

## NIETZSCHE, THIS FORGETFUL, MUSICAL SOCRATES

Alina FELD\*

*Every philosophy also conceals a  
philosophy; every opinion is also a  
lurking place, every word is also a mask.*  
(Nietzsche, 1989: 289)

**Abstract.** Nietzsche's philosophic experiment as a whole tackles the form and idiom of an artistic performance. His interest in tragedy disturbs and awakens consciousness to the call of its own creativity. The author emphasizes that tragedy provokes a total participation to the mystery of being. His work challenges the vocation for the sublime which in Heideggerian terms would be the vocation to acknowledge the enigma of the presence of the Being as such in its very shelter which conceals it. Provided that the expression in tragic performance is non-conceptual, its meaning precludes its own doctrinal and dogmatic reification by a perpetual metamorphosis, personal and experiential, and, by its intensity, it turns the spectator into an *ad hoc* creator.

**Keywords:** Nietzsche, Heidegger, tragedy, mystery, Being, dogmatic reification

### 1. Heidegger's Verdict on Nietzsche or a Case in Misreading

In the conclusion to the four volumes of a close reading of Nietzsche's corpus, Heidegger asks the question whether Nietzsche's metaphysics has overcome nihilism (1982:200). He considers that Nietzsche was under the illusion that, by excluding Being as such as a devalued value from thinking the being of beings which is not nothing but will to power eternally recurring, the essence of metaphysics as nihilism was overcome (201). Thus Heidegger:

Nietzsche's fundamental experience says that the being is a being as will to power in the mode of the eternal recurrence of the same. As a being in this form it is not nothing. Consequently, nihilism, to the degree there is supposed to be nothing to beings as such, is excluded from the foundations of such metaphysics. Thus, it would seem, metaphysics has overcome nihilism (201).

Heidegger further engages on the task of demonstrating that Nietzsche does not even address the question of Being as such and that the *nihil* in nihilism is not

---

\* Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Hofstra University.

thought in its essence. Being thought as value and being as a whole as will to power in the mode of eternal recurrence “block him from the path that leads to thinking Being as such” (199).

Let us follow Heidegger’s argument more closely.

Heidegger understands Being as such as unconcealment which veils itself into concealment in the essence of man, its main “abode” (217,244). It remains a “promise” (244) and a “mystery” (226, 233). Metaphysics is the history of this concealment of Being as such, the history of this omission which he calls “nihilism proper” (205) or “authentic nihilism.” Metaphysics which is ontology and theology at the same time posits the Being as such as the transcendental and the transcendent respectively (211) and thus repudiates the thinking, questioning of the Being as such. It thinks only the “being there,” the *Dasein* (218). With modern age, from Descartes to Hegel, metaphysics evolves as a metaphysics of subjectivity in which being itself is defined as will (205). Nietzsche does not overcome metaphysics, nor nihilism since metaphysics is precisely nihilism as the history of omission of Being as such. This omission is not a problem of thinking (213) but manifests the default of Being as such (216), the veiling of its unconcealment. Moreover, the desire of reversing, or opposing metaphysics indicates an “inauthentic nihilism.”(223-6) “Inauthentic nihilism” means the omission of the omission (226-7). In other words, the definition of the *Dasein* as will to power in the mode of eternal recurrence of the same interprets the concealment, the veiling of unconcealment of Being as such, as its absolute absence. The equation of the Being as such with value sanctions in Nietzsche’s view the liberation of *Dasein* from Being as such and the latter’s dependence, as value, on the former, thus reversing the relation between the two. In this way, Nietzsche’s metaphysics does not overcome nihilism rather fulfills it. As will to power eternally recurring, it is a negative ontotheology of the death of Being as such and of the death of god (210). Being/god as value indicates the last stage in the history of metaphysics which leaves the Being as such unthought and takes its concealment as complete absence. Nietzsche’s nihilism is thus inauthentic (231), i.e. it does not think nihilism in its essence, as the default of Being. An authentic nihilism would imply the infinite questioning of the concealment/unconcealment of Being. Heidegger writes:

