

ON NOT DEMOCRATIZING ART  
KANT'S COSMOLOGICAL SUBLIME VERSUS NIETZSCHE'S  
PARTY OF LIFE AND THE NEGATIVE AESTHETICS OF  
DIVERGENCE  
QUERYING KAPLAMA'S SUPER-SENSIBLE SÉANCE AND  
STRONG'S MAGICAL INCANTATION OF TRANSFIGURATION

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ABSTRACT: Kaplama (2013, 2016) and Strong (1999) have both written about art in way that seems to be me to be most un-Nietzschean in turning the work of art for Nietzsche into a locus of various mysticisms: in Kaplama, a medium to the supersensible of the Heraclitean cosmos of flux as some kind of tragic wisdom, and in Strong, as the fount of transfiguration by participation in a “world reordering” But Nietzsche is explicit that the works of art just in and by its Dionysian wisdom, is the visible (Sichtbare) presentation of will to power, not a mediation to the supersensible.

Strong's idea that tragic art brings about a world reordering simply ignores Nietzsche's own ordering that the tragic age of art is to be ushered in by the great wars of the Great Politics that alone will bring the “excess of life” (Zuviel von Leben) that will make the tragic age of art possible. While Strong recognizes that is the actual textual case as to be found in *Ecce Homo*, (Strong 1988, 171-173), he regards the later Great Politics as a politics of domination, which he seems to think as being obvious, and it is not. It is a politics of rupture. The idea of the aesthetic in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in Part II, ‘On Those Who Are Sublime’ is already political; the final form of the Great Politics is not a *dérason* of the later Nietzsche of *Ecce Homo*, as a glance at ‘On War and Warriors’ from Part I of that work shows. The ideas of aesthetics presented in ‘On Those Who Are Sublime’ present a coherent account of a fully developed theory of art and which is embedded in the overall architecture of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*'s themes of identifying the locus of rupture in a knowledge of creative willing of divergence. The idea of the great wars of the later Great Politics is a most undemocratic thought. It is a knowledge-enabled divergence of speciation rupture from a lineage of biopolitical resentment against will to power. The Great Politics is the politics of speciation and its coordinate concept, extinction. The tragic age of art is the negative aesthetic of rupture. The Great Wars will not be a conflict of suffering for us as a whole and has the meaning

of speciation instead. Art becomes the negative aesthetic of rupture—which is not a suffering because it is speciation. This is the idea of aesthetics in Nietzsche from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* onwards.

KEYWORDS: Critical Perspectives on Western Modernities; Critique of Western Interpretive Paradigms; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*'s Architectural Coherence; Critique of Posthumanist Fragmentarianism; Materialist Critique of Metaphysics; Kantian Aesthetics

## INTRODUCTION: LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent scholarship on Nietzsche's *Great Politics* has debated whether his vision entails a right to rule for the transfigured or instead points toward a pluralistic politics of experimentation and agonistic engagement. Tracy Strong's influential reading (1999) frames Nietzsche's politics of transfiguration as a radical, democratic openness to diversity and individuality, yet this interpretation overlooks Nietzsche's explicit anti-democratic stance and his assertion in *Ecce Homo* that transformation is not achieved through collective participation but through the force of the wars of the Great Politics. The work of art is founded on the Great Politics and the *Züviel von Leben*. The Great Politics of Warfare is against the destructive effects of the politics of equal entitlement. The work of art excludes the decadent. Strong's focus on agonistic engagement and pluralism, while influential, fails to address Nietzsche's antagonistic distinction between the decadent and the *wohlgeratner Mensch*. Nietzsche identifies himself as a *wohlgeratner Mensch* and as the opposite of the decadent thereby in *Ecce Homo*, 'Wise' § 2. This distinction is central to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* ('On Redemption') and carried forward into Nietzsche's aesthetics ('On Those Who Are Sublime').

This study also engages posthumanist appropriations of Nietzsche, particularly Rosi Braidotti's egalitarian and relational reading, which recasts the *Übermensch* and will to power in non-hierarchical, posthumanist terms. I argue, by contrast, that Nietzsche's later aesthetics remains fundamentally hierarchical and anthropocentric, rooted in human exceptionalism and the agency of will to power grounded in knowledge unique to humans. Braidotti's project is less a textual exegesis than an ideological repurposing, displacing Nietzsche's anti-democratic vision rather than refuting it. She isolates Nietzsche's concepts (e.g., will to power, eternal return) from their elitist frameworks to align them with posthumanist and feminist egalitarianism. For example: while Nietzsche's

*Übermensch* is a hierarchical figure transcending the “herd,” Braidotti reimagines it as a symbol of trans-species solidarity, emphasizing connectivity over Nietzsche’s Great Politics of war against the *kleine Menschen*; *Will to Power*: Nietzsche ties this to antagonistic hierarchy, but Braidotti recasts it as relational vitality, a force driving non-hierarchical becoming, Braidotti’s “nomadic subjectivity” borrows Nietzsche’s fluidity but discards his aristocratic telos to *Übermenschlichkeit*.

Turning to aesthetics, I directly challenge Erman Kaplama’s thesis of “cosmological aesthetics,” which interprets Nietzsche’s Dionysianism as a passage, a transition, from the sensible to the supersensible (Kaplama 2013, 2016). Kaplama asserts that, for Nietzsche, “the Dionysian came to be the heart and soul of Nietzschean aesthetics and ethics,” functioning as “a set of intuitively attained artistic ideas that constitute or reconstitute the sensible perceptions and supersensible representations into a new whole” (Kaplama 2016, 166–167). In this reading, Nietzsche’s Dionysianism appears structurally analogous to the Kantian sublime—a mediator facilitating a leap from the empirical world to a higher, cosmological, or moral domain. This reading, however, misrepresents the radical immanence which is the hallmark of Nietzsche’s mature aesthetics. For Nietzsche, especially as articulated in ‘On Those Who Are Sublime’ (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part II), beauty and the Dionysian are not vehicles for transcending the world, but are profoundly this-worldly, bound to the *visible* (*Sichtbare*) and to the processes of self-overcoming and creative becoming in divergence from the stasis of decadence. Nietzsche’s own words in ‘On Those Who Are Sublime’ are in the mode of definition: “When power becomes gracious and descends into the visible (*in’s Sichtbare*), that alone I call beauty,” (Nietzsche 1976, 230). Here, beauty is not a marker of transcendence but the sensuous manifestation of an evolutionary rupture that defines the *Übermensch*. Moreover, the figure of the sublime one in ‘On Those Who Are Sublime’ is not a metaphysician envisioning cosmic *a priori*s, but a warrior of knowledge of self-overcoming. Kaplama’s “cosmological aesthetics” erroneously conflates Nietzsche’s immanent, existential affirmation of life as will to power—“its inexhaustible procreative will”—and its grounding in the undemocratic, hierarchical project of the Great Politics, with a Heraclitean-Kantian metaphysical cosmology. In doing so, Kaplama obscures Nietzsche’s “heaviest demand” (*schwersten Forderung*): that aesthetics arises not from universal

moral or cosmic orders, but from the antagonistic struggle to rebel against the tarantulas of moral equality (Kant among them), because equality of rights is *lebensfeindlich*, a culture of rejection of will to power.

Nietzsche writes of the sublime man's "ugliness" decked out in "ugly truths" from his battle with the "monsters and riddles" (not just the monster of vengefulness and renunciation, that is only foreground) which makes him sublime but not angelic as he has not yet begun transforming these into "heavenly children." All his angels were once devils, but he is not at that point yet (Nietzsche, 1976, "On Enjoying and Suffering of the Passions"). But the transformation is not by a *nöesis* of willing affirmation but by an application of empirical knowledge to the overcoming of the self. The locus of beauty, then, is an event: the visible fulfillment of the trajectory of knowledge realized in the *Über-Held*, the over-hero, at rest, who achieves evolutionary divergence. This is what is purposed in art. This is a decisive break from Kantian aesthetic theory, which situates the sublime as a moment of transition to the supersensible and moral teleology. In Kant, the feeling of the sublime is valuable precisely because it gestures beyond the sensible to the noumenal and the moral law. Nietzsche, by contrast, refuses any such movement in the heroic will of the sublime warrior of knowledge to the *Über-Held*. The artwork, for Nietzsche, is a sensuous presentation of the event of evolutionary rupture in all its immorality.

