But we are more than *merely* animals. Unlike the other animals, we also have a 'second nature',[14] a nature produced by culture. And it is this that is expressed through our practices, including those practices in which various misunderstandings of ourselves are encoded. An animal without a 'second nature' could no more mistake itself for a transmitter of the 'voice of conscience', or for an inhabitant of a divinely ordered world, than it could enter into a contract, form a friendship, or go to war. Our 'second nature' is what makes us 'interesting', as Nietzsche later has it,[15] and the 'experiences' that are rooted there are pre-eminently among those to be

[13] See, e.g., *GS* 109. [14] See, e.g., *Daybreak* (*D*) 38.
[15] See, e.g., *On the Genealogy of Morality* (*GM*) 1.6.

subjected to the 'intellectual conscience'. In order to 'become who we are', then, we must be honest with ourselves not merely as pieces of nature, as animals in an undesigned world, but as pieces of 'second nature', as animals whose character and circumstances are significantly constituted by culture.

There are many ways in which we can misunderstand ourselves. We can, as it were, be factually wrong about some matter concerning nature or second nature. Or we can adopt, perhaps unconsciously, a perspective on such matters that systematically occludes or distorts them. Nietzsche is particularly interested in misunderstandings of this latter kind – in habits of thought that have the effect of making whole dimensions of ourselves and of our worldly circumstances obscure to us. The most famous example, of course, is the perspective that Nietzsche diagnoses under the label 'morality'. But that is a diagnosis that advances along several fronts: here, I will focus on just one of these, and attempt to indicate how Nietzsche understands the relation – obscured, he holds, by 'morality' – between our becoming our own 'creators' and our being the 'discoverers of everything lawful and necessary in the world'.

Two well-known passages from *The Gay Science* are helpful here. In one, Nietzsche speaks of the 'great and rare art' of giving '"style" to one's character':

> It is practised by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan . . . Here a large mass of second nature has been added; there a piece of original nature has been removed – both times through long practice and daily work at it. Here the ugly that could not be removed is concealed; there it has been reinterpreted and made sublime. (*GS* 290)

Four points are worth making about this passage. First, what Nietzsche is here describing is a form of self-creation, that is, a version of becoming who you are; second, this form of self-creation depends upon self-understanding, upon surveying one's nature and identifying the strengths and weaknesses in it; third, weaknesses or uglinesses are sometimes removable; and fourth, irremovable uglinesses are to be concealed if they cannot be 'reinterpreted' and transformed. The first two points connect this passage directly to our discussion so far: becoming who you are depends

upon the exercise of the intellectual conscience. And the remaining two points provide the connection to the second passage:

> I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love henceforth! (*GS* 276)

The connection comes to this: becoming who you are requires that you distinguish between what is and what is not necessary in things, including yourself (a job for the intellectual conscience). What is not necessary, and is weak or ugly, should be removed. What *is* necessary should, if weak or ugly, either be concealed ('*Looking away* shall be my only negation' (*GS* 276)) or else 'reinterpreted', so that one learns to see it as beautiful, as a strength.

A distinctive conception of the relation between self-creation and necessity – whether in nature, second nature, or circumstance – is implicit in these passages, and it is this that Nietzsche regards as obscured by the perspective of 'morality'. He develops the point explicitly in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886). 'Morality', he claims, trades on an impossible notion of freedom. It encourages 'the desire to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for one's actions oneself, and to absolve God, the world, ancestors, chance and society'. It encourages, that is, a quite peculiar conception of autonomy, according to which we are properly self-governing and properly responsible for our actions only to the extent that what we do is the product of '"freedom of the will" in the superlative metaphysical sense', a freedom that is supposedly operative independently of our nature, our second nature, or our circumstances. But this, observes Nietzsche, 'is the best self-contradiction that has been conceived so far'; it involves the desire 'to pull oneself up into existence by the hair, out of the swamps of nothingness'. And – crucially – it encourages us to perceive in every necessity 'something of constraint, need, compulsion to obey, pressure and unfreedom' (*BGE* 21).

The truth, Nietzsche holds, is quite otherwise. As the self-stylization and the *amor fati* passages make clear, he treats necessities of various kinds as material to be exploited and, where possible, affirmed. Indeed, he treats them as *conditions* of effective action, rather than as impediments to it, and hence as integral to the possibility of freedom, rather than as limits upon it:

> one should recall the compulsion under which every language so far has achieved strength and freedom – the metrical compulsion of rhyme and rhythm. How much trouble the poets and orators . . . have taken . . . 'submitting abjectly to capricious laws', as anarchists say, feeling 'free' . . . But the curious fact is that all there is or has been on earth of freedom, subtlety . . . and masterly sureness . . . in thought itself . . . in the arts just as in ethics, has developed only owing to the 'tyranny of such capricious laws'; and in all seriousness, the probability is . . . that this is 'nature' and 'natural' – and *not* that *laisser aller*. (*BGE* 188)

So Nietzsche offers a picture of freedom that roots it explicitly in the 'tyranny' of 'capricious laws', which is to say, in the necessities that constitute our second nature.