Such acknowledging means allowing Being to reign in all its *questionableness* from the point of view of its essential provenance; it means persevering in the question of Being. But that means to reflect on the origin of *presencing* and permanence and thus to keep thinking open to the possibility that Being, on its way to the as Being, might abandon its essence in favor of a *more primordial determination*. Any discussion of Being itself always remains *interrogative*. (201)

Heidegger argues that Being needs to “abandon its own essence in favor of a more primordial determination (201), one that would include the nihil and that therefore nihilism cannot be overcome. Thus, Nietzsche’s program of overcoming nihilism is abortive ex officio. What is Nietzsche’s own understanding of *nihilism* and of *overcoming*? Heidegger believes that Nietzsche “experiences nihilism as the history of the devaluation of the highest values and thinks of the overcoming of nihilism as a countermovement in the form of the revaluation of all previous values” (200). Is this assessment of Nietzsche’s dissatisfaction with previous evaluation and his program of revaluation correct? Interestingly, Heidegger himself, unawares, points in the direction of a different answer. He remarks in passing that “the inmost core of Nietzsche’s metaphysics ... still lies concealed” (12) in his posthumous notes and that “Being remains in the glare of concepts, indeed in the radiance of the absolute concept of speculative dialectics, unthought” (213).

The present essay endeavors to question Heidegger’s verdict and its relevance for Nietzsche’s mode of discourse as a whole. It will try to prove that Nietzsche’s metaphysics as nihilism—in the sense the former uses the term—is an authentic nihilism which he does not intend to overcome rather to re-awaken. The Nietzschean nihilism in need of overcoming is a version of the Heideggerian “everydayness” and refers precisely to the growing inauthenticity of ontotheological metaphysics which does not take the *nihil* seriously. Overcoming the prevalent ontotheological metaphysics requires no less than the re-creation of its mythical foundations. If successful, it would initiate precisely the questioning Heidegger desires and would make Nietzsche a Heideggerian *avant la lettre*. His doctrines viewed as new myths of creation and redemption are meant to be the spurs in reopening the question of Being and the *nihil*.

## **2. Deleuze’s Version of Nietzsche’s Mode of Discourse as An Experiment in Counter-conceptual Thinking**

Nietzsche’s text is a provocation, intrinsically iconoclastic. In the best prophetic tradition it brings war and good news. It destroys and creates new meaning, new tracks for thought. It awakens to the question of truth rather than enthroning a new truth, a future idol. In order to address Nietzsche’s metaphysics, a preliminary condition is to become aware that the Nietzschean mode of discourse is not the discourse of the philosophical treatise. Deleuze offers one of the most pertinent characterizations of Nietzsche’s writing. In *Nomad Thought* Deleuze hails Nietzsche’s liberating the unconscious from the burden of transcendence and for having invented “nomad thought”, “a mode of thinking that is without logical or metaphysical precedent” (206). Nomad thought is characterized by its “impulse to decodify, its rejection of interiority and its

preoccupation with pulsions of power rather than intellectual constructs” (206). Consider:

Nietzsche’s thinking undoes encrypted philosophical concepts by transmitting uncodifiable states of experience not to a new notional language but to a new body, Nietzsche’s own or that of the earth. Differing from both representation and formal argument that take the subject or consciousness as a starting point, Nietzsche’s thought and writing are grounded in “an immediate relation with the exterior”...The human subject...is a play of forces and proper names are merely designations for pulsional intensities inscribed upon a body that may be individual, collective, or terrestrial. (207)