To read the Nietzschean Dionysian as a rerouted passage to the supersensible, or to the Heraclitean notion of *panta rhei* as a cosmological principle otherwise denied to reason (as reason becomes dialectical in its transcendental employment), is to re-import precisely the transcendence Nietzsche sought to overcome. The sublime one cannot be a saint of knowledge but he can be its warrior. The artwork is the locus of evolutionary rupture, not of mediation to the structure of the cosmos and the nature of time. Kaplama's cosmological reading, therefore, obscures what is most radical in Nietzsche's philosophy: the affirmation of the will to power which is very much the architect of a world "thinkable, seeable and feelable" and by way of evolutionary divergence in a locus of empirical knowledge. Nietzsche's aesthetics integrates rational (Apollonian) and creative (Dionysian) forces. The aesthetic theory in 'On Those Who Are Sublime' clearly makes the will to power the center of Nietzsche's aesthetics, which is an evolutionary thought.

WORLD TRANSFIGURATION IN *THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA*

The work of art is apprehended by sense and is apprehended as an object of sense, known by sense as art. The world has already become: “thinkable, seeable and feelable” as the will to power strengthens aliveness against its intimate weaknesses. This is the “World of Truth,” as Nietzsche calls it, and it is on the ground of the World of Truth that the tragic age of art is founded. The arc of development in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part II from the World of Truth as “thinkable, seeable and feelable” to the work of art as the manifestation of will to power in the sensible (*in’s Sichtbare*) shows the architectural coherence of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in this area. This is just the development stated explicitly in *Ecce Homo*: that the tragic age of art will appear only after the wars of the Great Politics because they will bring a *Zuviel von Leben*; that the sacrifices these wars cause will not also bring about our suffering from them, and we must ask why not. It is the Tragic Wisdom of Dionysus that life sacrifices itself, wantonly even in the case of sacrifice of its highest types, as it can do so because it is inexhaustible, and that inexhaustibility will come forth as the *Zuviel von Leben* by the force of the Great Politics and we will have the tragic age of art. There is the sacrifice of life but without suffering from it, because the sacrifice brings a *Zuviel von Leben*. All these points can be found in the concept of the aesthetic in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Several interrelated texts in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* present the will to power as a creative force that generates the world for us as a world that we can know. These texts are in Part II: ‘Upon The Blessed Isles,’ ‘On the Tarantulas,’ ‘On Famous Wise Men’ and ‘On Self-Overcoming.’ In ‘*Blessed Isles*,’ Nietzsche presents the idea of a world that we can know and understand as created by ourselves. This creative will to power is not merely a passive or reactive force but an active, generative one, and the World as Will to Power thus created by it is “humanly thinkable, humanly seeable, and humanly feelable.” This creative will is the foundation for the emergence of the *Übermensch* and the revaluation of values, present as such, knowable as such, to sense, comprehension, and reason. In the aesthetics of the later section ‘On Those Who Are *Sublime*,’ the creative will is further developed in the figure of the *Überheld* (Over-Hero), who embodies the transition from the sublime to the beautiful. The *Überheld* is not merely a warrior of knowledge (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Part I) ‘On War and Warriors’), as that would be merely sublime: “then wrap yourself in the cloak of the warrior, the cloak of the sublime.” The warrior cannot be a saint of knowledge but can be the forerunner of such, (‘On

War and Warriors’), he can be sublime but not beautiful. The difference is that at the *Überheld* stage, knowledge that makes self-overcoming possible has become internalized and the will is now agential in mastering its intimate weakness. The heroic will is at rest in the *Überheld*. The developmental advance of will to power to the *Überheld* is: (a) to the *Überheld*, *comprehensible* to himself as a self-development, and (b) it is a visible development as the will to power’s divine descent into the visible. *Ein Mehr an Leben* come of the will to power’s development becomes visible in the *Überheld* as Zarathustra’s speciation event, and the work of art renders it. The work of art, as created by the artist-overhero, becomes the *visible presence* of the the will to power in mastery of the weakness in life that defines what we are now (decadence, and, to extend, *mutatis mutandis*, other sources of nihilism of the stasis field of the main lineage as well). In this sense, the artist’s creation is a self-reflective depiction of the *Übermensch*-not as a literal portrait, but as an embodiment of the *Mehr an Leben* that is the speciation rupture he represents. Art is knowledge of the truth as against mendacity: mendacity is the lie that the stasis field is normal, truth is the rupture to speciation. The artwork calls to reflection on the rational purpose of becoming a new species. On this point, there is some overlap with Kant. Kant was not speaking of a specific purpose for the work of art but of “purposiveness but without a purpose,” to use his language (Kant 2000). Art renders human existence as comprehensible and located in the visible world and as having a rational purpose.

In “Upon the Blessed Isles,” Nietzsche presents the will to power as a creative force that produces a world we can know. We learn that as “lovers of knowledge” (*Erkennenden*), we are not destined to a world that is “incomprehensible” (*Unbegreifliche*) or “irrational” (*Unvernünftige*): „**Weder in's Unbegreifliche dürftet ihr eingeboren sein, noch in's Unvernünftige,**“ (Nietzsche 1976, p. 197-200). **We are not permitted to be born into such a world but are enjoined otherwise by the law of development, the law of speciation.** To that end, we are enjoined to create a world as a world *for us*: “and what you have called world, that shall be created only by you, and with your “creative will” (*schaffender Wille*). And again “in knowledge too, I feel only my will’s joy in begetting and becoming.” What is begotten is the *Übermensch*, the speciation event. Nietzsche’s “*ein Mehr an Leben*” can be read as a proto-punctuational concept of evolution: not a metaphorical surplus, but a literal, visible rupture—a

speciation event. The Overhuman is not merely a gradual improvement, but a leap, both self-aware (*sensibility of itself*) and evident to others (*sensible as rupture*). In this sense, Nietzsche anticipates non-Darwinian, discontinuous models of evolutionary change, (Gould and Eldredge, 2001), where the emergence of a new type is both an event of self-consciousness and an observable break in the history of life. The locus of beauty is the speciation event of the *Übermensch*, and the beauty of the work of art is derivative from it and renders it.<sup>1</sup>

Using the creative will to power, everything is to become “humanly thinkable, humanly seeable, and humanly feelable” (*Menschen-Denkbares, Menschen-Sichtbares, Menschen-Fühlbares*), and that is a will to truth. In ‘On Self-Overcoming’ Nietzsche begins by telling us that the love of knowledge is not something in itself but merely a drive that follows the service of the will to power and that we love it as the furtherance of that will. He tells them that the will to truth is really a will to power

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<sup>1</sup> Kaplama writes: “Nietzsche repeatedly brings forward in Zarathustra the sublime and beautiful ideals of the new beginnings, the great noon, the hottest south, and the blessed isles in relation to his ideas of eternal recurrence and will-to-power, which constitute his ultimate *Weltanschauung*. This worldview is not entirely new but stems from the not-yet-metaphysical or namely cosmological ancient origins (particularly the Heraclitean notion of *panta rhei*).” (Kaplama 2016, p. 210). While it is true that in *Ecce Homo*, “Books” *The Birth of Tragedy*, § 3, Nietzsche mentions Heraclitus, it must be noted that in that very paragraph he himself references *Twilight of the Idols*, “What I Owe the Ancients,” § 5, and in that section there is no mention of Heraclitus although there again he identifies himself with Dionysus and as the teacher of the eternal recurrence. This makes one wonder: if Nietzsche were so keen to stress his debt to Heraclitus in *Ecce Homo*, why direct the reader to a passage about his debt to the ancients in which no such reference is found? Also, in the *Ecce Homo* text, Nietzsche does not say that he took over a cosmology of eternal recurrence from Heraclitus; he is far more guarded, only stating that he might have an affinity to him if, by *panta rhei*, Heraclitus was philosophically encoding the tragic wisdom of joy in destruction—which maybe he did, maybe he did not; Nietzsche is not sure and maybe he, Nietzsche, is the first philosopher to have tragic wisdom. Perhaps *panta rhei* has tragic wisdom because that is the sort of thinking it leads to, but perhaps not, and if not, the implication is that Nietzsche would have no interest in Heraclitus. So this text is far from an endorsement of Heraclitean *panta rhei*. But that point then redirects us to the meaning of eternal recurrence as the transposition of tragic wisdom into a philosophical pathos, and in turn redirects us to the first chapter of *Ecce Homo*, ‘Why I am So Wise’ where his Dionysian wisdom is set out: his happiness even in his inherited stasis condition of—still living and growing old, already dead—in Wise § 1 and the dynamic implied of becoming a happiness in and by divergence from it to „*leben, zum Mehr leben*.” Even if Heraclitus did have tragic wisdom and even if the Stoa taught the eternal recurrence because they had tragic wisdom, it still does not follow that Nietzsche thought that eternal recurrence was true cosmology and not just an authentic thing to believe per whatever he is specifying that makes it so. From the narrative text of ‘Why I am so Wise’ it is obvious he possessed tragic wisdom long before he discovered the eternal recurrence in August of 1881. Nietzsche possessed tragic wisdom due to an empirically contingent circumstance, so it is very unlikely that the eternal recurrence could mean an *a priori* cosmology, as there is no indication that tragic wisdom is *a priori* knowledge.