Only someone who acknowledges the rules of language has the capacity – the freedom – to communicate in it. Only someone who acknowledges the laws of chess has the freedom to castle his king, say. Only someone who acknowledges the norms and courtesies of conversation has the freedom to engage in one. And so on, for any human practice at all. To resent such 'necessities' as a threat to one's '"responsibility"', to one's 'belief in' *oneself*, to one's 'personal right to [one's *own*] merits at any price' would be, quite simply, to render oneself impotent (*BGE* 21). Yet it is precisely such a resentment that 'morality', with its fantasy of freedom in the 'superlative metaphysical sense', expresses. Nietzsche's point, then, is that if we are to understand ourselves as actors in the world as it is, we have to acknowledge that certain necessities are integral to our agency, to our 'freedom' and 'responsibility'.[16] And this is a form of self-understanding – a finding of the intellectual conscience – that the peculiar perspective of 'morality' necessarily occludes; which is one of the reasons why it stands in the way of our becoming who we are.

When Nietzsche says, therefore, that we must become 'discoverers of everything lawful and necessary in the world' if we are to become 'creators' of ourselves, part of what he means is that we must determine *which* of the circumstances of our existence really are necessities. Some of these circumstances, for instance, 'morality', may appear to be or may present themselves as being necessities,[17] when in fact they are only contingent

[16] Cf. *TI*, 'Skirmishes', 38.
[17] Morality 'says stubbornly and inexorably: "I am morality itself, and nothing besides is morality"' (*BGE* 202).

sources of self-misunderstanding: such circumstances are uglinesses or weaknesses, and they should be removed. Other of our circumstances really are necessities. And, of these, some will be ineluctably ugly, and will have to be concealed or looked away from.[18] The remainder, however, are to be understood – perhaps *via* 'reinterpretation' – as conditions of the possibility of agency, of freedom. And it is through the acknowledgement and affirmation of these that the discovery, development, and – perhaps – the perfection of one's capacities is to be realized. To the extent that those capacities *are* realized, one has succeeded in becoming who one is.

It is not surprising that Nietzsche should link this process to art and creativity. Artistry is law-like, in the sense that it is possible to go wrong, to make mistakes. Yet the laws against which these mistakes offend often declare themselves only in the moment at which they are breached, indeed *in* the breaching of them. And this is why getting something *right* feels like – is – getting what one was after all along, even when one could not have said in advance precisely what that was. In this way, successful artistry is also a form of self-discovery – it is the discovery, in the lawfulness of one's actions, of the innermost character of one's intentions:

> Every artist knows how far from any feeling of letting himself go his most 'natural' state is – the free ordering, placing . . . giving form in the moment of 'inspiration' – and how strictly and subtly he obeys thousandfold laws precisely then, laws that precisely on account of their hardness and determination defy all formulation through concepts (*BGE* 188)

– and this, in turn, is a large part of the reason why Nietzsche so consistently connects self-creation to having one's *own* laws. In becoming who we are, he says, we become 'human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves!' (*GS* 335); self-stylists 'enjoy their finest gaiety . . . in being bound by but also perfected under a law of their own' (*GS* 290); 'the "individual" appears, obliged to give himself laws and to develop his own arts and wiles for self-preservation, self-enhancement, self-redemption' (*BGE* 262).

So artistry represents a limit case of Nietzsche's understanding of agency. Like every kind of agency, artistry is possible only for those who acknowledge necessity as a condition of, rather than as a limit upon, their

[18] Cf. *BGE* 39.

freedom to act. We misunderstand ourselves if we misunderstand this. But in artistry we also perpetually discover ourselves, as our actions express those 'thousandfold' unformulable laws which are, Nietzsche suggests, most truly our own. We become most fully who we are, as he puts it at one point, when we become the 'poets of our lives' (*GS* 299).

Nietzsche on Nietzsche

This gives some of the background required to understand *Ecce Homo*, much of which is devoted to explaining – or perhaps to dramatizing – how Nietzsche has become who he is. But Nietzsche does not merely present his life as a work of art; he presents it as a fully achieved work of art, one that exhibits 'masterly sureness' throughout – that shows at every point his '*sureness of instinct* in practice' (*EH*, 'Wise', 6).

It is important to bear this latter point in mind, if the text is to stay in its proper focus. It can appear, for instance, that Nietzsche's conception of *amor fati* must have changed since 1882. In *The Gay Science*, as we have seen, *amor fati* involves learning 'to see as beautiful what is necessary in things' (*GS* 276), which leaves it open just how much *is* necessary in things (an indeterminacy that is vital if self-stylization, for instance, is to remain intelligible). In *Ecce Homo*, by apparent contrast, we read this: 'My formula for human greatness is *amor fati*: that you do not want anything to be different, not forwards, not backwards, not for all eternity. Not just to tolerate necessity . . . but to *love* it' (*EH*, 'Clever', 10), which may suggest that Nietzsche now regards *everything* as necessary.