Thus “nomadism” is “a style of counterconceptual thinking” (207), “a line of flight, a thinking away from received philosophical distinctions” (206). Nomad thought is then the counterconceptual thought which rebels against conceptual reification of meaning. It restlessly metamorphosizes from one symbol or mask to another in order to prevent the stabilization of meaning and gives the impression of a “masque-rade”. Nomad thought engages the pursuer in a maddening hide-and-seek for the true face behind the mask. In other words, nomad thought invites a genealogical reading of Nietzsche’s overt doctrines identified by Heidegger as the “five main rubrics” of his metaphysics, i.e. “nihilism, revaluation of all values hitherto, will to power, eternal recurrence of the same and Overman” (1982:9). Such a search for origins, whose founder Nietzsche declared himself to be, involves the suspicion that one cannot take any of his statements at face value. It takes a Nietzsche to read Nietzsche. To read Nietzsche means to read “a storm pregnant with new lightnings” (Nietzsche, 1989:258) whose meaning is ever retreating, ever luring one beyond the last horizon.

3. *The Birth and Death of Tragedy*: Dionysius versus Socrates It seems that it is not Being as such that has been devalued in the history of ontotheology, rather the concept of Being as such due to the inherent reification of meaning. An indication of this possible reading of Nietzsche’s corpus is grounded in *The Birth of Tragedy* where the tyranny of the *nihil*—in Nietzsche’s terms and not Heidegger’s—originates with conceptual thinking symbolized by the “ugly Socrates”, the theoretical man. Nietzsche’s earliest work, *The Birth of Tragedy* bears unmistakably the mark of Schopenhauer’s philosophy of voluntarism and nihilism borrowed wholesale from Oriental sources. In *The World as Will and Idea*, Schopenhauer promotes the idea of a Buddhist double perspective epistemology i.e., of the reality of nothingness on the one hand and that of the will and cosmic illusion on the other. Without fully endorsing this doctrine Nietzsche

interprets the perfected form of Greek tragedy of Aeschylus and Sophocles as a mythic symbol of totality. Totality requires the synthesis of the ground of ultimate reality and the phenomenon of individuality; in other words, the consciousness of primordial, ultimate oneness/nothingness and the consciousness of the *principium individuorum* as transitory.

In his theory of *catharsis* Aristotle considered the effect of tragedy as purging the soul of passions through intense empathic exposure to pity and terror. Nietzsche mentions Aristotle's *catharsis* only to oppose it. He welcomes the "metaphysical comfort" of intense participation in the necessary unfolding where Being and nothingness engage in a tragic play of concealment and revealing—not unlike the Heideggerian presencing and veiling—precisely on the ground of arousing passions rather than quieting them. Dionysian truth is the tragic truth of a Being defined more primordially. Such a more primordial Being includes the nothing as ground and source of itself. At the same time the Greek tragedy that Nietzsche has in mind is not a conceptual, systematic disquisition. It is a mythic saying which constantly immerses itself and the spectator back into the indistinctness and totality of music. Certainly, for Nietzsche this immersion into the prelinguistic is neither a commendation to mystical union nor to abstract transcendence.

The tragic performance precludes the reification of the answer as well as the separation of Being and nothing, of concealed Being and its revelation. Art, i.e. tragic art, is the unique locus of the unfolding of this double perspective metaphysics, its principal embodiment. Nietzsche laments in this early work the loss of this tragic awareness and with it of the sense of wonder, awe, of the sublime. The one accused of this murder is Socrates, the arch symbol of the theoretical, abstract, disembodied mind. The nothingness that Nietzsche aims to overcome is Socratic nothingness. It is net of the conceptual spider. As a parenthesis, Nietzsche's project of overcoming Socratic nothingness and the later Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* share a similar intention.