that seeks the thinkability of all beings („*Denkbarkeit alles Seienden*“) and that the world we are meant to create by the will to power is driven on by “the inexhaustible, generative will of life,” (*der unerschöpfte zeugende Lebens-Wille*). He writes: “and you too, lover of knowledge, are only a path and a footprint of my will,” and that the “will to power walks also on the heels of [the] will to truth” (Nietzsche 1976, 227) and, in ‘On Old and New Tablets,’ he says: “to gain knowledge is a joy for the lion willed, (*Löwen-willigen*)” (Nietzsche 1976, 318). Nietzsche’s idea is that we are not born into a world in which we remain incomprehensible to ourselves as being beings of “fragment riddle and dreadful accident,” cripples merely and vengeful.<sup>2</sup> This is Zarathustra’s understanding of the destiny of the human race as he presents it in the chapter “On Redemption.” But what is that world? Zarathustra’s striving is to compose into *ein Dichtes* what is “fragment, riddle and dreadful accident” in our species, as he says, again in the chapter “On Redemption,” and that we are merely forebears of that oneness, but it only becomes possible because the knowledge exists how to do it. Only the lion-will can face himself and overcome himself, but knowledge alone makes his self-overcoming possible, and so knowledge is his first joy that then leads to his “dancing over and away” from himself. The will to power is an evolutionary force in life that enables us to become knowers of ourselves and masters of ourselves, enabling us to grow in power in mastery of our intimate weaknesses and grow in life, and even reach *ein Mehr an Leben*.<sup>3</sup> The thought of evolution to *ein Mehr an*

<sup>2</sup> See Nietzsche 2014a, 257 on the decadence of fragmentation versus wholeness

<sup>3</sup> Edgar Landgraf (2023) and earlier critics, Svätópluk Štúr (1967) have criticized Nietzsche’s vitalism. In the case of Štúr, his argument is a non-sequitur: it does not follow that Nietzsche should not have been a vitalist on the grounds that vitalistic thinking of a naturalized will to power can be appropriated to support bad ideologies, which is the premise of Štúr’s consequentialist ethics. This sentence from “On Self-Overcoming” captures Nietzsche’s view: “I [life] am *that which must always overcome itself*. Indeed, you call it will to procreate or a drive to an end, or something higher, farther, more manifold: all this is one and one secret,” (Nietzsche 1976 227). The statement is vitalistic but it would seem *prima facie* to be a representation of a fact and not a value statement of philosophy subject to censure. Landgraf’s reading is that the concept of will to power in the later Nietzsche builds on an earlier conception of will as an emergent property of simpler instinctual processes, (Landgraf, 77). As an emergent property, will to power is not vitalistic. Landgraf’s book is highly selective, by his own statement of method, and he does not take into account the teaching on the will in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as the creative will, explaining his omission by stating to be writing for posthumanists who can profitably engage in discussions with Nietzsche, so by implication, leaving it an open question whether profitable engagement with the Nietzsche of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is even to be had for posthumanists. The will to power is creative in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; it is individual, autonomous, interiorized, agential, and hierarchical, all aspects of the will to power that Landgraf thinks are not engageable by posthumanists.



*Leben* is not a Darwinian thought of evolution. *Ein Mehr an Leben* comes to Nietzsche, as he tells us in his autobiography *Ecce Homo*, as a *Schöpfung*, not by mechanics; *ein Mehr an Leben* is a speciation rupture event.<sup>4</sup> Populations speciate, not individuals, of course, in any scientific sense of the term, and I quite agree with Paul Loeb that the *Übermensch* is not an individual and that the speciation rupture is not limited to one lifetime but references a genuinely new species.<sup>5</sup>

An early variant of the chapter we have just been studying, “On Self Overcoming” in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* contains a passage describing the “World

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<sup>4</sup> On this point, see the important variant to the intercalated passage “On this perfect day...” at KSA 13, 23 [14], 613-614.

<sup>5</sup> I acknowledge my broad sympathy with Paul S. Loeb’s interpretation of Nietzsche, particularly his central claim that Zarathustra’s mission is to inaugurate “an era of a new species of human being.” As Loeb writes, “Zarathustra’s ultimate goal is to bring about a future species that will stand in relation to us as we stand in relation to the ape” (Loeb, *Nietzsche’s Transhumanism: Evolution and Eternal Recurrence*, p. 89). I also share Loeb’s conviction that Nietzsche’s vision of evolution is inseparable from a new orientation to time; for my part, I understand time and evolution as co-dimensions, or perhaps even two aspects of one dimension, a relationship articulated through the doctrine of eternal recurrence. I have attempted a robust account of the Eternal Recurrence—distinct from both a psychological “as if” and from metaphysical readings—in my review of Bevis McNeil’s *Nietzsche and Eternal Recurrence* (Steinbuch, 2023a). I note a crucial connection in Nietzsche’s “On Redemption,” between development and development by willing the eternal recurrence where Zarathustra’s project is described as bringing together and composing into one composition (*eins Dichte*) what is “fragment, riddle, and dreadful accident” (Nietzsche 1980, vol. 4, p. 179, lines 20–22). Later, all “it was” is similarly identified as “fragment, riddle, and dreadful accident” (*ibid.*, p. 181, lines 15–18). This textual motif establishes a link between suffering, temporality, and the process of speciation, suggesting that the advance of the will to power—the *Mehr* of life—is realized through the creative integration of suffering as a necessity and a coordinating philosophical pathos of willing of eternal recurrence. What is being affirmed is life sacrificed again and again for power, and it is affirmed because that is how speciation is happening and in some non-moral sense, “should” be affirmed, but we are rejecting it and have become revengeful against will to power. The idea that Nietzsche believed that we had to affirm life in all its terribleness to be higher beings is nonsense, and leads only to circular thinking as we wonder why. We have to affirm the suffering of life sacrificed as per the necessity of such suffering because that necessity is the inescapable process of speciation. *Pace* Loeb, this is not a values theory of affirmation, nor does speciation arise from the adoption of new values. The opposite is true: values, if such are involved, follow speciation, in any scientific sense of the term, not the other way around. Consider the 25,000 speciation events in the 200-million-year history of ammonites—not one was triggered by a revaluation of values. Nietzsche emphasized necessity as a *feeling*, not as a cognitive act: a feeling that arises from the relentlessness of the creative force of will to power again and again cutting into life. The feeling of creative suffering over and over—because it is creative—is declared worthy of Eternal Recurrence, as Nietzsche makes clear in his unpublished fragments (Nietzsche 2023a, 195–197). The repetition is inherent in the speciation process in our lives as actually lived; the feeling of the necessity of life sacrificed for power is not a dictate of a pseudo moral imperative from an a priori cosmology being imposed on us, but emerges from that repetition itself in the higher person.

of Truth.”<sup>6</sup> The sense of the term “truth” in “World of Truth” is truth as opposed to the mendacity of the decadent in his spiritualization of revenge, so limited in scope. The World of Truth turns the lie that the decadent is the ideal type inside out. In Nietzsche’s philosophy, the World of Truth is the totality of the knowledge that guides the will to power in its becoming master over our intimate weaknesses, knowledge come from life cut into itself. That knowledge is always opposed by the decadent’s mendacity. The knowledge in question is knowing how to advance the growth of power against what resists it. Willing the Eternal Recurrence is just such a “knowing how” in my view. In the idea of the eternal recurrence, “the knot of destiny for humanity is bound” says Nietzsche (Nietzsche 2001a, p. 601). There can be no question that “On Redemption” sets the decadent and Willing Eternal Recurrence in an antagonistic relationship. The willing that such knowledge makes possible by which power grows in becoming master of the intimate weaknesses in our lives is a creative willing that creates the world to be “thinkable, seeable and feelable” for us as awareness of extended aliveness, as we are awakened to the evolutionary order of development of life. It is the generative will. That extension is the rupture of speciation. The World of Truth is composed of knowledge of speciation potential, and we are in the new world as that new species known to ourselves as such. The world into which we are born that is comprehensible and rational is the world of this new species.