But this is misleading. His claim, rather, is that a great human being is one who has learned to see as beautiful every circumstance of his life, has learned to treat every fact about himself and his world as necessary conditions of his freedom to act and to create himself under laws of his own. And *this* achievement may well require that quite a lot that is true of him now has only become true of him because of (unnecessary) things in his life that he has changed – for instance, that he has cast off certain weaknesses or uglinesses that masqueraded as necessities: examples that Nietzsche gives in his own case include ridding himself of the conviction that he is just 'like everyone else', of 'a forgetting of distance' between himself and others, an '"idealism"' (*EH*, 'Clever', 2). Or perhaps the great human being has altered one set of circumstances in his life so as to accommodate another, as Nietzsche reports himself as having altered

his diet and his environs in order to accommodate his physiology (*EH*, 'Clever', 1, 2). Nor does this mean that he must necessarily have cause to regret the *status quo ante*, to want things 'to be different . . . backwards'. For he may well understand it as a condition of his having arrived where he is now that he had to overcome things as they were before: 'he uses mishaps to his advantage', Nietzsche says; 'what does not kill him makes him stronger' (*EH*, 'Wise', 2).

The best way to construe *amor fati* throughout Nietzsche's work, then, is as an ethical injunction concerning one's attitude towards the world, rather than as a (disguised) metaphysical thesis about how much of the world is necessary. Indeed, the only difference between 1882 and 1888 is that whereas in *The Gay Science* the presentation had been aspirational ('I want to learn more and more . . .'), in *Ecce Homo* the learning-process is presented as complete. He now (he claims) affirms *all* of his worldly circumstances: '*How could I not be grateful to my whole life?*' (*EH*, 'On this perfect day'[19]); and, in this limiting case, he achieves 'masterly sureness' in every aspect of his existence – he has '*learned*', as Nietzsche elsewhere puts it, '*to love*' himself (*GS* 334).[20]

These points bring out another strong continuity between the work of the earlier and the later 1880s, a kind of naturalized theodicy that Nietzsche first airs in the section of *The Gay Science* that immediately follows the *amor fati* passage:

> *Personal providence* – There is a certain high point in life: once we have reached that, we are, for all our freedom, once more in the greatest danger of spiritual unfreedom . . . For it is only now that the idea of a personal providence confronts us . . . now that we can see how palpably always everything that happens to us turns out for the best . . . Whatever it is, bad weather or good, the loss of a friend, sickness . . . it proves to be something that 'must not be missing'; it has a profound significance and use precisely for *us*. (*GS* 277)

The 'high point', clearly enough, is attained when one has learned to affirm all of one's worldly circumstances, when one's *amor fati* is complete; and the 'danger of spiritual unfreedom' is posed by the temptation to believe that there must, as an explanation for this, be 'some petty deity who is full of care and personally knows every little hair on our head', a supernatural

[19] Inscription placed between the Preface and the first chapter.
[20] *GS* 334 provides an essential hinge between the notions of *amor fati* and of becoming who one is.

source of 'providential reason and goodness' in our lives (*GS* 277). The danger, in other words, is that one will start to misunderstand oneself (to become who one isn't) by believing that it is a condition of one's freedom that there be a God who ensures that all is for the best in this, the best of all possible worlds.

The truth, of course, in Nietzsche's view, is that the condition of our freedom is not a benevolent God, but nature, second nature, and our attitude to these. If we are 'strong enough', he says, then 'everything *has to* turn out best' for us (*EH*, 'Wise', 2), for which the credit should be given, not to anything supernatural, but to 'our own practical and theoretical skill in interpreting and arranging events' (*GS* 277). As an example, Nietzsche describes how his illness has had 'a profound significance and use precisely for' *him*: sickness can

> be an energetic *stimulus* to life . . . This is, in fact, how that long period of illness looks to me *now*: I discovered life anew . . . myself included, I tasted all good and even small things in ways that other people cannot easily do . . . [Indeed,] the years of my lowest vitality were the ones when I *stopped* being a pessimist. (*EH*, 'Wise', 2)

Nietzsche's illness has turned out to be for the best, to be one of those things that '"must not be missing"'.

So if a traditional, more or less Leibnizian, theodicy seeks to show that every apparent evil is a necessary part of God's benevolent grand plan, Nietzsche's naturalized version of it urges us to find a perspective on our circumstances from which even the most grim-seeming of them can be regarded as indispensable *to us*. In place of Leibniz's ambition to redeem the whole world from a God's-eye point of view, that is, Nietzsche's hope is that individual lives might be redeemed from the point of view of those who live them, from a first-person perspective.[21]

This dimension of Nietzsche's thought is largely backward-looking. One is to look back and interpret one's past as having been for the best; but one is to do so from a present whose character – whose rightness – is partly to be constituted by one's success in this very enterprise. Of course, one's past might need a good deal of interpretation in order to bring this

[21] Nietzsche does occasionally seem tempted by supra-mundane world-redemption, especially when he starts talking about 'eternal recurrence'. But eternal recurrence is different from *amor fati*, and it is the strand of his thought that stems from the latter that concerns us here.

off. It is not as if one had been all along the deliberate architect of one's life – indeed, one must *not* be such an architect:

> you [must] not have the slightest idea *what* you are. If you look at it this way, even life's *mistakes* have their own meaning and value . . . [Here, *know thyself*] is the recipe for decline . . . *misunderstanding* yourself, belittling, narrowing yourself, making yourself mediocre . . . the threat that instinct will 'understand itself' too early. – In the mean time, the organizing, governing 'idea' keeps growing deep inside . . . it slowly leads *back* from out of the side roads and wrong turns, it gets the *individual* qualities and virtues ready [which] will prove indispensable as means to the whole . . . Viewed in this light, my life is just fantastic [– the product of] the lengthy, secret work and artistry of my instinct. (*EH*, 'Clever', 9)

To have turned out well, from this point of view, is to be able to interpret one's development as the unconscious unfolding of one's latent potential, as the gradual, invisible piecing-together of a coherent self. And the 'happiness' of such a development lies, as Nietzsche puts it, 'in its fatefulness' (*EH*, 'Wise', 1).