The difference between Nietzsche and Schelling resides mainly in the mode of overcoming which, in the former case, takes the form of artistic performance: therefore, a masked performance which would resuscitate tragic myth. Nietzsche considers that the death of religions as mythical formulations of meaning happens when myth loses its power through doctrinal closure:

when under the stern, intelligent eye of an orthodox dogmatism the mythical premises of a religion are systematized as a sum total of historical events; when one begins to defend the credibility of the myths while one opposes any continuation of their natural vitality and growth, when accordingly the feeling of myth perishes and its place is taken by the claim of religion to historical foundations. (1989: 36)

Myth died “under the hands of Euripides” (1995:36) who manifested in art the demon of Socrates (42) for whom “to be beautiful everything must be intelligible” (43). The Socratic identification of knowledge and virtue, knowledge and beauty springs forth through “penetrating critical process, daring intelligibility, rationalistic method, conscious knowledge” (43). Socrates as “the theoretical man” opposed to Dionysian tragic art (46) is the symbol of conceptual knowledge. He represents the “sublime metaphysical illusion that with the clue of logic, *thinking can reach to the nethermost depths of being*” (53). The event of the concept and the enthronement of its rule are presented in dramatic terms as a cosmic catastrophe. Thus, after Socrates who is “*the turning point/vortex of universal history*” (53), “*a common net of thought was stretched over the entire globe*” (53). For theoretical man for whom to distinguish true perception from illusion becomes the noblest calling (54), error becomes the evil par excellence (54). In the Euripides-Socrates complex, Nietzsche is mourning the death of tragedy. By tragedy he understands both Dionysian metaphysics which gives a more primordial determination of Being to include the nothing and its mythical medium which prohibits the “evil slumbering at the heart of theoretical knowledge” (66). Or, translated in Heideggerian terms, tragedy is a locus of presencing and veiling of the default of Being as such, a metaphysics qua authentic nihilism which perseveres in the questioning and preserves the enigma.

#### 4. *Untimely Meditations*: The Art of Forgetting *versus* the Historical

*On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* is another early text that contains a key to Nietzsche’s later development. Here the excess of history is opposed to a creative life of great deeds. One of the various ways to misconstrue Nietzsche centers round an apparent contradiction in his understanding of the body and extends to his infamous slave-master morality. It, too, springs—as in Heidegger’s case—from overlooking the specific game of disguisements witnessed in *The Birth of Tragedy*. It can be dispelled by listening more carefully to the present text. Edith Wyschogrod gives a quick summary of Nietzsche’s genealogical probing into the value of pity, the main feature of Christian morality. She explains that “on his view, pity is the emotion that is felt when a desire for revenge is suppressed” (100) and quotes from the *Genealogy of Morals*: “Impotence which cannot retaliate is turned into kindness; pusillanimity into humility”. The reason for this impotence to react promptly is found in a deterioration of health, a slackening of instinctual life correlated with “an excessive development of consciousness and the hypertrophy of reason” (100). Inner and institutional repression creates a new human type, the man of *ressentiment* (101). Wyschogrod detects the root of Nietzsche’s defective argument against altruism/pity in his limited and fictional anthropology, the “tacit presuppositions in Nietzsche’s description of the body” (101). Consider:

It can be argued against Nietzsche that he has given to the body too narrow an interpretation. His account cordons off a feature of corporeality intrinsic to it: the body's vulnerability. To be as embodied existence, as flesh, is to be vulnerable. This is not a property of diseased bodies but of bodies generally. While Nietzsche acknowledges and even celebrates death, he segregates the phenomena of vulnerability -- sensitivity to temperature, fatigue, exhaustion, sleep and the like -- from death itself. These phenomena are treated metaphysically in the manner of nonbeing. (103-4)

And further:

For Nietzschean vitalism human existence is a perpetual self-overcoming, an activity that neither sleeps nor slumbers...But life thus interpreted is based on one of its pathological conditions, unceasing wakefulness or insomnia. (104)

Wyschogrod notes the exclusion of the dark side of the physiology as a paradox in a thinker who "works to undermine the power of memory...because it makes possible a delay in the expression of affect" (104-5) and emphasizes the fundamental importance of forgetfulness. She complains that

Nietzsche confers normative value on the very phenomenon he criticizes with respect to memory, the phenomenon of unceasing activity when such activity is attributed to the body. A hypertrophied wakefulness is transvalued when it is ascribed to bodily life. (105)