#### “SPIRIT IS THE LIFE THAT CUTS INTO LIFE”

But to gain such self-knowledge, life must spiritedly “cut into itself.” In the chapter of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part II ‘On the Famous Wise Men,’ Zarathustra instructs

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<sup>6</sup> See this variant text to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part II “On Self-Overcoming”: “Thus, there is neither good nor evil, which would be imperishable: everything must always overcome itself anew. With your values, you wield force, you value-creating ones: and this is your creative will out of hidden love. But a stronger force grows out of your values, and there eggshells break. Thus, my friends, life itself taught me about **its secret**; therefore I had to become the destroyer of your good and evil. Let us speak only out of truth! What does it matter if we ourselves are shattered by the truth, this terrible thing! May truth shatter us! May the world be shattered by the truth! (and break into pieces)! That I create a new world, the World of Truth. May the world be shattered by our truths—so there is a new world to create! For, my friends, if truth does not want to build the world anew, what does truth matter!” (Nietzsche 1980, 14, 302.) For readability, I have omitted bracketed material and quoted only Nietzsche’s final, unedited text, and I have combined variants.

the famous wise men on his Dionysian wisdom: he writes: “Spirit is the life that itself cuts into life; with its own agony it increases its own knowledge,” (Nietzsche 1976, p. 216). Will to power deliberately sets us back to enable itself to gain knowledge of our intimate weaknesses to grow in power over them. The line: “life sacrifices itself for power,” (Nietzsche 1976, p. 227) is a reference to interiority, as the sacrifice is to lead to knowledge of how to strengthen life against its original crippling of us as beings made of limbs and fragments merely.

In an 1884 *Nachlaß* text, Nietzsche writes about the Dionysian Wisdom that characterizes the highest type of human being, and that the world as he would wish to see it has emblazoned over it the principle of the “greatest possible stupidity,” (*Princip der grössßtmöglichen Dummheit*) the *Übermut* symbol, because that is the world in which will to power is ever turned against success/self-interest in order to make its advance, (Nietzsche 2023a, 197). The idea is that will to power brings a kind of devilry and devilment into our lives to study and understand ourselves as beings of “fragment, riddle and dreadful accident,” leading us to knowledge of self-overcoming and to life and even *ein Mehr an Leben*. He speaks of the suffering that will to power brings on us as delivery and devilment. In the world, as it is reflected in his mirror—as he lives the reality of will to power in himself and as that reality is reflected back into the world as what it should be—it bears emblazoned over it the “*Übermut*” Symbol. It is the world in which we are first authentically rendered by the principle of selecting against nihilistic “success” according to the rule of The Greatest Possible Stupidity. This is the world as presented in his “mirror” in *The Will to Power* (Nietzsche 1968, § 1067). It is the world as the reflection of himself in his self-overcoming, and as it is opposed to the world of lies told by the decadent.

Will to power forces us to take the path of the greatest possible stupidity in our lives, throwing our secure lives into turmoil, and sacrificing life for power. We are vulnerable to the will to power in this way; it will sacrifice life so that its intimate weaknesses may be brought into focus and knowledge acquired of how to strengthen life in ourselves against them and enable the will to power to grow. But, the decadent has set himself to reject this reality of life and to renounce his future in becoming the forebearer of the Overhuman that such knowledge as life cutting into itself by the will to power may bring. Stasis and flight into nihilism is the result.

Dionysian wisdom, on the other hand, is to have joy in life sacrificing itself for

power; joy in that the sacrifice of it is tied to acquiring knowledge of how to strengthen ourselves against our intimate weaknesses, so ultimately, it is joy in the inexhaustibility of life. This is Nietzsche's authentic happiness, as he states in the opening sentence of *Ecce Homo*, "Why I Am So Wise." His happiness puts the lie to the fake happiness of the *kleine Menschen* and the fake culture of "equal rights." We find this contrast in the section "Zarathustra's Prologue," Section § 4 in which Zarathustra relates his litany of what in human beings he loves most, among which we read: "I love him who is abashed when the dice fall to make his fortune, and asks, 'Am I a then crooked gambler?'" (Nietzsche 1976, 127). Taking the path of the greatest possible stupidity against self-interest to the degree that it provides us with knowledge of our suffering and how to overcome it is the sign of the interior journey on route to the Overhuman, which is our authentic selfhood because speciation is what species do. On the other hand, in the next section of "Zarathustra Prologue" § 5 we read of the *kleine Menschen*—"the last humans," "the beginning of the end"—who believe that in their dereliction in self-overcoming they have found happiness: "We have invented happiness" they say. But it is the happiness of the idiot as Zarathustra indicates as being such, as after each such declaration he writes of them: "*und Sie blinken.*"

A further statement of *Übermüt* devilry occurs in the published writings in *Beyond Good and Evil* § 36 and 37. In section § 36, Nietzsche argues to the imaginary interlocutor that the world is will to power and he is too. But in the next section, 37, the interlocutor objects: "God is refuted but not the Devil?" and Nietzsche's answer is in the form of a rhetorical question. The interlocutor is making a popular objection, but Nietzsche asks, "Oh, for the devil's sake, who is forcing you to use popular expressions anyway!" (Nietzsche 2014a, 40). The answer is that it is the devilry of will to power that is doing so, as he, the interlocutor, will soon learn as his obtuseness to what is being said about himself as being will to power is itself just will to power leading him to a rude awakening as he stumbles forward on the path of the greatest possible stupidity it has just set him on. Life must cut into itself, just as it did Nietzsche's in his terrible description of himself as "already dead...still living and becoming old" (which, note, is a single clause, parataxis, no "but," or "while," or "although" but referencing single stasis field, not two of anything.) Life *cuts into itself* to acquire the knowledge to speciate. That is the issue that sets up the antagonistic relationship between the decadent and

the *wohlgeratner Mensch* which leads to the decadent's misrepresentation of the conditions of speciation in the other-worldly mythology of revenge, the Spirit of Revenge. The whole point of the work of art in Nietzsche is to call out the *Lügenwelt* of the decadent, to extend Nietzsche's usage, by representation of the true world artistically, the world of beings who can will themselves to become a new species. Life cutting into itself is an agony that generates the new knowledge requisite for further self-overcoming. Nietzsche describes his suffering (*Schmerz*) as "almost holy," because it is the door to his experience and thus to his knowledge („zu meinen Erlebnissen, folglich Erkenntnissen“), (Nietzsche 2001a, p. 602). His suffering is holy, and in his late letters he aligns his own agony with the agony on the cross, signing himself as "The Crucified." Nietzsche's 'holy knowledge' gained from life cutting into itself is knowledge of biocultural speciation. If Heraclitus' cosmos is a child's game of flux, Nietzsche's is a *Grand Guignol* theater where life hacks off its own limbs to grow new ones.

#### GUILT AND PUNISHMENT AS THE *LÜGENWÖRTE* OF THE *KLEINER MENSCH*

Will to power cuts into life to acquire knowledge of how to grow in power over life's intimate weaknesses, setting us, hopefully, even on the path of the greatest possible stupidity. But from the perspective of self-preservation, which is the perspective of the *kleiner Mensch*, what is a "fragment riddle and dreadful accident" is a misfortune only and not part of a dynamic of evolution to stronger life, and that the will to power is malevolent in intruding disruptively on our secure lives, provoking in the decadent the strongest feelings of revenge against itself. The decadent cannot engage the suffering of will to power's "devilish pranks" on life as a suffering of life growing—if we are to call them such as they are devastating in their effect. Perhaps if once we can celebrate the fact of evolution we can joyfully apprehend the destructive agency of will to power as *übermütig*. Instead, the decadent wants to undo the past, to change it, he wants a different past. Unlike the *wohlgeratner Mensch*, the decadent *does* believe in misfortune and guilt as the categories of the Spiritualization of Revenge: the self that comes of "fragment, limbs and dreadful accidents" from which he suffers is misfortune, whereas for Nietzsche it is *ein Glück*, as he tells us in his autobiography, *Ecce Homo*. By way of preparing us for the thought of speciation in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, he says that he does not believe in misfortune and guilt, (Nietzsche

2001a, p. 221). But the decadent sees it as a punishment; that his suffering is a punishment is already a revengeful thought. It is revengeful just in the fact that it is a lie about the meaning of the suffering in the sacrifice of life for power; it is revengeful against the will to power lying about it. All of life is a punishment, says the decadent (and here I am still following the text of “On Redemption”) and by turning that suffering into the joy of a rupture event to speciation, I am denying my guiltiness and I am immoral. It is an unspeakable malevolence. The decadent’s belief in the morality of his guilt and his punishment in the suffering of life sacrificed for power is so that he can have a good conscience about his dereliction in not undertaking what we are called to do, which is to become forebears of the Overhuman.

The *kleiner Mensch* avenges himself on will to power becoming agential in the *wohlgeratner Mensch* by getting him to believe in the same way, thus to confuse him about the meaning of will to power stimulus suffering in life sacrificed for power and stand down from the project of his self-overcoming. We are one species after all (although we will become divided *de facto* when the Great Politics is won) and the *wohlgeratner Mensch* is very liable to being tipped back into the revengeful thinking of the *kleiner Mensch*. In getting him to believe the same way as himself, the decadent guarantees that will to power will be thwarted, and that is his revenge. Revenge is against the will to power for cutting into life for knowledge.