In *Ecce Homo*, then, Nietzsche presents his life as a species of artistry, in several senses. First, his life as it is now is one that he can affirm in all of its circumstances; he has learned to treat everything about himself and his world as necessary to his freedom to act and to create himself under his own laws. Second, he has interpreted his history in such a way that everything in it is 'for the best', so that his past unfolds like a work of art. And third, he attributes that unfolding to the 'artistry' of his 'instinct', since much that contributed to its course was not (and perhaps could not have been) consciously chosen. In each of these senses, Nietzsche portrays himself as the poet of his life, and hence as one who has become who he is.

Nietzsche's integrity

In the final sections of this introduction I turn to two of the circumstances of Nietzsche's life that make it most distinctively *his* – namely Christianity and Wagner. But before that, it might be worth asking what – in the light of the foregoing – we should make of *Ecce Homo*. I suggested at the outset that the book is not in any interesting or important way the product of insanity. But it may now seem as if the truth is if anything worse than

that – that *Ecce Homo* is actually no more than a self-help manual, of a sort that endorses a peculiarly self-serving variety of positive thinking. It may seem, too, as if the demands of the 'intellectual conscience', upon which I have laid a good deal of weight, have disappeared without trace. One is, it appears, opportunistically to reinterpret one's past in a way that makes it seem providential. And one is to take seriously the thought – the fantasy, surely – that one might regard one's life as a work of art, and oneself as its moment-by-moment creator.

The first thing to say is that Nietzsche remains fully committed at this period to the value of honesty and the intellectual conscience. Sections 50–6 of *The Anti-Christ* contain one of the longest discussions of 'the service of truth' (*AC* 50) in any of Nietzsche's works, and he summarizes that discussion in *Ecce Homo*: 'How much truth can a spirit *tolerate*, how much truth is it willing to *risk*? This increasingly became the real measure of value for me . . . [E]very step forward in knowledge comes from *courage*, from harshness towards yourself' (*EH*, Preface, 3). These are not the words of a witting fantasist, or of one bent on falsifying his past. Moreover, the positions – such as 'morality' – against which Nietzsche most consistently ranges himself in *Ecce Homo*, and which he labels 'idealism', he regards as 'errors' and as the products of 'cowardice' (*EH*, Preface, 3).

But Nietzsche's objection to 'idealism' is not merely that it falsifies the world – by pretending that there is a God, for example, or by pretending that freedom in 'the superlative metaphysical sense' is possible. It is also that 'idealism' devalues the world, by according the highest value to its own inventions, at the world's expense and out of resentment against it – out of a 'deadly hostility to life' (*EH*, 'Destiny', 8). And this means that Nietzsche's own project also has two dimensions. One is to diagnose the errors of 'idealism'; the other is to suggest how life and the world might still have value for us once we have refused to resort to supernatural or metaphysical remedies. The thoughts canvassed in the previous section are an important part of Nietzsche's attempt to engage with the second of these issues. They are, in effect, an exploration of the intuition, first expressed in 1882, that 'As an aesthetic phenomenon existence is still *bearable* for us' (*GS* 107).

It is true that nothing could correspond to living one's life, from moment to moment, as if it were a work of art. So in this sense, Nietzsche's

self-presentation does have an air of fantasy about it. But two points are worth making. The first is that, as I have argued, Nietzsche understands artistry as a limit case of agency in general, a limit at which one is, as it were, perfectly intelligible to oneself. And while it is surely true that that limit is not occupiable indefinitely, it is at least visitable from time to time; and it seems plausible to say that one is better off, by and large, for being closer to it than otherwise. And if this is right, it is hard to see why one might not try to imagine, as Nietzsche does, what it would be like if, *per impossible*, one could occupy that limit for the whole of the time – if only as a way of dramatizing a regulative ideal. The other point is that the expression of *Ecce Homo* is, as I said earlier, often hyperbolic. In part, of course, this is just to say that it is exaggerated, and to that extent the present point is the same as the first. But hyperbole is also a means of self-deflation, a form of deliberate over-statement that is meant to be seen through, if not at once, then at least pretty quickly. And from this point of view, it is not implausible to read Nietzsche as debunking his aesthetic ideal, as admitting that it is not fully realizable, at the same time as he dramatizes its realization.