*On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* is one of his "untimely," i.e., "that is to say acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and let's hope, for the benefit of a time to come" (1996:60), "meditations." His overt thesis is that the unhistorical and the suprahistorical are the natural antidotes to the stifling of life by the historical, by the malady of history. (120-1)

He initiates the process of decoding his text and volunteers one insight into its meaning:

With the word "unhistorical" I designate the art and power of forgetting and of enclosing oneself within a bounded horizon; I call "suprahistorical" the powers which lead the eye away from becoming towards that which bestows upon existence the character of the eternal and the stable, towards art and religion. (120)

We are made aware that Nietzsche withdraws behind a series of masks which are different codifications of his ideas. The unhistorical is the art of

forgetting; the historical, consequently, the art of memory. What do we find when we look behind the mask of forgetting and that of memory?

A historical phenomenon, known clearly and completely and resolved into a phenomenon of knowledge is for him who has perceived it, dead... History become pure sovereign science would be for mankind a sort of conclusion of life and a settling of accounts with it. (1996:67)

The sleeplessness of history or memory is an image/mask for abstraction, generalization, pure objectivity, mediacy; in excess, it is inimical to life; it creates passivity, a sense of epigonism and indifference; it is the opposite of art; it transforms the living creature into a thinking animal, a “cogital” (119), human beings into “thinking-, writing- and speaking machines” (85); it kills intuition, neuters (87), creates a race of eunuchs” (86), “hollows out” (87), “paralyses” (98). The profusion of indirect, un-lived events takes away the “strangeness” (98), the “surprise.” It is the “great cross-spider at the node of the cosmic web” (108), the “devil” (114). The excess of memory or history brings about the extinction of life and, with it, the birth of an age of irony (100) and of “the grey-haired race” (101,116). The blueprint for Nietzsche’s later nihilism (98-100) is sketched out: it is the dead fruit of the sleeplessness of conceptual idolatry, of the obsession with pure objectivity (84). The main consequence, like in the case of *The Birth of Tragedy*, is the incapacity for the sublime. He explains:

Expressed morally: you are no longer capable of holding on to the *sublime*, your deeds are shortlived explosions, not rolling thunder. Though the greatest and *most miraculous* event should occur -- it must nonetheless descend, silent and unsung into Hades. For art flees away if you immediately conceal your deeds under the awning of history. He who wants to understand, grasp and assess in a moment that before which he ought to stand long *in awe as before an incomprehensible sublimity* may be called reasonable, but only in the sense in which Schiller speaks of the rationality of the reasonable man: there are things which he does not see which even a child sees... (1996:83) [italics mine]

Nietzsche makes it clear that the art of forgetting -- or of the unhistorical -- is the art of the cow, child and artist of great deeds.

That is why it affects him [man] like a vision of a lost paradise to see the herds grazing or, in closer proximity to him, a child, which, having as yet nothing of the past to shake off, plays in blissful blindness between the hedges of past and future. (61)



As he who acts is, in Goethe's words, always without a conscience, so is he also always without knowledge; he forgets most things as to do one thing, he is unjust towards what lies behind him... (64)

At different levels, cow/child/artist live in the present, freely, unhindered by memory, intuitively, unreflectively. The unconscious, unreflective life of the body is directly linked to the art of forgetting. Wyschograd overlooked the fact that for Nietzsche the body is another trope or mask for the art of the genius/creator par excellence. The ban on pity is to be understood in this context. In order to create, "to love his deed infinitely" (64), the creator has to be pitiless, i.e. "narrow-minded, ungrateful to the past, blind to dangers, deaf to warnings, [one is] a little vortex of life in a dead sea of darkness and oblivion" (64). Thus pitilessness towards the historical can be decoded in opposition with the slave's *ressentiment*. From the perspective of this "untimely meditation," the slave, as man of *ressentiment*, is the one who does/can not forget. By this juxtaposition the slave becomes a mask/trope for the excess of history, the sleeplessness, the drive for absolute memory, consciousness as opposed to the body's unconsciousness and to the artist's unreflective creativity. The equations slave-memory/the historical and master-forgetting/the unhistorical offer a key to Nietzsche's main doctrines by forming the bridge between early and later writings. The "common net of thought stretched over the entire globe" of *The Birth of Tragedy* becomes the "great cross-spider of history" in *Untimely Meditations*. Dionysian tragedy is opposed by critical, theoretical Socrates. The art of forgetting, life, intuition is opposed by history, memory, mediate experience, objectivity, abstraction, generalization. In both writings Life is the creativity of presencing in an aura of mystery and illusion. Thus