The functional premise in the relationship between the decadent and the *wohlgeratner Mensch* is that the latter is surpassingly vulnerable. The *wohlgeratner Mensch* is capable of engaging the suffering inherent in will to power growing in strengthening life against its intimate weaknesses *simpliciter*, but the revengeful ill will of the decadent zeroes in on that moment and tries to overburden it with additional suffering so that the *wohlgeratner Mensch* is overwhelmed and made to stand down from the effort of will to power in evolution. Getting him to back off from his effort is how the ill will accomplishes its revenge against the will to power. The texts are quite clear on this antagonistic relationship. In “On Redemption” we learn that the ill willed decadent is revengeful toward all who can suffer, meaning all in whom will to power is working as it should to strengthen life in us. The will has turned from being a “liberator,” (*Befreier*) to a being a “hurter” (*Wehethäter*). The point is the same as made earlier in the “On The Tarantulas.” Those who are decadent are poisonous spiders who want to hurt those who have power with their poison of revenge. The tarantulas will take revenge and “abuse”

(*Beschimpfung*) against all who are not equal to them, meaning those above them in rank order of life and who are so because the higher rank means will to power making life stronger, so the revenge is against will to power. Against all that has power, the tarantulas will hurt by their revengefulness, a poison, “against **everything that has power: by this they want to hurt those who now have power,**”(gegen *Alles was Macht hat: solchen wollen sie damit wehethun die jetzt die Macht habe*<sup>7</sup>).

Nietzsche's critique of pity is along these lines. Pity multiplies suffering, and the vengeful intent of the decadent in pitying the *wohlgeratner Mensch* is to get him to pity himself because of his suffering in self-overcoming, but that then multiplies his suffering making it all that much more difficult to endure, so that the effort of will to power becomes overwhelmed and fails. That is his revenge. This is why pity for the *höhere Menschen* is Zarathustra's last temptation because they are those *wohlgeratene Menschen* on the path of will to power development and so are enduring that suffering. Zarathustra hears their cry of distress and is terrified

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<sup>7</sup> As an instance of a revisionist reading, one might cite Babette Babich's argument that in “On the Tarantulas” Zarathustra, “is not arguing against social equality because he is against the idea but because the claim is impossible, corresponding to a shortsightedness that happens to be ideologically self-serving,” (Babich 2016, 123). Babich's point is that Zarathustra does not oppose equality as an ideal and that his critique of the preachers of equality is only that they, knowing it is impossible, are being self-serving in preaching it nevertheless, and shortsighted so the ideal of equality, shared by Zarathustra in Babich's reading, will not come to be; whence their self-servingness. But Zarathustra's critique of the preachers of equality is not merely that they are self-serving in defending equality ideology as inequality is impossible however much of an ideal it may be. It is obvious that the critique is against the tarantulas' revengefulness against the agency of will to power in the agon that leads to inequality and hierarchy, *Rangordnung* of life. The tarantula bites Zarathustra as he praises the inequality to come of the god-like struggle in the agon; his critique is of their revengefulness against will to power agency manifested in the agon, which they are power struggling with to tyrannize over it and thwart its efficacy. This is a recurring theme in Nietzsche's writings: the agon is limited to the aristocracy, in some sense a ‘nobility,’ and the decadent strikes vengefully against it. Zarathustra is their opposite as he will not whirl with revenge from being bitten by the tarantulas and “dance the tarantella,” suggesting he will persist instead in pursuing the very non-ideal inequality of the godlike striving in the agon. There is no sense at all in the section that Zarathustra is lukewarm about the inequality of the agon as an unavoidable course. He rejects the tarantula's moral framework entirely—not out of neutrality, but as himself a *wohlgeratener Mensch* who affirms the agonistic *culture for an elite group* and the suffering necessitated by the will to power in growing in power and strengthening aliveness (they are the same). That is what has to be affirmed as worthy of recurrence. The text leaves no room for Babich's ambiguity: the tarantulas are venomous enemies of life's differential forces, not misguided idealists. Babich's revisionism distorts Nietzsche's core critique, substituting ideological convenience for philosophical rigor. Her interpretation risks sanitizing Nietzsche into a liberal pluralist, and I would count it as ideological overwriting of what the text plainly says to a commonsense reading.

upon hearing it because he is not sure he can pass the test they represent, the bet waged against him by the Soothsayer (Schopenhauer) in Part IV, “The Cry of Distress.” The test is whether Zarathustra, himself like Nietzsche on the lowest rung on the ladder of life, will show mastery of revenge against the will to power agency they represent in controlling his compulsion to multiply their suffering by pitying them and so causing will to power evolution in them to fail. He, on the lowest rung on the ladder of life, is faced with life ascending in them, and the test is whether he will become revengeful against will to power in the face of it and try to thwart will to power in them by multiplying the suffering in their self-overcoming. If he wins the bet, he proves that he is true teacher of the new values of the revaluation. Pity is Machiavellian in its stratagems against will to power; it is an antagonistic relationship to the *wohlgeratener Mensch*, (Steinbuch, 2022). My point in these citations is that calling the relationship between the decadent and the *wohlgeratener Mensch* “agonal” has the characteristics of an idling circularity, leaving the thesis to be, as far as I can see by my lights: “if everyone is in the agon, then Nietzsche believed in democracy.”<sup>8</sup>

The decadent would like to think he is justly morally aggrieved by the action of the *wohlgeratener Mensch/höherer Mensch* but that is not so. The strengthening of life in the *wohlgeratener Mensch* is essentially interior; the agency of will to power is in terms of the interior self, not the exterior self, the self exteriorized in consumerism and digital avatars. But the ill-willed decadent tries to make out that the will to power is exteriorized as a force of domination. This is not without its point because the exercise of will to power is amoral and it does lead to violating the moral law, as *per* Kant’s understanding of it, but it is only in the mind of the decadent that that is the primary intention. The primary intention of the *höherer Mensch* is to exercise and strengthen life in himself by will to power coming

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<sup>8</sup> The following writers—Herman Siemens, Vasti Roodt, William E. Connolly, David Owen, Lawrence Hatab, and, although not centrally involved in the issue, also Keith Ansell-Pearson, Alan Schrift, and Crista Davis Acampora—have worked on the theory of the agonistic as a foundation for a conception of democracy instead of consensus, interpreting Nietzsche’s oppositional structures as agonistic rather than antagonistic. While I recognize that we cannot get along without a concept of a Nietzschean extension, I do not believe that it is legitimate in this case, as this difference is the key oppositional structure in Nietzsche’s thinking, he is the opposite of the decadent as the *wohlgeratener Mensch*. It is unambiguously antagonistic, and consistently so up reaching even the point of the Great Politics/Great War against him. The agon is confined to the new nobility, and the decadent is the moralizing tyrant seeking to revengefully thwart will to power agency in it by imposing an order of equality.



into increasing mastery of its intimate weakness. That is his absolute existential premise.

“WAR WITH THE DECADENT?” PERHAPS.

It is difficult for the *wohlgeratner Mensch* to endure the added layer of suffering the *kleiner Mensch* introduces to thwart the course of speciation, and the result is that it is difficult to will his recurrence. This is Zarathustra’s abyssal thought in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part III ‘The Convalescent’: he is so downcast because the *kleiner Mensch* cannot be affirmed, but Zarathustra cannot afford not to affirm him either. This is the paradox that so preoccupies Zarathustra for those seven days, all his labor to carry together and compose into *eines Dichtes* on behalf of humanity opposed by the very humanity it is meant to save! Hard to stay positive. But, in the broad-most scheme of things, even the *kleiner Mensch* must be willed to recur as he is part of the great process of evolution in understanding itself, and his intrusiveness against our attempts to will the suffering of evolving is itself something to be understood and acknowledged as necessary. The *höhere Menschen* must even will the recurrence of revengefulness against their own will to power. Paying attention to this context, we may note that it is not truly affirmative of the decadent in the sense of valuing him, but, rather, it is a matter of having no choice but to affirm him. But this is not an agonistic affirmation of the value of the decadent as the liberal reading of the oppositional structure of decadent/*wohlgeratner Mensch* in Nietzsche’s thinking would have it. Those readings make no attempt to penetrate into the paradox of the seven days and nights Zarathustra lay downcast, which his animals could not understand. Indeed, how could his animals understand him? But what if that affirmation became impossible, as this thinking is not normative at all but entirely practical? What if the decadent were poised to ensure that humanity flounders? Then we would have to settle for less than perfect affirmativeness, and that is the thought that ushers in the idea of the Great War, the Great Politics against him. It is an essentially antagonistic relationship, and if the decadent shows signs of winning it, his destructiveness being so great and so intolerably burdensome an overlay to the *wohlgeratene Menschen*, *höhere Menschen*, then he has to be curtailed by any means necessary.