So one shouldn't worry about the essential honesty of *Ecce Homo*, I think. Nor is it very troubling to think that it might be taken as a self-help manual, as a promoter of positive thinking. Positive thinking is surely better than the reverse; and, if Nietzsche is right that supernatural or metaphysical remedies are hard to do without, it seems entirely reasonable to suppose that, in their absence, some self-help might be needed. Nor, finally, do the charges of self-servingness and opportunism seem well directed. Nietzsche is explicitly out to serve the self; he says so repeatedly. And we can pointfully be charged with opportunism only when there are alternatives available to us. Confronted with some grim fact about our past, we can of course try to forget it; indeed, Nietzsche speaks warmly and often about the value of forgetting.[22] But if that is not possible, it is scarcely opportunistic to try to see it instead as something that '"must not be missing"', that has 'a profound significance and use precisely for *us*'. To refuse to recuperate what we can out of life is to turn our backs on it. And that, according to Nietzsche, is exactly what 'idealists' do.

[22] See, e.g., *EH*, 'Wise', 2.

Nietzsche on Christianity

Nietzsche does tell at least one clear lie in *Ecce Homo*, and it is this: 'I only attack things where there is no question of personal differences, where there has not been a history of bad experiences . . . I have the right to wage war on Christianity because I have never been put out or harmed by it' (*EH*, 'Wise', 7). Most of Nietzsche's readers will find this assertion hard to square with the temperature of his rhetoric whenever Christianity is in his sights; and readers of the *Genealogy*, in particular, will find the following claim equally unbelievable: '"God", "immortality of the soul", "redemption", "beyond", are simply ideas that I have not paid any attention to or devoted any time to' (*EH*, 'Clever', 1).

The truth is that Nietzsche's relation to Christianity and to Christian concepts is both personal and intense. On the one hand, he regards Christianity as a calamity, as the worst sort of life-slandering 'idealism', existing only 'to *devalue* nature' (*AC* 38). On the other hand, faith in God had given life meaning, and once 'God is dead' (*GS* 125) we are cast adrift in a world whose emptiness Nietzsche feels acutely. So if Nietzsche attacks Christianity, frequently and vehemently, he is also keenly aware that victory must come at a price: the 'uncovering' of Christianity, he says, is 'an event without equal, a real catastrophe. Anyone who knows about this . . . splits the history of humanity into two parts. Some live *before* him, some live *after* him' (*EH*, 'Destiny', 8).

If *Ecce Homo* is, at least in part, an effort to see how one might live 'after him', *The Anti-Christ* is Nietzsche's most sustained attempt to ensure that the history of mankind is, indeed, split in two. At the heart of the book lies a contrast between the figure of Christ and institutionalized Christianity, a contrast that Nietzsche pursues energetically, and across several different dimensions, but always to the detriment of Christianity. His crispest *précis* of the contrast is this: 'A new way of life, *not* a new faith' (*AC* 33). And his claim, in a nutshell, is that the church (pre-eminently St Paul) has systematically perverted and distorted Christ's real significance – which lay in *how* he lived his life – by turning his example into the set of beliefs, doctrines, and dogmas that we know as 'Christianity'.

It is worth distinguishing between two aspects of Nietzsche's critique. One is concerned with the form of Christianity (i.e. with the fact that it consists of doctrines and dogmas), and the other is concerned with its content (i.e. with what those doctrines and dogmas actually are). I will

treat these aspects in turn, and try to indicate how each connects to issues touched on earlier.

Nietzsche's objection under the first head is essentially Aristotelian. We might hope to do what an exemplary figure does by learning some rules, by acquiring a set of beliefs about what is required and what is prohibited. But no such rules or beliefs can, by themselves, enable us to do what the exemplary figure does *as* he does it.[23] We cannot move, that is, from a 'way of life' to a set of requirements or prohibitions that is equivalent to it: something goes missing. And what goes missing, in effect, is the relation between who we are and what we do.[24] Christianity, as Nietzsche construes it, takes that relation to be externally mediated – by a learnable rule or prescription that is specifiable independently of the relevant 'way of life'. In the exemplary figure, by contrast, that relation is altogether internal: he does as he does because it is his nature to do so (whether that nature be original or second). The exemplar expresses and discloses himself in his actions. He is, in short, one of those whose 'most "natural" state' is to obey a 'thousandfold laws . . . that precisely on account of their hardness and determination defy all formulation through concepts' (*BGE* 188).

In seeking to extract a set of beliefs or rules from the life of Christ, then, Christianity has failed to treat Christ as an exemplar, and so has falsified the significance that his 'way of life' has. As Nietzsche puts it, Christ's faith 'does not prove itself with miracles, rewards, or promises . . . at every moment it is its own miracle, its own reward, its own proof . . . This faith does not formulate itself either – it *lives*, it resists formulas' (*AC* 32); indeed, it

> projects itself into a new *practice*, the genuinely evangelical practice. Christians are not characterized by their 'faith': Christians . . . are characterized by a *different* way of acting . . . The life of the redeemer was nothing other than *this* practice, – even his death was nothing else . . . He no longer needed formulas . . . or even prayer. He . . . knew how the *practice* of life is the only thing that can make you feel 'divine', 'blessed' . . . 'Atonement' and 'praying for forgiveness' are *not* the way to God: *only the evangelical practice* leads to God, in fact it *is* 'God'. (*AC* 33)

[23] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II, chapter 4.
[24] Nietzsche had long been interested in the ethical role of exemplars, as the third of the *Untimely Meditations*, 'Schopenhauer as Educator' (1874), attests.