All living things require an atmosphere around them, a mysterious misty vapour; if they are deprived of this envelope, if a religion, an art, a genius is condemned to revolve as a star without atmosphere, we should no longer be surprised if they quickly wither and grow hard and unfruitful. (1996:97)

He further qualifies this atmosphere as an "enveloping illusion...a protective and veiling cloud" (97). Illusion, mystery, art, "unconditional faith in right and perfection" (95), "awe", sublimity (83) a "horizon, rounded and closed"(63)—all these qualifications of the life of the future race of creators circumscribe a metaphysics which is the fruit of his earliest desire to impersonate an artistic Socrates and create a new language. The lost paradise of "health"/ childhood/ inspiration can be regained (120) only through "a new stern discipline, a new habit, a new instinct, a second nature"(76) which will cultivate the "unhistorical"

i.e. will master the art of forgetting. The new language will not be conceptual rather mytho-poetical.

### 5. Nietzsche as Creator of a New Idiom

It seems that Nietzsche was enacting in his later work the program of his earlier writings. He was obviously qualifying his young loves but the seeds planted in the refuted work, i.e. *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Untimely Meditations* were growing steadily. In his search for origins, Nietzsche witnesses the moment of creation, the origin of meaning. A *creatio ex nihilo* of our hitherto cosmos of meaning in which we have lived and had our being. This cosmos of meaning he identifies as the Platonic-Judeo-Christian. The Logos as Word/concept, i.e. language, fashioned man in its image and likeness. Believer or non-believer, European man was born into the house of meaning of his own making and became its prisoner. He spent centuries inside, in this Procrustean bed, trying to fit in, to adjust, to acquaint himself with all its nooks and crannies, explore again and again the same place with new eyes from a different perspective. At least this seems to correspond to Nietzsche's reading of European meanderings of the history of philosophy: a century-old rumination of the same indigestible food, the Platonic-Judeo-Christian. Philosophically Nietzsche finds fault with the ontotheological foundations of prior metaphysics, i.e. the equation of Being/essence and the Good and the separation of essence and existence. Theologically he laments the reification of myth. The death of God symbolizes the impotence of the Christian symbolic universe to speak meaningfully to modern man, i.e. to awaken him to his infinite, unexplored potentialities. The main factors in the process of reification were the narrowness of the ontotheological interpretation prevalent in mainline theology and philosophy, on the one hand, the conceptual objectification, on the other. God interpreted as Being itself can never account for the underground rumbling of suffering and evil. All theodicies fail ultimately and essentially to preserve the reality of God as Good and Being and account for evil and non-being. Heidegger notes the necessity to define Being more primordially in order to account for the *nihil*. Also Platonic and Christian thought in spite of all its metamorphoses has deepened the wound between essence/being/god and existence/non-being/man. From Plato through Descartes to Kant Nietzsche watches the infection spreading. He finds most disturbing the infection of moral consciousness. What Nietzsche proposes himself to do is to free man from his own prison by creating a new house of meaning.