Dionysian art appears as the victory over the terrible destructiveness of the *kleiner Menschen*. It can exist only in the transformed humanity. Nietzsche states his

task as being to prepare for the moment of highest self-examination on the part of humanity when it faces this, (Nietzsche 2001a, 274, 304), but that does not mean that the decadent will face it but only that we as a species must. There is no meaning scientific concept of speciation in which all members of the parent species speciate.

### THE AESTHETIC AS POLITICS: THE DIONYSIAN FUTURE OF ART

In *Ecce Homo*, “Books” *Birth of Tragedy* in sections §3 and 4 we learn of the meaning of *Dionysian* tragedy, that is, the meaning of the tragic pathos of *joy in destruction*, and are promised a Dionysian tragic age of music. The promised tragic age of music is set in the future, and said future will be ushered in by the Great Politics that will bring about a *Zuviel von Leben*.<sup>9</sup> The Great Politics will be waged by the Party of Life, and it will include the “relentless destruction” (*schonungslose Vernichtung*) of “everything degenerating and parasitical.”<sup>10</sup> The Great Politics can

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<sup>9</sup> Nietzsche’s “Great Politics” in *Ecce Homo*, the *Nachlaß*, and his late letters is a radical, transformative, and future-oriented project that goes well beyond the institutional or cultural reforms discussed by Hugo Drochon in his book (Drochon 2016). While Drochon’s book is a significant contribution, it does not sufficiently grapple with the depth and extremity of Nietzsche’s late political vision, especially as articulated in the unpublished notes and correspondence of 1888–1889. Any serious engagement with Nietzsche’s political thought must take these late writings as central, not peripheral, to understanding what Nietzsche meant by “Great Politics.” The later writings reveal Nietzsche’s ambition for a politics that transcends the nation-state, aiming at a reconfiguration of humanity itself—ideas that are only partially addressed in Drochon’s analysis.

<sup>10</sup> The translation of “*jene neue Partei des Lebens*” as ‘that new section of life’ in the Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, trans. Carol Diethe, (Nietzsche 2001a, 259) exemplifies a tendency in Anglophone Nietzsche scholarship to render politically charged terms in a more neutral register. The German ‘*Partei*’ means ‘party’ or ‘faction,’ terms that carry a strong political and oppositional connotation. By translating it as “section,” the revolutionary and militant dimension of Nietzsche’s call for a new cultural and philosophical movement is diminished. Furthermore, because “section of life” is a generic phrase, capitalizing it as “Section of Life” would seem arbitrary or even nonsensical in English—it doesn’t carry the weight or specificity of a proper noun like “Party of Life.” Thus, Diethe is almost compelled to use lowercase, further reducing the phrase’s impact and stripping away the visual and conceptual emphasis present in the German. This choice is indicative of a broader pattern in some interpretations of Nietzsche, where the radical and unsettling aspects of his philosophy, especially his vision of a “Great Politics,” are downplayed in favor of more palatable readings. Such translations risk distorting Nietzsche’s intent, particularly in works like *Ecce Homo*, where he explicitly positions himself as a philosopher of the future and a proponent of a new, life-affirming politics. In this context, Diethe’s translation, which is likely to become standard as in the CWFN edition, may inadvertently contribute to a domestication of Nietzsche’s project of “Great Politics,” aligning it with prevailing democratic sensibilities that Nietzsche himself sought to unmask as a reaction against the

include kinetic warfare, “life” Nietzsche writes, “is a consequence of war.” (Nietzsche 1968, § 53)<sup>11</sup> which does not say that all wars lead to life but that all life comes from war. *Ecce Homo*, ‘Wise’ § 7 is about Nietzsche’s warlikeness and part of the Great Politics against the stasis culture of decadent, and it is a biocultural text.<sup>12</sup> A Dionysian state will emerge of transformed humanity as a ruptured speciation event. There is nothing whatsoever in the text of *Ecce Homo* “Books” *Birth of Tragedy* § 4 to suggest that Dionysian art initializes this transfiguration, and, instead, the explicit statement is to the contrary that *The Great Politics* initializes it and that the age of Dionysian art follows.

Speciation rupture means war. What is unique about these wars is that we will go through them *but without suffering from them*, and this line is emphasized in

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speciation rupture implied by the *Übermensch*—a new, emergent type of humanity rather than a singular individual.

<sup>11</sup> The following texts would seem to call for real, i.e., kinetic, and not just spiritual warfare. Laurence Lampert’s binary either/or is unfaithful to Nietzsche’s thinking. These are: Nietzsche 2023, 238; Nietzsche, 1968, § 126, 127, 856. Laurence Lampert cites this text: “war (but without gunpowder!) between different thoughts! and their armies!” (Nietzsche, 1980, volume 10, p 515), (Lampert 1986, 53) in support of the idea that Nietzsche was not talking about real warfare. Also, there is this text from *Ecce Homo*, “It is war, but war without powder and smoke, without warlike attitudes, without pathos and contorted limbs—all these things would still be ‘idealism’” (Nietzsche 2001a, 267-268), which would seem to support Lampert’s point, but I am questioning it. The *Nachlaß* text cited by Lampert is from the fall of 1883. In the full context, the text refers to a new nobility. The reference is to an aristocratic community privileged to war. The text mentions the decadent, and it is clear that the engagement with the decadent is as per his usefulness to the aristocracy and not a kind of moral parity. A close reading of this text and comparison with other similar ones shows that Lampert’s interpretation is not supported. A similar text occurs in *Ecce Homo*, “Books” *Dawn* (Nietzsche 2001a, 173) where Nietzsche says that his critique of morality does not have the scent of powder but that one will find lovelier scents in it, suggesting that the “without powder and smoke” line does not mean without kinetic war but without a kind of idealistic warfare, full of pomp and fanfare. That is the actual rhetorical context of the “without powder and smoke” language, not as opposite in menace to kinetic warfare. He says that the effect of the book (*Dawn*) follows like the following of an inference, not like a canon. Morality is destroyed as an inference after one has moved on afterward, which thought does not have an implication about how it is destroyed. This is metaphorical language and Lampert is off sides taking it to have exclusionary meaning as he does to spiritual warfare. His spiritual war/kinetic war binary is a falsification, and the Great Politics is both.

<sup>12</sup> The point in the section that opponents must be equal is sometimes read to support an agonal reading of Nietzsche’s theme of warfare, but the thought of equality there is contextualized as opposition but the opposition cannot be either from above, stronger, since you cannot win, not from below, since you get nothing out of it. The point is that the opponent must be a psychological counter to my level of will to power, as otherwise there is no chance for will to power to develop from the conflict. This text cannot be reconstructed into a framework of moral parity as it confers nothing on the opponent beyond utility. The text at Nietzsche 1980, volume 10, 515 cited above in the previous footnote, is explicit on this point of *using* the decadent (*Die Entartenden*) and its being his fit punishment to be used... and used up.

the text as being the point of the paragraph, (Nietzsche 2001a, “Books” *Birth of Tragedy* § 4).<sup>13</sup> Because of the *Zuviel von Leben* these wars will bring about, the destruction will be in the context of a Dionysian joy in destruction, and what will be joyful will be the rupturing event of speciation, (Nietzsche 2001a, “Books” *Birth of Tragedy* § 3). Nietzsche’s insight is that life willingly sacrifices even its highest types because it is inexhaustible, and that such destruction is not a loss but a prelude to the emergence of new forms,. Today his insight is widely recognized in evolutionary biology, where the interplay between extinction and speciation is understood as a fundamental driver of life’s continual renewal and diversification. The same language as above from *Ecce Homo*, “Books,” *Birth of Tragedy* § 4 appears in a *Nachlaß* text titled “The Great Politics” where he speaks of the Great Politics, as being a creative force strong enough to cultivate humanity as a whole and higher things, including:

...merciless severity (*schonungsloser Härte*) against the degenerate and parasitic in life - against what corrupts, poisons, slanders, destroys to the ground, .. and sees in the destruction of life the mark of a higher kind of soul,” (Nietzsche 1980, 13: 25[1], my translation.)