'The "kingdom of God" is not', therefore, 'something that you wait for; it does not have a yesterday or a day after tomorrow . . . it is an experience of the heart; it is everywhere and it is nowhere' (*AC* 34). And it is this that is shown in the life of Christ.

Yet it is also this, precisely this, that goes missing when Christianity, as Nietzsche construes it, translates Christ's practice into a set of 'formulas'. Indeed, 'the history of Christianity . . . is the story of [a] progressively cruder misunderstanding', as a new way of life is obscured more and more by 'doctrines and rites' (*AC* 37). And the effect of this is that Christ's '*glad tidings*', that 'any distance between God and man', is 'abolished' (*AC* 33), is turned upside down. In place of a practice, which '*is* God', the church erects 'formulas' which mediate between man and God, and so hold them apart. '[Y]ou will not find a greater example of *world-historical irony*' than 'that humanity knelt down before the opposite of the origin, the meaning . . . of the evangel, the fact that in the concept of "church", humanity canonized the very thing the "bearer of glad tidings" felt to be *beneath* him, *behind* him' (*AC* 36).

For present purposes it doesn't greatly matter whether Nietzsche is right about Christ or the church. What matters is the point about the *form* of Christianity (or at any rate of Nietzsche's version of it), the fact that it replaces practices with 'formulas'. For this, in Nietzsche's view, is to promote a distorted picture of a person's relation to his own actions. It is to privilege those cases in which one puts a statable policy into effect over those in which one's policy is disclosed in getting one's actions right. It is to privilege conformity *in abstracto* over self-discovery *in concreto*. And that is why Nietzsche claims that 'for two thousand years' Christianity has been 'just a psychological self-misunderstanding' (*AC* 39); and why he claims elsewhere that to root one's entire ethics in impersonal, codified prescriptions is 'not yet [to have] taken five steps toward self-knowledge' (*GS* 335). His point, in other words, is that the form of Christianity impedes the kind of understanding of oneself that is integral to 'becoming who one is' – indeed, that it renders the very possibility of doing that invisible.

The second aspect of Nietzsche's critique concerns the content of Christianity, what its 'formulas' actually are. These are derived, obviously enough, from Christ's 'way of life'; and this way of life Nietzsche regards as 'necessary' (*AC* 39) for the 'psychological type of the redeemer' (*AC* 29).

This type has two defining traits, of which the second is essentially an elaboration of the first:

> *The instinct of hatred for reality*: the consequence of an extreme over-sensitivity and capacity for suffering that does not want to be 'touched' at all because it feels every contact too acutely.
>
> *The instinctive exclusion of all aversion, all hostility* . . . the consequence of an extreme over-sensitivity and capacity for suffering that perceives every reluctance . . . as . . . an unbearable *pain* . . . and only experiences bliss . . . when it stops resisting everyone and anything, including evil, – love as the only, the *final* possibility for life. (*AC* 30)

And so in Christ's life, according to Nietzsche, these traits are exemplified: 'The polar opposite of struggle . . . has become instinct here . . . blessedness in peace . . . in an *inability* to be an enemy.' His nature is expressed 'as a flight into the "unimaginable", into the "inconceivable" . . . as a being-at-home in a world that has broken off contact with every type of reality, a world that has become completely "internal", a "true" world, an "eternal" world . . . "The kingdom of God is *in each of you*"' (*AC* 29).

The practice of Christ's life is entirely proper to him. He becomes who he is through his way of life, freely creating himself under a law of his own.[25] But such a life is not for everyone. And when Christianity lays hold of it, with its determination to '*vulgarize*' it into a set of formulas (*AC* 37), the result is calamitous.

> From now on, a number of different things started seeping into the type of the redeemer: the doctrines of judgment and return . . . the doctrine of the *resurrection*; and at this point the whole idea of 'blessedness', the solitary reality of the evangel, vanishes with a wave of the hand – and all for the sake of a state *after* death! . . . And in one fell swoop, the evangel becomes the most contemptible of all unfulfillable promises, the *outrageous* doctrine of personal immortality. (*AC* 41)

And when, by these means, 'the emphasis of life is put on the "beyond" rather than on life itself – when it is put *on nothingness* . . . the emphasis has been completely removed from life' as such (*AC* 43).

[25] I return to this claim in the following section.

An important dimension, then, of Nietzsche's critique is that Christianity, as an integral part of its '*disvaluing*' of life, encourages precisely the sorts of views about the self (as immortal) and the world (as a divinely ordered prelude to the 'Beyond') that guarantee self-obscurity. So the content of Christianity, he claims, no less than its form, stands squarely in the way of becoming 'who you are'.

'Have I been understood? – *Dionysus versus the crucified*': that is the famous final slogan of *Ecce Homo* (*EH*, 'Destiny', 9). And a rich slogan it is, too. Nietzsche is insistent that one's opponents should be worthy of one – 'an attack is proof of good will . . . I do something or someone honour, I confer distinction on it when I associate my name with it: for or against' (*EH*, 'Wise', 7). And '*the crucified*' passes muster. As one who has become who he is, Christ earns Nietzsche's respect, even if the psychological type that he represents is not remotely to Nietzsche's taste. And as the saviour concocted by Christianity, he is the most momentous foe imaginable: in *his* name, the world has been stripped of all value, and the possibility of human freedom has been removed from view.