So, he appoints himself as creator of new meaning in whose image and likeness man can live and act. The creation of new myths lacks pity for the old myth which had turned into idols, a hindrance. He philosophizes with a hammer. For Nietzsche it is not the reality of Being itself which is a value as Heidegger

naively believes but its mask, the concept of Being itself, an idol, a disincarnated myth, the god of ontotheology. The transvaluation of values means creation of new myths of unsettling, unstable original versatility which would bar conceptual reification, idolatry. It is strange that Heidegger does not realize that the nihilism that Nietzsche ambitions to overcome is not the nothingness as ground or intrinsic to Being itself/as such. Nietzsche's nihilism comes precisely from the ontotheological omission of the nothing in the definition of the Being i.e. the definition of Being as God and the Good which could not account for the richness of existence nor for the depth of suffering. Frozen into concepts it became a tyrannical interpretation of meaning incapable to redeem the continual flux of existence perceived as sinful, thus incapable to awaken consciousness from its dogmatic slumber. The new mythical realm will be circumscribed by the doctrine of the eternal recurrence and the Overman. Instead of *creatio ex nihilo* or *ex deo* the eternal recurrence of the same, instead of the new man in Christ, the Overman. The new gospel is staged by a masked performance. And it is tragic, tragic in the sense in which early Nietzsche understood Greek tragedy prior to its dissolution in the age of conceptual thinking. In the Greek tragedy of Aeschylus and Sophocles the Apollonian *principium individuum* appears only to be sacrificed as tragic hero. He is reabsorbed into the nothingness of the ground of all.

The sublime is the category most appropriate for the tragic event. It is interesting to note Nietzsche's change of heart regarding Kant in this respect. Whereas Kant along with Schopenhauer and Wagner were viewed as the heralds of a resuscitation of the tragic mode on German soil, later Nietzsche finds him as another instance of critical Socrates, trapped in memory, in self-consciousness, in the net of the of the spider. Nevertheless though with specific qualifications, Nietzsche's sense of the tragic resembles Kant's category of the sublime.

## 6. The Nietzschean Tragic as a Modified Version of the Kantian Sublime

For Kant the sublime is a relation between the cognitive powers of Imagination and Reason whose specifics are caused by the object and experienced as a paradoxical feeling of displeasure and pleasure. Kant explains that the sublime is not to be found "in products of art where both form and magnitude are determined by human purpose nor in natural things whose very concept carries with it a determinate purpose, but in crude nature" (109). The reason why "crude nature" is the main locus to have the feeling of the sublime is the physically/sensorially overwhelming magnitude and might displayed. Kant has a "sacred thrill", awe, a mixture of horror and respect, i.e., veneration in front of this display. Consider:

Thus any spectator who beholds massive mountains, climbing skyways, deep gorges with raging streams in them, wastelands lying in deep shadow

and inviting melancholy meditation...is indeed seized by amazement bordering on terror, by horror and a sacred thrill; but since he knows he is safe, this is not actual fear; it is our attempt to incur it with our imagination in order that we may feel that very power's might and connect the mental agitation this arouses with the mind sense of rest. In this we feel our superiority to nature within ourselves and hence also to nature outside us. (129)

With a few changes this passage could be read as a footnote to Nietzsche's hymn to tragedy or to the Overman. Kant explains that such a spectacular vision challenges the powers of cognition. Imagination and Reason are called into play. But this play is not a harmonious encounter between the two; rather it is a conflict which is resolved at the price of Imagination's self-sacrifice. Imagination as the power of sensibility is crushed under the magnitude and might which evoke Ideas of the Infinite. It cannot produce images of the totality and the absolute which are required by Reason; thence the negative feeling, the displeasure. In experiencing the inadequacy and defeat of Imagination the mind comes to feel its own sublimity which lies in its supersensible vocation (121). Kant concludes:

We are dealing with nature as appearance. We cannot determine the idea of the supersensible. We cannot cognize but only think nature as an exhibition of it. The idea of the supersensible is aroused and strains the imagination to its limits of expansion and might. The mind has a vocation that wholly transcends the domain of nature: moral feeling. (128)