Dionysian tragic pathos, precisely, is joy in destruction as informed by the wisdom of the inexhaustibility of life and the recognition that the occurrence of destruction is necessary and is its own testament to its inexhaustibility. The aesthetic contains this same thought: life cut into itself as the sacrifice for knowledge by the warrior of knowledge, but ultimately sacrifice without suffering from it because it is leading toward the *Zuviel von Leben*. The work of art just is that political program in antagonism to the decadent. The political transformation Nietzsche is envisioning is to be brought about by the creative force of the Great Politics, and the Dionysian age of art to follow will be founded on those politically transformed grounds. The Great Politics is not small politics and so probably does not meet the standard criteria for political thinking, but

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<sup>13</sup> The extraordinary characteristic of these wars is that we will look back upon them, after they have been fought and won, and realize that we did not suffer from them, and that is why the line is in italics. But why would that happen? My reading refers this line to the framework of speciation. Although Strong (2008) wrote about the uniqueness of the wars of the great politics, he did not identify the point of uniqueness as being wars from which we do not suffer because of the *Zuviel von Leben* after all “degenerate and parasitical” elements are gone. That is what must be explained because it is not a calculus of subtraction.

that is actually the point. There is no suggestion that the tragic age of art can effect that transformation before the work of the great wars of the great politics; the transformation is explicitly stated as the force of the Great Politics. Strong's reading of the transfiguration has matters precisely backwards, and it makes no sense that way. Art does not generate a politics, it can only reinforce an existing one. Nietzsche tells us what the politics is in which art is embedded and it is not democracy but anti-democracy.

It is time to return to the text of 'On Those Who Are Sublime' and a close reading and delve into its details and to reveal that Nietzsche had thought through a coherent theory of art and ground my thesis that Nietzsche's aesthetics cannot be appropriated for a program of democratization. A bit of background context to begin this discussion is needed because the text is actually quite rooted in the tradition from Kant, although going further beyond him theoretically.

In Kant's essay from his pre-critical writings, "Observations on the Feeling of the Sublime and the Beautiful,"<sup>14</sup> we read about the feeling of the sublime in connection with what is overwhelming in the natural world, its vastness, chaos, and power, and how the sublime cannot be beautiful. The boundless sea evokes the feeling of the sublime but it cannot be beautiful, for example. The beautiful must be bounded and at rest, but the sublime cannot maintain such bounds. What exists amid turmoil cannot have a purpose; possessing purposiveness requires restfulness. Kant claims that art displays a kind of undefined purposiveness, appearing organized with a purpose in mind, but without a specific, identifiable purpose. To have purpose is to be a self-moved mover of something else, and that implies rest. The analysis of purpose in terms of rest finds parallels in Hegel's thought: "purpose is what is immediate and at rest, the unmoved which is also self-moving, and as such is subject," he writes. (Hegel 1979).<sup>15</sup> To have a purpose is to be a self-moved mover of something else, and that implies rest. And, finally, the sublime can transition to becoming beautiful. All these points carry over to Nietzschean aesthetics of will to power as well. In 'On Those Who Are Sublime' from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Part II he makes the distinction between the sublime and the beautiful and allows for the transition

<sup>14</sup> The work originally appeared in 1764; it is translated into English by Paul Guyer in the Cambridge volume "Anthropology, History, and Education," Cambridge texts in the History of Philosophy, published in 2007.

<sup>15</sup> In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Preface, section 22.

from formless movement to a bounded rest, and that the bounded rest of the beautiful one, the Over-Hero, (*Überheld*) has a purpose, which is to summon our becoming the *Übermenschen* species. In this text, Nietzsche is going beyond the aesthetic thinking in his early work on Western tragedy and its Hegelianism of the dialectic of the Dionysian and the Apollonian, and we find a definition of the beautiful in terms of the Dionysian only. He writes: “When power becomes gracious and descends into the visible (*in’s Sichtbare*) that alone I would call beauty,” (Nietzsche 1976, 230) which is a reference to his idea of will to power. We find a coordinated definition of beauty in another chapter where Zarathustra asks: “What is beauty?” and answers: “Where I must will with all my will ... that an image may not remain a mere image” (Nietzsche 1976, 235).<sup>16</sup> The point is that I must will with all my will to the end that what is a mere image before me, namely myself as a self-that-is-overcome, can become my realized self, and that means in the visible world. Why is the sublime one, the heroic will, not at rest? Not at rest from what we may ask. And what then does that tell us about the meaning of the over-hero’s rest and the rational purpose of art *contra* the irrational *Lügenwelt* of the decadent?

The sublime one for Nietzsche cannot be beautiful because he is not at rest; he is unbounded. as yet without form and has no purpose. The sublime one is a warrior and a knower; he has been heroic in having learned what he knows and in his warlike engagements he has learned ugly truths; he even decks himself out in them, but that is not yet the adornment of beauty. The ugly truths he has learned are in relation to himself, and he is terrifying and sublime in his self-knowledge. He is the lion-willed for whom knowledge is a joy who then sets before himself tasks of self-overcoming. His is the holy suffering” Nietzsche speaks of in relation to himself, made “holy” because it leads to knowledge that is necessary in the great war he fights against the decadent whereby new values appear, (Nietzsche 2001a, p. 602). His redemption is yet to come: “he must still redeem his own monsters and riddles, changing them into heavenly children” (Nietzsche 1976 230) that is, into angels. This point in the text does suggest a connection between art and willing the Eternal Recurrence, but not as a cosmological metaphysics. There is a further step from knowledge of how to

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<sup>16</sup> Part II, “On Immaculate Perception.”

achieve self-overcoming to its execution, to the redemption of his suffering by the creation of *ein Mehr* of life in himself. The poetic imagery is a narrative landscape of the inner life. As a warrior to hold fast such fearsome knowledge he is sublime, but he cannot be beautiful.

Art, according to Nietzsche, identifies a purpose tied to suffering, not just any and all suffering, but the suffering involved in self-overcoming that becomes the speciation event of the *Übermensch* species.<sup>17</sup> He has the knowledge of the sublime one. In contrast to Schopenhauer's pessimistic renunciation of the ever-suffering will (for which art serves as a relief against suffering), Nietzsche identifies a creative purpose for the will's suffering, and that is the purpose expressed in art. The creative will to power, creating *ein Mehr an Leben* manifested in *das Sichtlichbare*, is beauty. The knowledge the sublime one has been acquiring, and that makes self-overcoming possible, has become internalized; and in the *Übermensch* the will is now agential in becoming master of its intimate weakness, and so he is at rest. The *Über-Held* rests "with his arm placed over his head," Nietzsche writes in 'On Those Who Are Sublime' overcoming his rest even in his resting, as it is so perfect. The image of the arm placed over the head is from Dionysian iconography.<sup>18</sup> The will to power manifesting itself as the Dionysian *Über-Held* at rest in mastery of himself, and revealing the purpose of suffering as the *telos* of *ein Mehr an Leben*, the fulfillment of the sublime one's heroic knowledge quests, is the locus of beauty. Nothing like this is in the early idea of the Apollonian. But this then means that the work of art arises willlessly.

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<sup>17</sup> See *Twilight of the Idols*, Forays of an Untimely One, § 24, Nietzsche 2001cp. 101 on the purposiveness of art.

<sup>18</sup> There are several images of Dionysus in this pose recorded in the "Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae" (LIMC). The crooked arm gesture may also be found in many of the erotic wall paintings in Pompeii, although most of those would have been the 'Gabinetto Segreto' (Secret Cabinet) at the time of Nietzsche's visit there in 1877. However, one example was still on display as it was too degraded to be removed on Insula 5, Regio IX Cubiculum f, west side of atrium, on the west wall. It is heavily damaged but it could represent the Silenus and a maenad or perhaps the Silenus and a Hermaphrodite. The crooked arm iconography is also to be found on the sarcophagus, The Triumph of Dionysus, on Display in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum, the Gymnasiarch Gerostratos, although Nietzsche never traveled there to see it. This iconography is also to be found on the sarcophagus, The Marriage of Dionysus and Ariadne, on display in the Walters Museum in Baltimore, Maryland. In this instance, Ariadne is resting her head on the lap of Hypnos, the god of sleep, her arm placed over her head, while Eros draws Dionysus towards her. It is a standard gesture and Nietzsche was aware of it.

It is the soul's "greatest mystery;" (*das Geheimniss der Seele*), Nietzsche continues to write in the chapter, that only when she is abandoned by the hero is she approached, as if in a dream, by the *Über-Held* (Over-Hero), which is a reference to Ariadne's abandonment by Theseus on the island of Naxos and her rescue by Dionysus, thus by that identification, to reinforce the Dionysianism of the work of art. This is the "Great Mystery" of the soul, that the over-hero comes to us after the heroic will has subsided that is to say, as a radical newness. The key concept here is the concept of the involuntary: the sublime one must have done with his heroic will and become "will-less" (*Willenlösen*). We find something like this in Schiller's aesthetics as well: that there should not be a compulsion to will in response to the artwork, the aesthetic state is his "middle state" between reason and passion. In Nietzsche, the will to power reaches the end point of its development, and is at rest and becomes will-less, and only then graceful, as the *Über-Held* transcends suffering, and that is the mark of the beautiful. The mystery, the mystery of his negative aesthetics, is that the beautiful does not suffer the agony of knowledge, and that mystery is enfolded within the greater mystery of speciation itself as without consciousness of the suffering in the rupture that begot it.