Nietzsche on decadence

Christ is a 'decadent', Nietzsche claims (*AC* 31); and he says the same of himself. Indeed, he attributes the fact that 'I have a subtler sense of smell for the signs of ascent and decline than anyone has ever had' to a 'double birth, from the highest and lowest rungs on the ladder of life . . . simultaneously decadent and *beginning*'. It is this, he claims, that allows him to look 'from the optic of sickness towards *healthier* concepts' and, conversely, 'to look down from the fullness and self-assurance of the *rich* life into the secret work of the instinct of decadence . . . if I became the master of anything, it was this' (*EH*, 'Wise', 1).

'Decadence' is a tricky concept to handle, however. We should begin by noting that Nietzsche, as his own case attests, does not regard decadence as incompatible with becoming who one is: decadence can be an ingredient in self-creation. Decadence is not, therefore, equivalent to the kinds of 'idealism' that he attacks in *Ecce Homo*, even if, in the event, 'idealism' may be one of its most frequent effects. The fact that Nietzsche uses the term 'decadence' indiscriminately to refer to both cause *and* effect often tends to obscure this. But we must keep them apart, and understand decadence as a necessary, but not as a sufficient, condition of 'idealism'.

Construed thus, decadence is a form of suffering from life, of suffering from being oneself. As one component of a psyche, it can be something which, if it 'does not kill' one, makes one 'stronger'; it can be one of those 'qualities' which 'will prove indispensable as means to the whole', an element subordinated to an 'organizing . . . "idea"' which produces a totality whose 'incredible multiplicity . . . is nonetheless the converse of chaos'. And this, according to Nietzsche, is how his own decadence is to be understood, as having been woven by the 'secret work and artistry' of his 'instinct' into that greater whole which is 'what he is' (*EH*, 'Clever', 9). Where no such 'secret work and artistry' is present, on the other hand, one is apt to be driven to 'idealism' – to be driven by one's suffering to falsify and devalue the world.

Twilight of the Idols is devoted to the uncovering and diagnosis of decadence, both as cause (suffering) and as effect ('idealism'). It also, via the person of Socrates, offers a case study in how one *ceases* to be who one is. Nietzsche portrays Socrates as the product of decay. Standing behind him is an idealized Greek noble – vibrant, healthy, in tune with himself and his instincts, an artist of his life to his finger-tips – and it is this figure whose decay Socrates represents. '[D]egeneration was quietly gaining ground everywhere', Nietzsche says: 'old Athens was coming to an end . . . Everywhere, instincts were in anarchy' (*TI*, 'Socrates', 9). In place of a more or less unconscious regulation of the instincts, chaos threatened; the 'organizing "idea"' of the Athenian soul was loosening its grip; and people began to suffer from themselves and from life as if it were a sickness (*TI*, 'Socrates', 1). The Athenians became decadent.

But in Socrates there appeared to be a cure at hand. He became 'master of *himself*'. Although he was only 'an extreme case' of the general crisis, he nevertheless held out the prospect that 'a stronger *counter-tyrant*' might be opposed to the tyranny of the instincts (*TI*, 'Socrates', 9). And this tyrant was to be dialectic – '*reason*':

> Rationality was seen as the *saviour*, neither Socrates nor his 'patients' had any choice about being rational . . . it was their *last* resort. [T]hey had only one option: be destroyed or – be *absurdly rational* . . . [Socrates established] a permanent state of *daylight* against all dark desires – the daylight of reason. You have to be clever, clear, and bright at any cost: any concession to the instincts . . . leads *downwards*. (*TI*, 'Socrates', 10)

So Socrates became an 'idealist'. He accorded absolute value to a hypertrophied version of one human capacity, rationality, invented a realm of the Forms that would answer to it, and then used it as a rod with which to beat and denigrate the rest of human nature and the world. And this, although it may well have addressed the 'anarchy' of the instincts, also confirmed him in the view that life is to be suffered as a sickness. What appeared as 'salvation', that is, turned out to be 'only another expression [i.e. effect] of decadence' (*TI*, 'Socrates', 11).

Three things are worth highlighting here. First, 'anarchy' of the instincts is already sufficient for someone to cease to be (or not yet to have become) who he is; no 'organizing "idea"' is present; and this explains Nietzsche's remark that 'our modern concept of "freedom"' – that is, '*laisser aller*', letting go – is 'a symptom of *decadence*', is another 'proof of the degeneration of the instincts' (*TI*, 'Skirmishes', 41). Second, the counter-tyranny – the 'idealism' – that Socrates proposes as a cure for 'anarchy' serves further to obscure oneself to oneself: 'instinctively to choose what is harmful to *yourself*' [that is, for the self who one is to become], 'to be *tempted* by "disinterested" motives, this is practically the formula for decadence [as effect, as 'idealism']' (*TI*, 'Skirmishes', 35). And third, and the foregoing notwithstanding, 'anarchy' of the instincts is not a necessary feature of decadence. Such 'anarchy' was present in the Greeks' case, perhaps – was what *they* suffered from; and for them it might have been true that 'To *have* to fight the instincts' was 'the formula for decadence [as cause]' (*TI*, 'Socrates', 11). But decadence can be rooted in other sources than this.