Thus the feeling of the sublime in its inner mechanics represents a type/figure of the tension and struggle involved in the moral triumph of mind over matter. Morality though can and should never be perfect and the highest good of the reconciliation of nature/happiness and morality/freedom requires an infinite progression and thus can be assured only in the beyond by postulating god and immortality. It is only in the feeling of the sublime that man comes to a full sense of his vocation, dignity and true self. Kant believes that only by "a strange subreption we substitute respect for the object for respect for the idea of humanity within ourselves" (114). Consider his exposition of the mathematically and dynamically sublime. Sublime is the absolutely large, large beyond all comparison (103). Excessive might inspires terror, raises the soul's fortitude above its usual middle", allows us to discover in ourselves an ability to resist which is of a different kind, gives us the courage to believe that we could be a match for nature's seeming omnipotence. A "hymn to man's divinity", the sublime call is a calling forth of "affects of the vigorous kind" (133). The enumeration of these is almost unsettling: it is a blueprint of Nietzsche's Dionysian humanity. Enthusiasm, self-imposed *apatheia*, anger, indignant

desperation, voluntary isolation (132-4), sublime madness (136), calm, moral control, beligerance (122)—these instances of sublime self-encounter push the self on the brink of physical annihilation and open the entrance into the realm of the supersensible: they are instances of self-conquering, self-expansion and transcendence. Defeated, imagination, the power of imaginal sensibility withdraws. Kant reveals his iconoclastic leanings. This iconoclasm this obsession with a priori purity is echoed in Schopenhauer's appropriation of the ideal of Buddhism and with early Nietzsche's Dionysian discarding of the *principium individuum* that only music and pre-Socratic tragedy can induce.

If the Kantian feeling of the sublime is experienced in nature, Nietzsche's tragic feeling is triggered by an artistic performance. Kant rationalizes the sublime/offers a conceptual explanation of the sublime, whereas Nietzsche intends to provoke it as reaction to his exposition of his new doctrines. Most importantly, Nietzsche's tragic does not call to a supersensible vocation. Nor does it need to postulate God and immortality nor is it a "triumph of mind over matter." The annihilation of Imagination requires the courageous acceptance of the nihil as ground of a conceptually non definable Being. His doctrines are meant to resuscitate in the audience the spirit of the sublime which the Greek tragedy induced. To that purpose Nietzsche's philosophic experiment as a whole the form and idiom of an artistic performance.

The play he directs must be a tragedy. It must disturb and awaken consciousness to the call of its own creativity. Tragedy provokes a total participation to the mystery of being. It provokes the vocation for the sublime which in Heideggerian terms would be the vocation to acknowledge the enigma of the presence of the Being as such in its very shelter which conceals it. Since the expression in tragic performance is non-conceptual, its meaning precludes its own doctrinal and dogmatic reification by a perpetual metamorphosis; it is also personal and experiential, and, by its intensity, turns the spectator into an *ad hoc* creator, thus initiating the era of the race of creators, envisioning masters of the art of forgetting, of the art of letting the Being as such. Heidegger concludes that Nietzsche has not asked the question of Being as such. Indeed, Nietzsche does not ask the question of the Being as such, rather he provokes the encounter with the tragic mystery in its presencing.

#### REFERENCES

- Deleuze, Gilles, "Nomad Thought" in *New Nietzsche*. Ed. by David B. Allison. New York: Delta Book, 1977
- Heidegger, Martin, *Nietzsche*. Volume Four. Edited by David Farrell Krell. Trans. by Joan Stambaugh, D. F. Krell, Frank A. Capuzzi. San Francisco, A Division of Harper Collins Publishers, 1982
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Trans. by Helen Zimmern. New York: Prometheus Books, 1989

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. by Clifton P. Fadiman. New York: Dover Publications, 1995

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Untimely Meditations*. Trans. by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge University Press, 1996

Wysocki, Edith, *Saints and Postmodernism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.