#### THE *GROSSE POLITIK* AND THE WORLD OF TRUTH

The *Große Politik* is a transformative force driven by the will to power and creates the World of Truth. (*die Welt der Wahrheit*). In this is exposed the lie of the metaphysical order that defines humans as *beings of guilt*-indeed, of *eternal guilt*. The "deed," is locked in the past and irredeemable even by punishment, it cannot be undone and becomes a *stasis field of the eternal*. The metaphysical order's purpose is to preserve a **stasis field** within the dominant lineage, resisting transformation and perpetuating inherited values under a false rule. This shields the status quo from the disruptive force of the *Wille zur Macht's* creative use of suffering in the sacrifice of life as a stimulus for *Mehr leben* (surplus-life). This is the first truth of the *Welt der Wahrheit*.

The *Mehr an Leben* arises from the will to power mastering its intimate weaknesses as its exercise of itself, and becoming *das Sichtbare* (the visible). This visibility defines **beauty**, beauty visibly depicts the human as "fragment, riddle, and dreadful accident" overcome in *eine Dichtung* (a creative composition). Art



presents the *speciation event* as a rupture from the stasis of the decadent order, pointedly excluding the *decadent (kleiner Mensch)*.

A *Mehr an Leben (a surplus of life)*—the mark of speciation—grounds the artwork, and is realized only through the *Große Politik* and the *Zuviel von Leben* (excess of life) by the *Partei des Lebens* (Party of Life) defeating the *kleine Menschen* (small humans) and their *ressentiment*. **The** *Große Politik* transfigures humanity through an *illiberal, revolutionary order* where evolutionary development-speciation-rupture, rules over the stasis order of the destructive Spiritualization of Revenge imposed by the dominant lineage. Dionysian art serves this political overthrow, subordinating the rule of the *demos* (masses) to the rule of *Partei des Lebens*. Unlike for Kant, the work of art for Nietzsche does not mediate between the individual and the cosmos. Rather the heroic will of the warrior of knowledge and the *Über-Held* after him transforms our species in precisely gauging to alienate. Kaplama's "play" implies a Heraclitean harmonizing of individual and cosmos, but Nietzsche's Dionysian art **alienates**—it is a *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation-effect) art, to use Bertold Brecht's term, a negative aesthetic that *severs* the artist from his all too human lineage. The *Über-Held* (Over-Hero) of knowledge isn't a bridge to the cosmos but an incarnate *surgical blade* that excludes the *demos as life that will not abide to cut into itself* from its forward march.

Dionysian art exists solely within the political order forged by the *Große Politik's* wars against the *decadent/kleiner Mensch*. The Great Politics creates the transfiguration of the human race and does so as an order of rule grounded in the premise that evolutionary development, a speciation rupture, should rule when it is opposed, that speciation should dictate rule and not the main lineage in a formation of stasis that opposes it. The *Große Politik* is radically illiberal and exclusionary. It cannot be reconciled with an idea of agonistic pluralism. Dionysian art serves the political overthrow of the static order of moralization by the revengeful "preachers of equality" by the rule of the Party of Life. Nietzsche's politics, embedded in his philosophy of art, dictate that art cannot democratize. Attempts to the contrary are ideological overwriting and are civilizational, presupposing pluralism rather than telling us why we should have it. Strong's idea that the Dionysian Age can come by the artifice of the *kleine Menschen* accepting Nietzsche's invitation and thus further democratic order, is a fantasy Nietzsche. The Spiritualization of Revenge is not going to dissolve itself by being

invited to do so. Pluralism just is a politics of aggrievement and equal entitlement in identity. On this point Nietzsche could not be clearer, in *The Antichrist*, that being wronged emerges only on the presupposition of the equal entitlement not to be wronged, and that equal entitlement is meant precisely to inculcate moral aggrievement and that the socialists have set themselves as the guardians of the marginalized for this very reason (Nietzsche 2001b, § 57). By way of introduction to section 57 of *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche writes of his own autobiographical experience in *Ecce Homo*, how he rejects equal entitlement not to be wronged just for this reason and the result is that he adds life to himself as a reversal of the decline of life in himself that he carries from his inheritance from his father, (Nietzsche 2001a, 224). Relinquishing equal entitlement is a revaluation because it is life-conferring.<sup>19</sup> Strong's interpretation might emphasize how aesthetic forms (art, literature, myth) shape political realities, and that may be so, but the fundamental order as per Nietzsche's concerns is presented as the opposite to this, specifically in *Ecce Homo* "Books" *Birth of Tragedy* § 4, which text, while Strong acknowledges, he does not take to heart. This order is in force earlier in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in the coherent theory of art presented in 'On Those Who Are Sublime' and the exclusionary self-knowledge from life cutting into itself and affirmation of the sacrifice of life for this growth of will to power. That begins with the sublime and then, as a *Geheimniss*, beauty approaches the soul. *The politics*

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<sup>19</sup> In the CWFN (2021) translation of *Ecce Homo* by Carol Diethe, the line about Nietzsche's continuation of his father's life after his all too early death is rendered as "and as it were his continuation of life after an all too early death" for "*und gleichsam sein Fortleben nach einem allzufrühen Tode*," Nietzsche 2001a, 224). However, the more natural reading of "*sein Fortleben*" in context is that Nietzsche is the continuation of his father's life, not that his father is continuing his own life. "I am my father again and, as it were, the continuation of his life [in me] after his all too early death" is the intended meaning. This is supported by the translations of Hollingdale, Kaufmann, and Large, (whose renderings "his continuing life" is acceptable) accurately reflect the German. The point of the passage is Nietzsche's autobiographical experience as hinging on the relinquishment of equal rights—the relinquishment of equal rights adds life to him as he is his father, which his father could not do, as he carried his father's decadence in himself. So the value of the revaluation of relinquishing equal rights is that it is life-creating in relation to the revengefulness of the decadent, he and his father before him, but he as, unlike his father, a "beginning" (*Anfang*). It may be the most important line in *Ecce Homo* about the meaning of the revaluation, which meaning is what the work was purposed to reveal. Diethe's ambiguous translation obscures this radical point: that to relinquish the claim to equal entitlement is biocultural for Nietzsche, his father's decadence, as he inherited it, had become the energizing stimulus to life, *zum Mehr leben*. In this context, mistranslating or obscuring Nietzsche's self-description as the continuation of his father's life risks neutralizing the text's most explosive, anti-democratic implications.

*of social transfiguration in Strong's understanding does not bring with it a right to rule. Lack of clarity about what the meaning is of "politics" in his discussion is the result and his 'politics of transfiguration' reduces to a magical incantation that changes nothing.*

## CONCLUSION

Kaplama's "cosmological aesthetics" and Strong's "democratic transfiguration" share in mystification, and each case it can be tracked to their refusal to come to terms with the later Nietzsche's Great Politics as articulated in *Ecce Homo*, the *Nachlaß* of 1888, and correspondence. Both reduce Nietzsche's aesthetics to a metaphysical parlour game—Kaplama through Heraclitean-Kantian sublimity, Strong through agonistic pluralism. The great wars, most terrible, will be the foundation of the culture of a tragic art. The Great Wars hallmark a negative aesthetics of a new humanity, ruptured from its static past but, despite how necessarily violently so, because it is a rupture of speciation, it is a violence from which we will not suffer. That is the Dionysian tragic wisdom of art: not of the necessity of suffering, which thought can only actually lead to the fake Schopenhauerian wisdom of not willing (ridiculed in "On Redemption" as a fable of madness (*Fabellied des Wahnsinn*), but joy in necessary suffering because these wars bring speciation as will to power grows stronger. But the *Übermenschen* are no sufferers—they are the speciation events (beginning as an event in individuals and later becoming an event in a population), the living ruptures that sever past from future. Any interpretation of Zarathustrian aesthetics that evades this truth—whether by recasting Dionysus as a pantheistic reveler engrossed in the cosmos of flux (as in Kaplama's reading of the events on Nietzsche's "Blessed Isles"), or by overwriting aesthetic exclusionism with an agonistic liberal pluralism (as Strong's "transfiguration" does, reducing the meaning of art to a twee florescence of democratic values)—commits not merely an error but a fraud. This view is not unique to the present critique: Julius Evola, too, argued that Nietzsche is persistently lied about, his radicalism diluted by interpreters who cannot or will not confront the full implications of his philosophy. Unless Nietzsche's his radical negative aesthetics are recognized as rooted in the ground of the period's "Great Politics," they will, perforce, remain unintelligible.

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