In Nietzsche's own case, he tells us, it was rooted largely in his illness. 'Anarchy' threatened, no doubt, and he suffered from himself; but thanks to the 'organizing "idea"' that was secretly germinating within him, he succeeded in becoming who he was anyway. And the case of Christ makes the point still more clearly. Christ is a decadent. Yet in his case there simply aren't enough instincts in play to allow for an anarchic free-for-all between them; there is no multiplicity in him (*AC* 31). Rather, Christ's decadence, as Nietzsche diagnoses it, is expressed directly in a single instinct, in a no-holds-barred '*hatred of reality*'. He is, in this sense, decadence incarnate; his life just *is* a suffering from life. And this is why he is no 'idealist'. He has no other resources to draw upon: he stands

> outside . . . all natural science, all experience of the world, all knowledge . . . he never had any reason to negate 'the world', the . . . concept of 'world' never occurred to him . . . *Negation* is out of the question for him. – Dialectic is missing as well, there is no conception that . . . a 'truth' could be grounded in reasons (– *his* proofs are inner 'lights'.). (*AC* 32)

And so he inhabits 'a merely "inner" world, a "real" world, an "eternal" world'; and he becomes who he is there by becoming, in effect, no one at all, by sublimating himself into a pure symbol of love.

Nietzsche on Wagner

Decadence is not a univocal phenomenon, then. One can suffer from being oneself in many different ways and to many different effects. And this should arm one against thinking that Nietzsche's late writings about Wagner, in which he presents Wagner as the modern decadent *par excellence*, are likely to be especially one-dimensional. Indeed, it should alert one to the strong possibility that in this case, where Nietzsche's claim to be personally unembroiled is even less plausible than in the case of Christianity, his judgment may go awry.

Nietzsche is not unaware of this potential worry, and in *Ecce Homo* he seeks to disarm it directly: 'I need to express my gratitude', he says, 'for what was by far the friendliest and most profound' relationship of my life, that with Richard Wagner (*EH*, 'Clever', 5). 'I know better than anyone what tremendous things Wagner could do . . . and being what I am, strong enough to take advantage of the most questionable and dangerous things and become even stronger in the process, I name Wagner as the greatest benefactor of my life' (*EH*, 'Clever', 6). So Wagner is one of those things in Nietzsche's biography that 'must not be missing': he is one of the conditions of Nietzsche's having become who he is.

Indeed, Nietzsche makes a stronger claim than this. He suggests in *The Case of Wagner* that, as a decadent, Wagner is indispensable, not merely for Nietzsche, but for every philosopher. 'Modernity speaks its most *intimate* language in Wagner: it does not hide its good or its evil . . . And vice versa: if you are clear about . . . Wagner, you have just about summed up the *value* of modernity' (*CW*, Preface). So for a philosopher

interested in modernity – and hence, Nietzsche insists, in decadence – Wagner is a '*lucky case*' (*CW*, Epilogue). But he is also complex, multi-faceted, and wide-ranging; and Nietzsche's treatment of him reflects that. His objections are legion, but are also closely interconnected. And this makes it more or less impossible to give a convincing *précis*. So instead, I focus here on three aspects of Nietzsche's critique that link directly to the discussion so far, and hope that something of the general flavour will emerge through that. The issues that I focus on are style, 'idealism', and who Wagner *is*.

We have already seen that 'style' matters to Nietzsche. It is, after all, what one has to give to one's character if one is to create oneself under a law of one's own. And Nietzsche's model of style – which is drawn, obviously, from art – is a conventional one: style is a higher 'lawfulness' (*CW* 8), he says, marked by the fact that 'life' dwells 'in the totality', with the parts being related to one another in an 'organic' way (*CW* 7); it is marked by '*necessity*' but gives 'the impression of freedom' (*CW* 9); it has its own sort of 'logic' (*CW* 2). It is, in short, precisely what one gets when an 'organizing "idea"' is at work. And style, according to Nietzsche, is what Wagner lacks: indeed, Wagner has 'no stylistic facility whatsoever' (*CW* 7).

In part, Nietzsche's objection arises from his dislike of so-called 'endless melody', which '*wants* to break up all evenness of tempo', with the result that the listener finds himself 'Swimming, floating – no longer walking, dancing': there is a 'complete degeneration of the feeling for rhythm, *chaos* in place of rhythm . . .' (*Nietzsche contra Wagner* (*NCW*), 'Wagner as a Danger', 1). But chaos, to Nietzsche's ear, is endemic to Wagner's music: there is 'an anarchy of the atom, disintegration of the will'; '[p]aralysis everywhere, exhaustion . . . *or* hostility and chaos: both becoming increasingly obvious the higher you climb in the forms of organization. The whole does not live at all any more.' Wagner 'forges little unities', 'animates them', and 'makes them visible. But this drains him of strength: the rest is no good.' 'Wagner is admirable . . . only in his inventiveness with the very small'; he is 'our greatest *miniaturist* in music' (*CW* 7).

In the light of the huge scale of Wagner's works, it is perhaps unsurprising that Nietzsche should enjoy the charge of 'miniaturism'; he returns to it repeatedly. Wagner specializes, he says, in